Hi,

The preparation and delivery of sermons is a function some parishioners think is the only thing pastors do. Although one of the main functions, that's certainly not true. In this issue of the Ministry newsletter, we will be focusing on sermons, whether it's preparation, content, or delivery. May the Lord touch your ministry in a meaningful way.

Many blessings,

Sheryl Beck
Editorial Specialist

articles on sermons 1928-now

What is preaching?

I.H. Evans
The word "preach" is derived from the Latin praeco, which means "a herald, or public crier." The word "preaching" in its modern sense means delivering a discourse to instruct men and to persuade them to a better way of living. Preaching has to do with more than imparting knowledge, be it ever so true; it deals with the will as well as with the reason....

Organizing the sermon

T.M. French
Every thoughtful preacher gives painstaking care to the plan of his sermon, whether it be held in the mind or placed in written form. However, unless the sermon is worked out into a written outline before it is given in the desk, there is a tendency toward careless preparation, which soon degenerates into wandering, pointless preaching. Therefore...
the preacher who wishes to maintain a high standard of pulpit work should give thorough, specific attention to his sermon outlines...

The sermon that converted Spurgeon
Arthur S. Maxwell
Most authorities agree that the preacher who spoke in the Primitive Methodist chapel at Colchester, England, on January 6, 1850, when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted, was not the "illiterate deacon" as commonly supposed, but the Reverend Robert Eaglen, whose sermon notes, written on four pages of letter paper, have recently been brought to light. As will be remembered, the sermon was based on Isaiah 45:22, and the actual sermon outline was published many years ago in the Methodist Times. In view of the tremendous consequences of this one sermon, preached by an obscure minister, the notes assume special interest and value....

Christ in every sermon
Charles Spurgeon
The best sermon is that which is fullest of Christ. A Welsh minister, when preaching at the chapel of my dear brother Jonathan George, was saying that Christ was the sum and substance of the gospel, and he broke out into the following story....

The one-minute sermon
Reuben A. Hubbard
A one-minute sermon? Sounds intriguing, doesn't it? But what can one say in only one minute? Actually we can say a lot. Especially if we have to...

How to prepare effective Biblical sermons
Joseph J. Battistone
Indispensable to a living, vibrant ministry is the proclamation of God's Word in the worship service. In worship the congregation assembles by God's command in order to hear His Word and be assured of Christ's presence. Whenever God's Word is truly proclaimed, the Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, nourishes...

Quality control for sermons
James Coffin
No minister wants to be a boring preacher. No minister likes to think that his parishioners look forward to each of his discourses with a sort of resigned foreboding. No minister wants to admit that his expositions are muddled and hard to follow. But the sad fact remains that such is indeed the case in more instances than we would care to admit....

Every sermon should call for a response
James A. Cress

Annual report highlights worsening freedom of belief worldwide
This year’s report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has Seventh-day Adventist human rights experts concerned over growing state-sponsored or condoned intolerance toward minority faith groups worldwide.

Starting in New York, ‘Mission to Cities’ focuses outreach on large metro areas
As a New York City evangelism initiative is in full force, other plans for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to reach major metropolitan areas are in place. Some have begun, while others are waiting for the conclusion of the NY13 outreach initiative.

ADRA’s ongoing aid to Syrian refugees includes women’s clinic, school
The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has offered assistance to hundreds of refugee families fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria with a targeted focus on un-registered refugees, an agency official said.
Why did you preach last Sabbath's sermon? Did you expect your listeners to do something in response? Or were you just filling the time between offering and benediction?

**How to care for your voice: Eight practical suggestions for preachers**

*Derek Morris*

I just signed up for voice lessons. No, I am not planning to stop preaching and become a professional singer! Rather, I want to learn how to care for my voice in order to maximize and preserve my impact as a preacher for years to come. Most of us received little or no instruction in voice care during our college or seminary training...

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**just for you...**

**Video: The Interactive Sermon**

The Interactive Sermon - Ministry in Motion

Episode 3

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- no ratings yet
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**How to be a friendly church**

*S. Joseph Kidder*

If you survey churches and ask what their strengths are, almost every one would include “We are a friendly church.” However, when I surveyed some of the visitors who attend those same churches, I found the opposite perception...

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**featured website**

[www.nadministerial.org](http://www.nadministerial.org)
Whether you are a pastor, director, elder, or leader in your church, when you visit the North American Division Ministerial Association, you will see a treasure trove of information. Find out about the next webinar for pastors, read through resources on evangelism, get good ideas of practical ways people in your congregation can get involved, and so much more.

What areas would you like covered in this newsletter or the upcoming issues of Ministry? Share your feedback by visiting our Facebook page.
What Is Preaching?

The word "preach" is derived from the Latin praeco, which means "a herald, or public crier." The word "preaching" in its modern sense means delivering a discourse to instruct men and to persuade them to a better way of living. Preaching has to do with more than imparting knowledge, be it ever so true; it deals with the will as well as with the reason.

Persuasion belongs as much to preaching, and is as much a part of what preaching accomplishes, as is the imparting of knowledge or the interpretation of Scripture. A sermon may be intellectual, the arguments logically arranged and unanswerable, the theme exhaustively and completely handled, and yet the sermon be nothing more than a lecture or an essay. True preaching must not only convey information, it must carry conviction, it must move the whole being to action. There is something in it which is unearthly, spiritual, divine. It is to be a voice from the unseen, audible, visible, thrilling.

It must lift the hearer above earthliness, above troubles and sorrows, and place before him, in convincing and compelling form, a future life and the means of attaining it. If the sermon fails to move its auditors, it is not a sermon. It may be a lecture, an address on a suitable theme, or an oration. But whatever it may be, it is not preaching. A noted religious leader once said: "The true aim of a discourse is not so much to enlighten the mind as to move the heart; not so much to convince us of our duty, as to impel us to fulfill it. . . . This is genuine eloquence, because it fulfills the legitimate end of preaching, namely... the spiritual progress of the hearers."

After every sermon that he has given, the true minister of the gospel ought to be able to say, with Moses, "I call heaven and earth to record this day, . . . that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Deut. 30:19.

An illustration of true preaching is found in Peter's sermon before the multitude on the day of Pentecost. When he had finished his short talk, they cried, "What shall we do? " When Felix and his wife Drusilla heard the prisoner Paul reason of "righteousness, temperance [self-denial], and the judgment to come" Felix was deeply agitated, and said he would hear Paul again. When King Agrippa heard Paul make his famous defense, it stirred his very soul, and he said to Paul: "With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian." Acts 26:28, A. R. V. Such sermons are true preaching. They break up the fallow ground of the heart, and prepare it for the good seed of the kingdom.

Such was the preaching of John the Baptist. Men were moved by his ministry, and cried out, "What shall we do?" Christ stirred the people who heard Him preach. Some said, "He hath a devil," but others declared, "Never man spake like this man."

Christ's sermons are models of true preaching. Preaching is the voice of God heard through man. The Holy Ghost speaks through flesh, but man puts all there is in him in power, in utterance, in vehemence, in holy zeal, into the sermon. The sermon is a living, throbbing, compelling thing: it lives because the man puts himself into his preaching, and personifies his words into a burning message moving the souls of men. That is preaching.

Shanghai, China.
Every thoughtful preacher gives painstaking care to the plan of his sermon, whether it be held in the mind or placed in written form. However, unless the sermon is worked out into a written outline before it is given in the desk, there is a tendency toward careless preparation, which soon degenerates into wandering, pointless preaching. Therefore the preacher who wishes to maintain a high standard of pulpit work should give thorough, specific attention to his sermon outlines.

Outlines visualize the construction, or organization, of the sermon material; and organization makes for clarity and effectiveness in preaching. However excellent the material gathered for the sermon, unless it is given form, it may not be helpful to the congregation. An accumulation of cement, brick, and lumber on a vacant lot may awaken curiosity as to what is to be erected; but not until the architect draws his plans, and the building materials take the form of an edifice, do the passers-by see that there is a church, a residence, or a bank. The preacher should have a "blue print" of the sermon to be delivered, and he should build his materials into a sermon which will be readily understood and long remembered for its clarity and beauty.

Another requisite to good preaching is effectiveness. Here again organization is essential. There is a vast difference between the effectiveness of an organized army and an unorganized mob. The wise preacher marshals and organizes his materials for the greatest effectiveness. This largely accounts for the results of our best preachers. The successful evangelist also looks ahead, and plans his entire series of meetings, and each sermon is made to serve effectively in that series.

Since the topical sermon is the simplest to organize, let us begin with this class of discourses. In organizing a sermon, how true the old adage, "Divide and conquer!" Most subjects readily divide into from two to four general divisions. Let us take, for example, the subject, "The Second Coming of Christ." It may be divided thus:

I Will Christ Return to Earth?

II What Will Be the Manner of His Coming?

III What Is the Purpose of His Coming?

Obviously the first division is the best one for opening a discussion of the subject. There are persons in the congregation who are not convinced concerning the event. They must have Scriptural evidence, and this evidence must first be given. But after the proof has been presented, the concepts of Christ's coming are not formed, or are often greatly distorted by previous false teaching on the subject.

To have a right conception of this supremely important event, the manner of Christ's coming must be clearly set forth, with convincing evidence. Much depends upon the way in which this phase of the subject is presented. This division also affords the opportunity to picture to the audience the grandeur, the glory, of this crowning event of redemption. Furthermore, the present is an intensely practical generation. The preacher must touch motives that will move materialistic men and women to see that this subject is vitally practical.

The purpose of Christ's coming, the third and final division, affords the basis for a stirring appeal, which will touch just such motives. The character fitness, the reward of the saints, the deliverance from this world's sorrows and sufferings, the resurrection of loved ones, the glad reunion, the crowning day, the joy of seeing the Redeemer-these touch the vibrant chords of human hearts. On the other hand, a portrayal of the destruction of the wicked, sounds a warning which will not fall lightly on the ears of the sinner.

Attention is either gained or lost in the introductory remarks; and the sermon is made either fruitful or fruitless by the appeal at the close; therefore special thought should be given to the introduction and conclusion to this appealing subject.

Not only are main divisions essential, but the careful preacher will work out his subdivisions-his line of reasoning, his proofs,
his illustrations, and the application of his texts. The following suggestive outline of divisions and subdivisions of the subject under consideration will suggest how this may be done:

**The Second Coming of Christ**

Introduction:

1. Widespread interest in the subject.

2. Large place it occupies in the Scriptures.

**I. Will Christ Return to This Earth?**

1. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied. *Jude* 14, 15.


3. The psalmist declares that our God will come. Ps. 50: 3-5.

4. Our Saviour said, "I will come again." John 14: 1-3.


**II. What Will Be the Manner of His Coming?**

1. This same Jesus will so come as ye have seen. Acts 1: 9-11.

   a. The same personal Jesus.

   b. He was raised a literal, material being. Luke 24: 36-43.

   c. He will come in like manner as He went.

2. He will come visibly in the clouds of heaven. Rev. 1: 7.

3. The righteous and the wicked will *see* Him come. Rev. 1: 7; Matt. 24: 30.

4. He will come in glory. Matt. 24: 30; Matt. 25: 31. (Illustrate by the glory of the angel that came to the tomb of Christ.)

**III. What Will Be the Purpose of Christ's Coming?**

1. He will reward His saints. Rev. 22: 12.

2. He will bestow the crowns of reward. 2 Tim. 4: 8; 1 Peter 5: 4. (Compare with the temporal crowns of monarchs.)

3. His coming will be the resurrection day. 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17.

4. It will be the reunion day. 1 Thess. 4: 17. (Caught up together.)

5. The saints will be taken to the mansions prepared for them. John 14: 2, 3.

6. The wicked will be destroyed by the brightness. 2 Thess. 2: 8. (Luke 17: 26-30; Rev. 6: 15-17.)
Appeal:

1. Shall we hear the glad welcome into His presence? or,

2. Will we join the scoffers now, and then join in that wail because of Him?

"A mere skeleton," someone says. But as the human skeleton prevents the body from sinking down into a mass of helpless flesh and sinews, so the sermon outline gives form and direction to the discourse. It is the preacher's task to cover the sermon skeleton with a comely body. There must be proper amplification-giving the setting of the text used, making the points seem reasonable, illustrating for impressiveness, applying the lesson for edification. There must also be connectives in passing from division to division, from point to point, so that the auditors may easily follow. Above all, the Master must breathe into this body, the sermon, the breath of life, the Holy Spirit, that it may become a living, vibrant message that will turn souls from darkness to light, from the way of death to the pathway of life.
Most authorities agree that the preacher who spoke in the Primitive Methodist chapel at Colchester, England, on January 6, 1850, when Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted, was not the "illiterate deacon" as commonly supposed, but the Reverend Robert Eaglen, whose sermon notes, written on four pages of letter paper, have recently been brought to light. As will be remembered, the sermon was based on Isaiah 45:22, and the actual sermon outline was published many years ago in the *Methodist Times*. In view of the tremendous consequences of this one sermon, preached by an obscure minister, the notes assume special interest and value. The outline, virtually as it appeared then, is as follows:

(Text.) "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, . . for I am God, and there is none else." *Isa. 45:22.*

(Introduction.) God wills the salvation of man. In order that it may be accomplished, He makes use of varied means—He threatens, promises, exhorts, entreats, and in His Word clearly points out the means whereby we may be saved. Notice:

I. The Blessing Offered: Salvation.

a. Salvation is deliverance from slavery or danger. This salvation is a spiritual one, and may best be illustrated by considering the moral condition of man. Man is naturally 'under—

b. The guilt of sin which, like a chain, binds the soul.

c. The dominion of sin which, like a taskmaster, keeps him in drudgery.

d. He is also exposed to the wrath of God against sin.

2. The blessing offered in the text is an entire deliverance from all these evils. This salvation is:

a. Free—in its offers; in its communications.

b. Full—in the deliverance it effects in the blessings it imparts.

c. Present—in its realization.

II. The Means to be used in Order to Obtain: "Look unto me."

a. The Object of regard—God.

God in Christ atoning for our sins. *John 1:29.*

What is meant by looking to this Object? (Refer to the Israelites and the brazen serpent.) It implies:

A sense of our need of salvation.

A desire to obtain it.

An exertion after it, by earnest prayer and strong faith. The reception of this blessing is inevitably consequent on our thus "looking."

III. The reason why we must look to this object: "*I am God, and there is none else.*"

1. Consider the greatness of the Being giving the command.
2. There is no other means of being saved.

Evidently it was when "applying the subject" that the preacher cried out to the youth in front of him, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ!"

Probably Robert Eaglen went home that day to his Sunday dinner wondering, like many another preacher, what good he had accomplished: But who can tell what results may accrue from even the humblest ministry in the Master's service? We must labor on in faith and hope, confident that while we may but humbly scatter seeds, or water another's sowing, God, in His own good time, will give the increase.
Christ in Every Sermon

The best sermon is that which is fullest of Christ. A Welsh minister, when preaching at the chapel of my dear brother Jonathan George, was saying that Christ was the sum and substance of the gospel, and he broke out into the following story:

A young man had been preaching in the presence of a venerable divine, and after he had done, he foolishly went to the old minister and inquired, "What do you think of my sermon, sir?" "A very poor sermon indeed," said he. "A poor sermon!" said the young man, "it took me a long time to study it." "Ay, no doubt of it." "Why, then, do you say it was poor; did you not think my explanation of the text to be accurate?" "Oh, yes," said the old preacher, "very correct indeed." "Well, then, why do you say it was a poor sermon? Didn't you think the metaphors were appropriate, and the arguments conclusive?" "Yes," they were very good, as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon." "Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?" "Because," said he, "there was no Christ in it." "Well," said the young man, "Christ was not in the text; we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text." So the old man said, "Don't you know, young man, that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?" "Yes," said the young man. "Ah!" said the old divine, "and so from every text in the Scripture there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And, my dear brother, your business is, when you get to a text, to say, 'Now, what is the road to Christ?' and then preach a sermon, running along the road towards the great metropolis Christ. And," said he, "I have never yet found a text that had not a plain and direct road to Christ in it; and if ever I should find one that has no such road, I will make a road, I would go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for a sermon is . . . [useless], unless there is a savour of Christ in it."
The One-Minute Sermon

A one-minute sermon? Sounds intriguing, doesn't it? But what can one say in only one minute? Actually we can say a lot. Especially if we have to.

Where Can We Use a One-Minute Sermon?

Nearly every home has a television set. Realizing the great potential, many conferences sponsor their own telecasts: The TV Bible Class, Words of Life, et cetera. All of us support Faith for Today, our national telecast.

However, television time is very precious and it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain desirable time, especially for a half hour religious program. When we do, the expensive production costs are utilized at some early morning hour, generally on Sunday, when most of the TV sets are off.

A One-Minute Sermon Can Be Productive

The one-minute sermon can be produced at a minimal cost. And it can be released on prime television time daily for less than the thirty-minute programs cost per week at an undesirable hour. In other words, by releasing during prime television time, each sermon enjoys a larger audience than the thirty-minute program, and we have seven audiences per week instead of one! The potential volume of mail is far greater for the one-minute sermon than for the thirty-minute telecast.

And the one-minute sermon is adaptable. If finances will not permit a daily telecast, then it can be released weekly on prime time. Even free time may be obtained if we are willing to sacrifice the benefits of prime time for a less desirable hour.

In eastern Idaho, when I was piloting the one-minute sermon, the stations unhesitatingly offered me free time daily at the sign-on or sign-off hours. I chose to telecast at the sign-off, after the Johnny Carson show (some time after midnight), and averaged five letters a week even at that late hour. And the entire series of ninety-eight one-minute sermons cost only thirty-five dollars, and this for reusable slides purchased from the Review and Herald! This was less than thirty-three cents a telecast!

What Can We Say in One Minute?

Seven seconds of each minute are consumed in the introduction, fifteen seconds at the close in advertising the Gift Bible offer. This leaves thirty-eight seconds for the actual "sermon." During this time a brief thought on some doctrine, such as the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the Second Advent, is presented, or something on astronomy, archeology, creationism, et cetera. All the proof texts cannot be used in thirty-eight seconds, and I don't attempt to use them. I merely introduce the subject and appeal to the audience to send for the white Bible with study guides that will cover the subject in more detail.

The response has been marvelous. Laymen are trained to deliver the Bible and lessons, and they have done a very acceptable job. Many people today are looking for answers—answers which Seventh-day Adventists can supply.

How Is the One-Minute Sermon Put Together?

To cut production costs the one-minute sermon was produced entirely with slides and audio tape. I wrote the entire series of ninety-eight sermons in less than two weeks and recorded them at the studio in two afternoons. This required a minimum of time and gave me coverage for nearly four months.

Each introduction is the same: a slide of the speaker while the TV announcer says: "The Seventh-day Adventist Church proudly presents the ONE-MINUTE SERMON, with your TV pastor, Reuben Hubbard."
Use Plenty of Slides

The slide changes and I begin the sermon immediately. One sermon begins, "Archeology discovers and uncovers . . ." The color slide is of the Amarna Letters of Egypt. I generally use four or five slides during the thirty-five-second presentation, or a slide every seven or eight seconds. Many people think that the program is a live production and my parishioners have often asked me if I have to be down at the TV station each midnight!

Final Appeal

Each sermon closes with an appeal to study the subject further through the white Bible, with the study guides offer, and a slide flashes on the screen showing the Bible and the study guides. The final slide contains the address where the Bible and guides may be obtained. To keep the address simple we use a box number and list also a telephone number for those too busy to write. Several phone calls have been received as well as letters.

The Need to Use Television More Extensively

As ministers we need to make greater use of television than we have been doing in the past. During this great Gift Bible Evangelism thrust we must use every means available to place our message before the world. Personal Bible study is the most effective means of presenting the message. If we can use television to advertise our Gift Bible Plan of Evangelism, we will enjoy a much greater outreach than we have previously known.

Television is expensive, but it is effective! If every home in America could tune in to the one-minute sermon, think of the white Bibles with lessons we could place!

We Must Not Delay

Time is running out. We dare not delay to use the most effective means possible to present a message of hope to a hopeless and perplexed generation. And the one-minute sermon is an idea that could be incorporated conveniently into the evangelistic program of nearly every pastor in North America.
Indispensable to a living, vibrant ministry is the proclamation of God's Word in the worship service. In worship the congregation assembles by God's command in order to hear His Word and be assured of Christ's presence. Whenever God's Word is truly proclaimed, the Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, nourishes, and sustains the church. Thus the congregation is able to offer to God with confidence and joy its prayers, its hymns of praise and consecration, and its sacrificial gifts.

The preaching task is therefore not simply one among the pastor's many duties—it is essential, it is the very heart of the pastor's work. This does not mean that the minister spends most of his time in the study, researching his books; instead, he must balance his book learning with pastoral visiting and counseling, and with administrative activities. The minister's field experience is as vital to sermon preparation as is his study.

How, then, does one go about the task of preparing effective Biblical sermons—sermons that meet the needs of the worshiping community?

**Definition of Biblical preaching**

Biblical preaching, briefly, is the proclamation of God's Word to the congregation. To be sure, proclaiming God's Word means much more than simply reading the Bible and attaching an object lesson to the passage. Biblical preaching involves the careful removal of the text from its original setting and transplanting it into the present situation of the church. To accomplish this, the minister must understand not only the Scriptures but also his congregation—the world of Bible times and the world of his church, the way both worlds are alike and the way both worlds differ.

Since the sermon serves as a bridge between the past and the present, and not merely as a commentary on the text, Biblical preaching must not be confused with grammatical, historical, or theological exegesis. It goes beyond these to proclaim the Biblical passage as normative for Christian faith and practice, in a way that informs, awakens, assures, and sustains the congregation in its life of faith. However, Biblical preaching must be centered upon the Biblical passage and not upon some personal problem or contemporary issue. The Bible alone is the norm for the beliefs and behavior of the church. Textbooks on psychology, sociology, or the like cannot replace the Bible as the basis for Christian faith.

As a teacher and advocate of the faith, the minister derives his authority from the Bible, but only so far as he understands and interprets its message correctly. A superficial approach to the Scriptures—one that gives the minister only a vague idea of what the text is saying—impairs his ability to speak forcefully and forthrightly from the pulpit. It also depreciates the significance of preaching in the eyes of the congregation and robs God of an opportunity to address His people in worship.

Biblical preaching is thus the only kind of preaching that equips the pastor with power to minister effectively to his congregation. It is the only kind of preaching that carries with it the authority of the Holy Scriptures. There can be no substitute for Biblical preaching.

**Basic principles of preparation**

The task of preparing Biblical sermons involves three scientific disciplines: hermeneutics (the principles of Scripture interpretation), exegetics (the methodology of exposition), and homiletics (the techniques of sermon preparation). The way one minister actually proceeds in the preparation of his message may differ from that of another; nevertheless, the minister cannot ignore any of the three disciplines and expect to preach effective Biblical sermons. Let's discuss the task under four subdivisions: the grammatical principle of interpretation, the historical principle of interpretation, the theological principle of interpretation, and the translation of God's Word into the contemporary idiom.

**The grammatical principle of interpretation**
Biblical preaching begins with an exegesis of the text, and exegesis follows grammatical principles. It seeks to understand the verbal meaning of the text by analyzing the function and meaning of the words employed, as well as the grammar and syntax.

Grammatical exegesis involves more than a general knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. It requires information about the various possible meanings of ambiguous terms and grammatically ambiguous constructions. Since the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek (a few portions were in Aramaic), the minister who has no knowledge of these languages is handicapped. It is not enough simply to find the English equivalent of a Hebrew or Greek word in a lexicon. For example, the Greek equivalent to the English term world conveys a variety of meanings, all of which must be taken into consideration when one prepares a sermon on the church in contemporary life.

The minister who lacks adequate linguistic skills can make use of such lexical aids as commentaries, concordances, and theological dictionaries, provided that he understands their purpose and knows how to incorporate the information into the sermon. Commentaries differ in function and scope, as well as in theological posture. Some are chiefly concerned with text-critical matters (Bruce Metzger's *Commentary on the Greek New Testament*) or with literary and source criticism (*The International Critical Commentary Series*) or with theological exegesis (*The Old Testament Library Series, The Anchor Bible*) or with homiletical exposition (*The Pulpit Commentary*). Yet even when the minister possesses and uses lexical tools correctly, he must still examine words in their grammatical context within the phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, and finally the whole discourse.

**The historical principle of interpretation**

Biblical exegesis seeks to understand the grammatical meaning of the text in the light of the historical situation in which it was first written or spoken. This means that one should have a general knowledge of the literary history of the Bible, as well as an understanding of Israelite religion, society, politics, and economics. One must be acquainted with the various literary types of material in the Bible and the specific situations addressed by such types. In the Old Testament we find examples of law (Ex. 20:1-23:19), historiography (Judges), wisdom or philosophy (Proverbs), devotional writings (Psalms), and prophetic literature (Jeremiah). In the narrower sense we note literary *genre* such as a legal saying (Ex. 21:15), a historical narrative (2 Sam. 2:8-4:12), a riddle (Judges 14:14, 18), a hymn (Psalm 100), or a prophetic oracle (Amos 4:1-3).

It is not enough simply to identify literary types. The minister should recognize, most of all, the relationship between inspired literature and the sacred history of the people to whom the messages were directed. A sermon based on a text must first interpret that text in the light of its own religious history setting. It is helpful to know whether the text that one is citing is a priestly blessing pronounced over the congregation at the close of worship (Num. 6:24-26) or a funeral dirge proclaimed by the prophet in lamentation over the fall of Jerusalem (Lam. 1:1).

Historical exegesis, then, proceeds from the conviction that God's self-disclosure occurred in the arena of human history and that the human witness to the divine revelation was a product of a particular culture. This in no way denies the inspiration of the Bible; rather it affirms the historical character of the Scripture revelation. In fact, this affirmation provides a safeguard against fanciful interpretations of the Bible that arise from the creative imagination of the reader rather than from an intensive and prayerful study of the text.

Because the Bible is a historical document and the church a historical movement, historical exegesis is important both in understanding the Biblical message and in determining its meaning for today. Questions of date, authorship, background, and setting are essential to the task of preparing Biblical sermons. The more we know about the religio-political circumstances and socioeconomic conditions under which a document was written, the better able we will be to grasp the author's message and apply it accordingly.

**The theological principle of interpretation**

The minister must also understand and explain a text theologically. He should be cognizant not only of what the particular text is saying on the surface but also of the theology that informs the text. A person without theological training could read the book
of Amos and grasp the general points expressed. He could read the prophetic denunciations against the wealthy aristocrats, the corrupt judges, and the elaborate system of worship, and would doubtless be able to perceive why doom was pronounced on the nation. And yet the conclusions he would reach would be shallow, because he would have failed to probe deeply into the theology that motivated Amos to prophesy. Unless the minister understands that the preaching of Amos was rooted in the ancient traditions of his people, the sermon he prepares will be superficial or possibly incorrect.

Clearly, the prophet spoke for God in the context of the theological traditions of his people, as well as in the light of the circumstances of his day. An awareness of this fact enables the minister to grasp the text theologically and to preach the message with clarity and force. Effective Biblical preaching does not ignore theological questions but wrestles earnestly with the major themes and concepts of the Bible, offering to the congregation a clear exposition of their relevance in practical terms. It is well to keep in mind that the theology of the Bible is not expressed in abstract, highly speculative language. It is conveyed in concrete and picturesque speech in order to confront men and women in the course of their daily, mundane affairs with inspired counsel on how to live.

**The translation of God's Word into the contemporary idiom**

Biblical preaching is obviously more than a commentary that explains the grammatical, historical, and theological meaning of a text. The message of the text must be translated into the idiom of the congregation and presented in such a way that it is clearly seen to address the contemporary situation. To accomplish this, the minister must be knowledgeable not only in the Scriptures but also in the social sciences, particularly those having to do with human behavior. He must learn to ask the right questions of the text and of his congregation, and formulate a message based on careful and prayerful research.

It is important that the minister be aware of contemporary issues and their impact on the thinking, the feeling, and the behavior of his church. It is equally important that the church believe that the pastor comprehends what is happening in the world and how this affects them.

A minister may do careful exegesis of a scriptural text and yet detract from the significance of his study by offering superficial observations of contemporary life. The church stands in need of penetrating analyses and critiques of the world today. Should not a congregation be informed about the prophetic significance of the Middle East tensions and unrest? Cannot ministers offer the church direction in healthful living? Surely pastors who are alert to the diminishing natural resources, the mounting world population, and the apparent gloom of social commentators can prepare effective Biblical sermons on the second coming of Christ!

Sermons can be addressed to other areas of pressing needs. The minister must help the congregation discern between good and evil and offer counsel on protecting oneself against the cunning ways of the devil. What are the forces that contribute to the collapse of families? How can husbands and wives organize their lives around the Word of God to preserve the purity of their marriage and the security, stability, and solidarity of their homes?

Does the minister understand how a sense of powerlessness drives a youth to drugs, a mother to alcohol, and a father to crime? Is he sensitive to the anxiety that some of his members experience over guilt, or loneliness, or boredom? Does he proclaim from the Scriptures good news to the impoverished, relief to the oppressed, and freedom to the captive? Sermons of this kind are not put together by chance. They are the product of earnest soul searching, keen observation, intensive study, and much prayer. But the results are rewarding. Biblical preaching has creative and redemptive value for the church. When ever the Word of God is proclaimed, the church is nourished. And when the church is nourished, it grows spiritually and numerically!
Quality control for sermons

No minister wants to be a boring preacher. No minister likes to think that his parishioners look forward to each of his discourses with a sort of resigned foreboding. No minister wants to admit that his expositions are muddled and hard to follow. But the sad fact remains that such is indeed the case in more instances than we would care to admit.

And this sad state of affairs persists in spite of the fact that many of us have (to our credit) spent no small amount of money and time to acquire and read books on how to improve our sermons. Yet the techniques and suggestions that we anticipated would revolutionize our presentations somehow fall short of our expectations. It is not that the suggestions are not valid. But as busy ministers, we have difficulty remembering—let alone implementing—the myriad do's and don'ts we encounter in our study of the "how to" books. And because we are busy, our ready-to-deliver sermon is often judged on the single criterion: Is this a "good" sermon?

Such a nonspecific, qualitative analysis may be better than no critical evaluation whatsoever. But it would be far more beneficial if every minister would take the time to establish in his own mind just what are the most significant and the most basic criteria applicable to any sermon, be it doctrinal, devotional, evangelistic, philosophical, expository, or apologetic. This does not ignore the multitude of fine-tuning details whereby any sermon can be significantly improved. But it does guarantee that every sermon will be critically examined to see that it contains at least the basic qualifications of a good sermon. Such a procedure takes relatively little time, but it can do wonders in improving one's sermons.

The criteria by which I attempt to construct and evaluate my own sermons are six simple yet vital questions. I have divided them evenly into two categories: content and construction. The following three points are the basis upon which I evaluate the content of the sermons I prepare:

1. Is the sermon Christ-centered? Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Verse 33 makes it clear that He was speaking of His death on the cross. However, it is no less true that if Christ is lifted up in the pulpit, He will draw men unto Himself. Where Christ is not uplifted, the people will perish for lack of the nourishment and refreshment He alone can provide. Every sermon, whether an Old Testament exposition, a presentation on Christian stewardship, or a prelude to Communion, must be Christ-centered.

To make a sermon Christ-centered does not necessarily mean that we must talk about Christ by name—although we certainly do not talk about Him any too much. Rather, to make a sermon Christ-centered means that it must be a portrayal of God's love in Christ, even if the topic is the destruction of sinners, and it must be presented in the context of the salvation that is freely offered in Christ. When Christ is thus brought into every discourse, even the most volatile subjects can be handled in a way that does not antagonize or alienate listeners.

2. Does the sermon present the "abundant life"? Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (chap. 10:10). John expressed the hope in one of his epistles that our "joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). In fact, absolutely everything that God asks of us He does so because it is intrinsically superior to the alternatives.

Too often we have told people what they should do—do it or face the consequences; do it or else! Such an approach may have worked, or at least appeared to have worked, in the decades and centuries gone by. But it is hopelessly out of touch today. We need sermons today that bring out the beauty of every facet of God's truth. From the joy derived through sharing our means, to the fitness and fulfillment of healthful living, to the symbolism expressed in baptism, all of these are intrinsically beautiful and fulfilling and should be presented as such. The abundant life is a far more effective form of motivation than the fear of being lost. Today's preachers should be the world's best salesmen—not the world's most demanding taskmasters.

3. Have I personally experienced what I am speaking about? When told to refrain from preaching or face the consequences, Peter and John stated without equivocation, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). There is something about personal experience that gives the speaker an enthusiasm that cannot be quelled. Both John and Peter
emphasize in their Epistles their personal association with Jesus. And until we as preachers can stand in the pulpit and commend to our listeners what we know to be true from personal experience, there will be no authority and little life in our discourses.

To preach from personal experience does not mean, of course, always to be telling personal experiences. Sermons should lift up Christ, not self. Rather, preaching from personal experience means that we will have wrestled with the issues ourselves, that we will have come to the point where the light has shone through, and spurred on by the joy that we have experienced, we will turn to the waiting congregation to share "what we have seen and heard." Every doctrine, every Biblical biography, every exposition, must first have touched the life of the preacher if it is to be preached in such a manner as to touch the life of the hearer.

These, then, are my criteria for judging the content of my sermons. They are simple yet, I feel, essential. But whatever criteria you may develop, as they become more familiar, they become not only a basis for critical evaluation but also a formula for proper sermon preparation. Before long, sermons quite naturally satisfy the prerequisites laid down.

Yet merely having something of significance to say does not mean that it will automatically come forth in a form that can be easily assimilated by your people.

Careful attention must be given to the construction of the sermon. These are the questions I ask of my sermon's form:

1. Do I have a clearly defined goal, an attention-attracting introduction, and a strong, concise conclusion? Every sermon should have a clearly defined purpose. The minister is not under obligation to fill a specified time in the worship hour. He is, however, under obligation to feed the flock. He must have a goal, and every aspect of his sermon must be ever moving in the direction of that goal.

Not only must a preacher know where he is going, but he must take his congregation with him right from the start. People usually decide whether a speaker is going to be worth listening to in the first few minutes of his address. Very careful thought should be given to how to introduce the sermon in a way that will capture the imagination and interest of the greatest number of listeners, young and old, members and visitors, committed and uncommitted.

Most important of all is the conclusion. Good preachers spend what may appear to be a totally disproportionate amount of time preparing the last two or three minutes of their sermon. But those preachers know that unless the conclusion is emphatic, concise, and moving, the sermon will have been preached largely in vain. It is often helpful to have the conclusion written out word for word and carefully studied, then when it is presented, certain carefully chosen words and phrases flow forth more freely, stirring the congregation to make the desired response.

2. Have I chosen a topic that I can adequately handle in a single presentation, and have I discarded all unnecessary baggage? Mark Twain observed that very few sinners were converted after twelve o'clock! Sermons should be short and to the point. However good the presentation, there is limit to how much the congregation can digest in any one sitting. Some homiletics teachers insist that every minute preached after twelve o'clock undoes the effectiveness of two minutes preached before twelve; and by the time the speaker has gone ten minutes overtime, he has all but nullified his entire sermon.

Obviously some topics require more time than others. An exposition of some complicated doctrinal passage may require more time than a devotional sermon. But if the preacher, knowing exactly what he wants to say, aims for the target and does not allow himself to be diverted by nonessential details (however interesting), he can cover a great distance in a relatively short time. If the preacher sees that he will still be short of time; even though the sermon is free of unnecessary baggage, he should then probably plan to present the topic as a series rather than a.s a single unit. And his congregation will be greatly blessed for it—not to mention that they will greatly bless him!

3. Is the sermon in a logical and easily remembered sequence? Clear organization on the part of the preacher is a prerequisite to quick assimilation of the details on the part of the listeners. If point A does not naturally and obviously link up with points B and C, few listeners will waste their time unraveling the mystery. Furthermore; that which is carefully structured is likewise more easily remembered both by the preacher and by the listener.

I remember listening to a high school commencement address some eleven years ago, and can to this day remember every point
presented. The points were not exceptionally profound, nor was the presentation exceptionally dynamic. The key to my remarkable recall is the clarity of the speaker's organization. He made only three points, but he drove them home so forcefully that they are with me to this day.

As preachers we may not be the world's most profound thinkers. We may not be the world's greatest orators. We may not be able to remember—let alone implement—all the do's and don'ts of proper sermon construction. But if we establish for our sermons a system of quality control, a simple system that can become the working policy of our sermon preparation and the basis of our own critical evaluation, and if we ruthlessly adhere to the criteria we ourselves have deemed essential, our preaching will take on a new tone, our discourses will be given a new power, and hungering, thirsting seekers will be led to Christ where their souls will be satisfied.
Why did you preach last Sabbath's sermon? Did you expect your listeners to do something in response? Or were you just filling the time between offering and benediction?

Perhaps it's time we rethink preaching. Perhaps the times demand that we think about intentional preaching—preaching on purpose! Intentional preaching involves planning what you will say and what you expect in response from your audience. A sermon that does not demand a response is not a sermon. It may be a discussion, a presentation, a monologue, or even cleverly disguised religious entertainment, but not a sermon. Unless what you preach motivates the audience toward some positive reaction to what they have heard, your sermon is incomplete.

Peter's sermon at Pentecost was so powerful that the listeners made the appeal themselves: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Unless you can preach with such power and conviction, it will be necessary for you to make your own appeal to extend an invitation that calls for a response.

In fact, planning your appeal before you construct your sermon is one of the greatest tools in building a powerful sermon. Ask yourself, What action do I want my audience to take as a result of this message? The question will change not only your sermon but also your sermon preparation. The process will be different because your objective will be clearly delineated at the beginning. Everything you say will be focused to ward the goal of motivating the desired response.

When I first told my congregation that I would extend an appeal at the close of every sermon, they reacted with surprise. But soon they discovered that the appeal not only guided my sermon preparation each week, but also demanded a balanced schedule of texts and topics throughout the year. Further, an invitation every week requires careful worship planning in order to allow sufficient time to accomplish the spiritual business at the end of every sermon.

How can you implement an appeal into your weekly worship service?

**Condition your audience** to expect an appeal after every sermon. Tell them your intention at the beginning of the sermon: *I intend to give you an opportunity to respond to Jesus Christ today.* If your people know that a response is expected from them, they will listen to the sermon differently, and let the Holy Spirit work more effectively.

**Prepare your audience** by preaching a Christ-centered sermon. "The object of preaching is not alone to convey information, not merely to convince the intellect. The preaching of the word should appeal to the intellect, and should impart knowledge, but it should do more than this. The words of the minister should reach the hearts of the hearers." * Sermons rooted in Jesus and bathed in the good news of salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit will reach the hearts of your hearers!

**Establish a familiar routine** for your appeals. This assures your congregation that the appeal is planned as a vital part of your worship service and allows a person to think ahead of decisions that need to be made. For ongoing use, a generic response card is quite helpful. Such a card could include an opportunity to accept Jesus as personal Saviour, an opportunity to request baptism or church membership (by profession of faith), a request for prayer for specific needs, as well as requests for Bible studies, pastoral visits, etc.

Because I wanted my members to respond every week (attendance records), I found it helpful to include some choices to which they could always respond: *I would like the Holy Spirit to continue working in my life. Pray that I will personally apply the lesson of from today's sermon.* In order to allow sufficient time, I arranged a musical presentation each week at the time of the appeal.
Consider each response an opportunity to minister. My members appreciated a postcard or telephone call assuring them that I had seen their requests for special prayer and would indeed remember them that week. Guests always received acknowledgment of their responses. Even if they registered only their attendance, they received a postcard expressing appreciation for their visit. Always prioritize those who are seeking further Bible studies, acceptance of Jesus Christ, or baptism. During one year we had more than 50 requests for baptism.

Begin now. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you willing to extend regular appeals and to give you the desired fruit for your labor.

How to care for your voice: Eight practical suggestions for preachers

I just signed up for voice lessons. No, I am not planning to stop preaching and become a professional singer! Rather, I want to learn how to care for my voice in order to maximize and preserve my impact as a preacher for years to come. Most of us received little or no instruction in voice care during our college or seminary training. Many of our preaching professors assumed we all knew how to take care of our voices. They were wrong. That is why I have dialogued with several voice professionals in order to discover some practical suggestions about voice care for preachers.1

Your voice is a miracle of creative genius. Your vocal cords are quite small, somewhere between 18–23 millimeters in size, with this miraculous and priceless instrument housed within your larynx. Your vocal cords vibrate hundreds of times per second when speaking. Continuous misuse or abuse will damage them, and sometimes that damage becomes permanent.

If you would like to protect and preserve your vocal cords and keep your voice working at peak performance, here are eight practical suggestions for voice care.

Warm up your vocal cords

Athletes use a warm-up routine before vigorous exercise. This reduces the risk of injury to muscles and ensures peak performance. Likewise, your vocal cords are muscles, too, and they need to be “warmed up” before use in order to realize their maximum potential and avoid injury.

A simple warm-up exercise for speakers involves humming on a descending scale. Your lips should be touching, with your teeth slightly separated. Feel the buzzing sensation when humming. You can also vocalize various syllables on a descending scale. Try using buzzing sounds like vi, vi, vi, vi; va, va, va, va; vo, vo, vo, vo; or bede, bede, bede, bede; or ze, za, zo, zu. Start in the middle of your range and descend to your low range. Then go to your high range and descend to your middle range. You can also do lip trills (make a brbrbrbr sound, vibrating your lips naturally and easily). A few minutes devoted to a vocal warm-up routine is time well spent.

Gale Jones Murphy, a renowned Christian musician and motivational speaker, offers this practical suggestion for a vocal warm-up routine for preachers. Before a busy day of preaching, one of the best times and locations to warm up your voice is while taking a shower. The steam and humidity are great for the vocal cords. Sing the melodies of some of your favorite hymns or Scripture songs with ee vowels, remembering to relax your jaw. This focused warm-up routine can also be a time of spiritual reflection as you associate the melodies with the spiritual messages of the songs.2

If you find yourself running out of breath in just a few seconds during your warm-up exercises, then you need to pay special attention to the second suggestion below.

Practice proper breathing techniques

The vibration of your vocal cords requires consistent, continuous airflow— this reinforces why proper breathing techniques are essential for peak vocal performance. Be mindful of proper breath management because too much pressure wears down the vocal cords. However, too little pressure has the same negative effect. Here are several breathing exercises to help you develop effective breath support:

• Inhale deeply, allowing your ribcage to expand and your diaphragm to lower without raising your shoulders. Then exhale slowly with a hissing sound, gently pulling in with your abdominal muscles for a consistent airflow.
through your vocal cords. Think about sucking through a clogged straw while inhaling. This will help your air intake to flow slowly and smoothly.

- Inhale deeply, then vocalize “Choo, choo, choo” with a loud whisper, using your abdominal muscles to pull in and up with each word. Learn to associate the use of your voice with good breathing techniques. These breathing exercises also help minimize upper body and neck tension and fatigue.

- Lie on the floor with a large book on your abdomen and breathe. The book should ascend and descend as you inhale and exhale. You can also practice this breathing exercise while lying in bed.

- Explore the extremes between too much air pressure and too little air pressure. Exhale with a loud hissing sound (too much air pressure). Then exhale with no hissing sound (too little air pressure). Develop muscle memory for an appropriate breath support that produces better tone quality. Practice reciting sermons with passion without developing tension in your throat.

- Learn to breathe deeply. Engage in activities such as brisk walking, biking, and other aerobic exercises that require you to breathe deeply. Panting can also help you to breathe deeply. Start slowly, then speed up. Feel your whole torso moving when you pant, not just your chest. Deep breathing gets the diaphragm to lower, which produces a more efficient and pleasing tone. Intentionally wake up your body by deep breathing prior to a speaking appointment.

### Practice good posture

Good posture is essential for efficient voice production. When your physical alignment is poor, you not only look awkward to your congregation but you also impair proper breathing techniques. Have you noticed preachers who slump over the pulpit? That is an example of poor posture. When you have proper body alignment, you should be able to drop a line from the top of your head, past your ear, the point of your shoulder, the highest point of your pelvis, just behind your kneecap, and just in front of your ankle. Proper posture enables you to have good balance, move freely, and provide efficient breath support.

### Provide adequate hydration

My colleague, Dr. Evan Chesney, often coaches me in good voice care with a single word: “Hydrate!” Most of us are aware of the fact that our bodies are made up of approximately 60 percent water. Lost water needs to be replaced daily, and the best way to hydrate is to drink pure water. Other fluids, like juices, are not good substitutes for pure water because your body processes these fluids as food and treats them differently.

Adequate hydration with pure water becomes particularly important for the lubrication of your vocal cords. Make sure that you are well hydrated before speaking and, if necessary, drink additional water during breaks. Room temperature water is preferable because chilled water will cause the vocal cords to constrict. When preaching three times in a row, my regular preaching routine, I make sure that I drink at least 16 ounces (0.47 liters) of water prior to my first sermon and an additional 16 ounces of water between each sermon. I thought that I was doing well until Reyna Carguill shared with me that she drinks 64–128 ounces (1.89–3.79 liters) of water in the four hours preceding a major event. This requires some intentionality, but adequate hydration is well worth the effort in order to avoid damage to inadequately hydrated vocal cords.

My voice teacher, Mark Becker, shared a story that illustrates the importance of adequate hydration. A preacher requested Becker’s assistance because he noticed that his throat was beginning to get sore during his speaking assignments. In asking for help, the preacher demonstrated wisdom because soreness is your body’s way of telling you that something is wrong, and you could be damaging some aspect of your physical being. After careful analysis, it was discovered that the preacher was sipping water during his sermons. Rather than providing adequate hydration, this sipping habit was simply washing away the natural lubrication from around his vocal cords, resulting in soreness. When the preacher began to drink adequate fluids prior to
speaking and on breaks, rather than sipping water during his presentations, he was able to speak all day without soreness of any kind.

Get adequate rest

Has anyone ever said to you, “You sound tired!” When you are tired, one of the first parts of your body to be affected is your voice. Adequate rest is essential for optimal voice performance. Reyna Carguill makes a point of getting extra rest two days before a major event. Preachers also need to give their bodies some rest reserves. Be intentional as well about providing rest for your vocal cords. Have you heard the expression “Silence is golden”? That is true, not only in times of conflict, but also when you want to provide good care for your voice. Vocal rest becomes very beneficial for your instrument. Be silent for an extended period of time. Some preachers have the mistaken idea that whispering rests the vocal cords, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, whispering is more stressful on your vocal cords than speaking. So take time to just be silent. Rest.

If you have a demanding speaking schedule on a particular day, schedule time for your vocal cords to rest. Ask someone else to welcome the visitors, give the announcements, lead the songs, and offer the morning prayer. Make room for others to serve, while providing rest periods for your voice at the same time.

Provide healthy fuel for your body

Your whole body supports your voice so make sure you provide your body with healthy fuel. Everything you eat and drink either sustains or alters your nutritional balance. To maintain the proper chemical balance in your body, you need the appropriate nutrients. Enjoy a healthy balance of fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and legumes. Be aware of foods and beverages that can damage your instrument; for example, spicy foods and fried foods can cause acid reflux that damage the vocal cords. Also, be aware of personal food allergies that can affect vocal performance. Avoid overeating as overeating results in shallow breathing and lack of energy. Adequate and appropriate nutrition prior to speaking helps provide the needed energy for peak performance.7

Keep your whole body toned

Exercise is also essential for optimal vocal performance, for exercise will keep your body toned and enhance your core strength. Many muscles are engaged when speaking, and a well-toned muscular system will help you maximize your impact as a communicator. Dr. Julie Penner strongly encourages all of her voice students to take an exercise class that concentrates on strengthening the core of the body, namely the innermost abdominals.8 This exercise class also involves stretching and controlled deep breathing, all of which results in freedom and support of the voice and helps the speaker or singer become more supple in body and voice.

Take some voice lessons

Every preacher could benefit from taking some voice lessons from a good vocal coach. Dr. Evan Chesney shared a lesson he learned early in his career: “My first teaching experience began when I taught remedial English at Southern Adventist University. After my first week of teaching, I had pretty much trashed my voice, which was very frustrating since I was a vocal performance major. My voice teacher pointed out that I needed to learn to speak the same way I sing. Applying the same techniques when speaking that I used in singing—proper posture, abdominal breath support, proper vocal placement and projection—relieved the stress on my vocal cords, and I didn’t have any more trouble.”

Your voice teacher can help you avoid voice strain and provide some helpful strategies to protect your precious instrument.9 Old habits die hard, but it is possible to change with discipline and practice. If you are experiencing a vocal disorder of some kind, your voice teacher might suggest you consult a physician because your vocal cords could be damaged and may require complete rest or even surgery.

Your voice is a precious gift. Do not misuse or abuse it. Make an effort to practice good voice care. Be determined to use your
voice to bring honor and glory to God.¹⁰

1 I am grateful to Mark Becker, Reyna Carguill, Dr. Evan Chesney, Gale Jones Murphy, and Dr. Julie Penner for their significant contributions to this article.

2 Gale Jones Murphy serves as a choral teacher at Brentwood Academy in Brentwood, TN, and is minister of music at Riverside Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nashville, TN. You can learn more about Gale’s music and teaching ministry at www.galejonesmurphy.com.

3 Dr. Evan Chesney serves as the minister of music at the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida.

4 Alcohol and caffeinated drinks are also detrimental to optimal vocal performance. Alcohol causes constriction of the blood vessels in the vocal cords, causing a reduction in vocal control. Caffeine causes dryness in the throat and impairs a healthy rest cycle.

5 Reyna Carguill is a professional operatic soprano.

6 Mark Becker teaches voice lessons and directs choral and handbell activities at Forest Lake Academy in Apopka, Florida.

7 A healthy lifestyle is an important part of caring for your voice. An excellent resource for whole person health is CREATION Health, which is produced by Florida Hospital. You can learn more about CREATION Health at www.creationhealth.tv.

8 Dr. Julie Penner is the director of voice activities at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.

9 Preachers need to learn how to use a microphone correctly. You should not adjust your speaking voice in an attempt to find the appropriate volume or tone. That is the job of the audio technician. Take time for an audio check. The equalizer levels (EQ) are different for speaking versus singing. Female voices may require less treble and male voices may require less bass tones.

How to be a friendly church

Editor’s note: One of the purposes of Ministry is to provide practical instruction in pastoral and evangelistic ministry. This bi-monthly how-to page will seek to fulfill that purpose, providing effective and implementable strategies for pastors and other church leaders.

We need your help as this ongoing bi-monthly column needs a name. Please visit facebook.com/MinistryMagazine and suggest a 1-4 word name for this column by Monday, February 25, 2013. The chosen name will then be featured with the column in the April 2013 issue of Ministry.

If you survey churches and ask what their strengths are, almost every one would include “We are a friendly church.” However, when I surveyed some of the visitors who attend those same churches, I found the opposite perception.

People who attend church regularly look at the issue of friendliness from the inside out. From their perspective, they are experiencing a friendly atmosphere. Guests to a church view the issue of friendliness from the outside in for they may not know other people. If they have needs, they are rarely noticed or dealt with.

Many church growth studies have found a direct correlation between friendliness and potential growth. The friendlier a church, the greater its potential for growth. According to a Barna Research survey of people looking for a church, “More that 90 percent stated that friendliness is either extremely or somewhat important.”[i]

At the beginning, we should point out that all members are responsible for greeting visitors. And while that is true, what often happens? The greeting may never get done. Members find it easy to slip into the mentality that we are a friendly church and therefore visitors will be welcomed by someone else.

Here are several practical guidelines to build a friendly church from research that has made a difference in churches.

1. Give guests the best attitude.

Visitors to your church need to notice a prevailing friendly attitude. Most will make up their minds about your church within 30 seconds of entering the front door.

2. Give guests the best communication.

Whenever I visit other churches, I station myself in a busy part of the building to see how many people will speak to me. Many times, people will walk toward me, and then they will look away and ignore me. If this happens in your church, your guests will feel invisible. Teach your members that whenever they come within ten feet of a person, they need to say “Hi.”

3. Give guests the best service.

Recently I visited a church and, upon entering, a lady greeted me by asking “Hi! Is this your first time with us?” After I replied in a positive manner, she introduced herself, asked my name, and walked with me into the building.

At the welcome desk, she introduced me by name to the person at the desk who immediately offered help and gave me directions to important areas of the church, such as the restrooms and sanctuary.

If you want to be a friendly church, I suggest you follow these three principles:

- Approach new people promptly.
- Offer help and information.
- Introduce them by name to others.
4. **Give guests the best welcome.**

As I was visiting a church once, to my dismay the pastor asked all visitors to stand. Then he asked each of us to introduce ourselves. This act is embarrassing for most. Barna shows that 72 percent feel very uncomfortable being pointed out during church greeting time.[iii] To welcome guests from the pulpit can be a good thing, but be careful in how you recognize them. Whatever you do, take great pains not to embarrass the newcomer.

5. **Give guests the best parking.**

People often will drive around for several minutes to find a parking place closer to the entrance. If they do not find easy access, they will drive on by without stopping. If you want to be a friendly church, reserve approximately 5 percent of your parking places for guests as close to your main entrance as possible. Clearly mark them for first- and second-time guests.

6. **Give guests the best seats.**

People like to have a sense of openness; guests prefer the aisle seats and the seats in the rear of the sanctuary. But, most regular attenders like to sit there too. If you want to be a friendly church, reserve the aisle seats and the rear seats for guests.

7. **Give guests the best time.**

At the end of one church service, the pastor said to the audience, “Remember the five-minute rule.” I later found out that the people of that church had been instructed to speak to guests during the first five minutes following each worship service.

If you want to be a friendly church, I suggest you reserve the first five minutes following every worship service for your guests. How will guests who visit your church answer, “Is this church a friendly place?”
As a new Christian, I confess that I felt the following verse, and others like it, were in the Bible for the weak: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12, NIV). Patient in affliction? My eyes would gloss past this pep talk. I felt it was encouragement for the weak when they are down. The rest of Paul’s illustration on how to live a Christian life I heartily absorbed—tangible things such as loving openly, living peaceably, being hospitable, and clinging to good.

I now read Romans 12 with new eyes. The afflictions of this life have transformed the deepest parts of me. During times of deep affliction, I have seen His love, His face, and have come to know and understand His character. The sorrows and hardships peel away the superficial bits of my life and leave behind God’s deep abiding love.

When I am stripped of all earthly confidence, I am able to be fully joyful in hope. In the mire of affliction, my prayers are truest. Affliction has re-formed my darkest recesses—the crags that could never be touched no matter how hospitable or peaceable my life might be.

Romans 12:12 is not a canned pep talk message for the weak but a promise of a journey. A journey that God will take with us, if we are willing; a journey that will reform the heart and make us stronger than we ever imagined.

—Jean Boonstra is Children’s Ministries director for It Is Written Television.
Annual report highlights worsening freedom of belief worldwide

This year’s report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has Seventh-day Adventist human rights experts concerned over growing state-sponsored or condoned intolerance toward minority faith groups worldwide.

Dwayne Leslie, director of Legislative Affairs for the Seventh-day Adventist world church, speaks at a religious liberty event in April at the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C. Leslie is among religious freedom advocates troubled by this year’s report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. [photo: Andrew King]

“We are again reminded that for religious minorities, of which Seventh-day Adventists are in many regions, things can actually be very difficult and, in many places, are getting worse,” said Dwayne Leslie, director of Legislative Affairs for the Seventh-day Adventist world church.

The report from the independent commission categorizes offenders as tier 1, tier 2 or “watch list” countries. “Tier 1” nations are designated as “countries of particular concern” (CPCs), where religious liberty violations are defined as “systemic, ongoing and egregious,” and include torture, prolonged detention without charges, disappearances and “other flagrant denial[s] of life, liberty or the security of persons.” Countries re-designated as CPCs this year are Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan.

Newly categorized this year as “tier 1” nations are Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam. While not yet officially CPCs, these countries do “meet the threshold” for “tier 1” designation, the report states.

Countries designated as “tier 2” by the report are so listed for displaying “negative trends that could develop into severe violations of religious freedom.” These countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cuba, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos and Russia.

A small third group of nations comprise a watch list, and the commission is “monitoring” them for violations. Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Ethiopia, Turkey, Venezuela and Western Europe are on this list.

Western Europe has drawn criticism in recent years for curbing religious expression among minority faiths. Laws in France and Belgium now ban the burqa and other full-face veils. Switzerland has barred the construction of new minarets, or prayer towers atop Muslim mosques. And so-called defamation of religion laws—which religious freedom experts say could restrict religious speech worldwide—continue to emerge in the region.

In Iran, Leslie said, the government continues its oppression, arrest and, in some cases, torture of Christians, most recently American pastor Saeed Abedini, who was imprisoned in Iran in September ostensibly for his religious beliefs.

Pakistan, too, has made headlines in recent months for violence against Christians. In March, a mob torched the homes and businesses of a Christian community in response to alleged insults against Muhammad.

Nigeria is another increasingly troubling area, Leslie said. There, the extremist group Boko Haram has unleashed sectarian violence on Christian communities in recent years, regularly bombing churches and leaving hundreds of worshippers dead.
Since January, Adventists in the country have reported declining church attendance and some church closures amid the country’s worsening religious conflict.

Countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Nigeria, Leslie said, are deeply entrenched in intolerance, and the report is unlikely to change their behavior. But for newly watch-listed countries, “dialogue can hopefully lead to greater freedom of belief,” he said.

After reviewing religious freedom violations, USCIRF makes policy recommendations to the U.S. president, secretary of state and Congress. These recommendations can include arms embargos, restrictions on exports and, Leslie added, further talks with some offending nations.

Beyond that, Leslie said, the report “constantly keeps religious liberty in the public eye, reminding people why it’s important for us to continue to fight for freedom for all people of faith.”

**Religious Liberty**

Adventists believe that religious liberty is a God-given universal human right, and they work to make the free expression and practice of religion a universal reality. Adventist religious liberty advocates are active in promoting and protecting religious freedom through the church’s department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. They represent the church’s priorities to national leaders and policy-makers worldwide.

**Areas of representation:**

- United States Government in Washington, D.C.
- United Nations in New York City and Geneva

**Recent Photos**
Starting in New York, ‘Mission to Cities’ focuses outreach on large metro areas

Jun 24, 2013 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

ANN staff

As a New York City evangelism initiative is in full force, other plans for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to reach major metropolitan areas are in place. Some have begun, while others are waiting for the conclusion of the NY13 outreach initiative.

“The writings of our church co-founder Ellen White tell us very clearly what we need to do for the large cities,” said Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson. “We need Christians who can manifest the love of Jesus as they work in the cities.”

Here is what each of the Adventist Church’s 13 world divisions say they are planning for the denomination’s “Mission to the Cities” initiative:

Members of the Adventist Church’s Women’s Ministries in the Democratic Republic of Congo prepare food outside of the Makala Prison in Kinshasa, the city that the East-Central Africa Division has selected for the “Mission to the Cities” initiative. [photo courtesy ECD]

East-Central Africa Division, based in Nairobi, Kenya. This division has selected Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The metro area is home to some 12 million people and 12 Adventist churches. A key strategy is involving women and youth. In February, Division Women’s Ministries Director Debbie Maloba held a training session “Outreach is for Everyone,” in which she prepared participants for community service, prison ministry and giving Bible studies. Women have gained approval to minister to sick and abandoned prisoners at the Makala Prison, which holds 6,000 prisoners in a compound that was designed for 1,500 inmates. Women have also started a program to clean marketplaces – the initiative’s theme is “Garbage Kills but Cleanness Heals.”

Euro-Asia Division, based in Moscow, Russia. Includes Russia, Northwest Asia and Eastern Europe. The division has identified Moscow for focused outreach, including evangelistic and health initiatives.

Inter-European Division, based in Berne, Switzerland. This division has selected Geneva in Switzerland, home to some 1.2 million residents and several United Nations agencies. The division has two missionaries currently working in the city, and evangelistic campaigns were held in February at a French-speaking church and a Spanish-speaking church. This year the church will hold health expos and more evangelistic campaigns in October and November. Other cities of focus include Prague, Czech Republic; Hamburg, Germany; Munich, Germany; and Vienna, Austria.

Inter-America Division, based in Miami, Florida, United States. The division in the past six months has focused on evangelism efforts in 49 cities. The surge is aided by mission funds designated for church planting in cities and urban ministry training for pastors and church leaders. Over the next two months, more than 200 university students from throughout the region will assist church planting initiatives in 15 cities. Next month, division officials will plant a Chinese church in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. That congregation will be the first Chinese Adventist church in the division.
The Inter-European Division has selected Geneva, Switzerland, for focused ministry outreach. Here, a train’s advertisement announces the Adventist Church’s “Time of Hope for Geneva” campaign. [photo courtesy EUD]

North American Division, based in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. This division has supported NY13 and its more than 160 evangelism venues throughout the tri-state area surrounding New York City. Adventist world church officers selected New York City as a model for evangelistic outreach in other major metro areas worldwide. The “Mission to the Cities” campaign is part of the division’s core building block of Transformational Evangelism. The goal is to inspire members to get out and make an impact in their community. Division leaders say churches and conferences will sponsor health expos, and dialogues are currently taking place with Adventist healthcare systems about how to partner in impacting big cities. Future cities of focus include Indianapolis, St. Louis, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, Memphis, Tampa and Oklahoma City.

Northern Asia-Pacific Division, based in South Korea. The division has chosen Tokyo, Japan, as the city of focus, and named the initiative TOKYO 13. The “13” means that every pastor and church member is to become the 13th disciple of Christ. The Adventist Church in Japan has experienced very low growth in recent years. Because evangelistic meetings have met with little success, the church will employ Christ’s method of mingling with people. Hence, the strategy for TOKYO 13 will be relational evangelism. Later this year, the church will organize small groups and engage in team ministry while inviting new people to church. The goal is 100 new believers, which may seem a small number compared to other regions of the world church, but would be three times the number of new members in a typical year. A team has already started praying for the TOKYO 13 initiative.

South American Division, based in Brasilia, Brazil. Includes South America except for the five northern-most countries. Division leaders have designated Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, for focused outreach. The church opened a center of influence in Villa del Parque, one of the busiest districts of the city. The center partners with the Belgrano Adventist Sanitarium to offer guidance about health and family issues. The center is visited by nearly 40 people each day. The church also operates the Granix Restaurant, which sells healthy food and offers health information. The division is purchasing two pieces of property to construct new congregations. Other major outreach is also planned in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia; Santiago, Chile; Guayaquil, Ecuador; and Sao Paulo, Brazil, home to 19 million people.

Pastor Masuya Yasui, right, baptizes a new member at the Tama-Saitama area campmeeting in Fujikawaguchiko-machi, Yamanashi, Japan, earlier this month. The Adventist Church’s Northern Asia-Pacific Division has selected Tokyo for focused outreach. [photo courtesy Japan Union Conference]

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, based in Pretoria, South Africa. This division plans to hold a school of evangelism, similar to one held in New York City to launch NY13, which was the starting point of the “Mission to the Cities” initiative. Luanda, Angola, is the designated city of outreach for this year. It is home to some 7 million people. The Adventist Church is now holding 10,000 small group meetings, and 100 larger campaigns will be held in neighborhoods throughout the city in September. Every church department is involved and the initiative is widely supported by lay members. Follow-up will include the “Fishers of Men” discipleship program. Next year, 70 cities will be identified throughout the division, with each union, conference, district and church
offering support.

**South Pacific Division**, based in Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia. Sydney was the site of an Adventist evangelism series, “The Last Empire,” the largest of its kind in more than three decades. The series was promoted with four billboards, 1.25 million brochures and 100 TV ads. The series was held in partnership with 45 churches and was held in 29 venues. More than 1,500 community members attended and nearly 1,000 were still attending the final program. Most of the meetings were held in English, but several venues offered Portuguese, Tongan, Samoan, Fijian, Mandarin and Arabic. Churches prepared for the series for 18 months, and members were encouraged to pray for five people in their circle of influence.

**Southern Asia-Pacific Division**, based in Manila, Philippines. Includes Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Adventist Mission representatives are planning for a major evangelism campaign in Manila next year, with church President Wilson as the featured speaker. The denomination will also offer health outreach from a shopping mall in Indonesia and a vegetarian restaurant in Laos.

In London, Adventist young people place a couch on a city sidewalk and offer to let passers-by sit and rest. It’s an opportunity to talk about how Sabbath rest can help people gain peace in their own life. [photo courtesy British Union Conference]

**Southern Asia Division**, based in Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India. Includes India, Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal. The division has selected Mumbai, India, a city of more than 18 million people. Church leaders will offer ministry in the northern suburb of Malad, among the fishing community in Vasai, and at the Paschael village in Madh Island. Local members and pastors are offering Bible studies in these communities. In February, Adventists held evangelistic outreach in West Andheri in India among the Telugu-speaking community. Programs offered preaching, children’s programming and lectures on health.

**Trans-European Division**, based in London, England. The division will host more than 100 evangelism initiatives and Bible academies in London. Members are encouraged to reach out to their circle of influence. In addition to traditional billboard and Underground posters, a clever advertising campaign includes the “Sabbath couch.” Adventist young people place a couch on a city sidewalk and offer to let passers-by sit and rest. It’s an opportunity to ask what they would do with a 24-hour break each week, introduce the concept of Sabbath, and invite them to an upcoming meeting nearby. The goal is to have 50,000 people sit on the couch over time leading up to meetings. The division is also planning meetings next year in other cities, including Belgrade, Serbia; Budapest, Hungary; Dublin, Ireland; Split, Croatia; and Copenhagen, Denmark.

**West-Central Africa Division**, based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. This division has selected Lagos, Nigeria, for focused outreach. Lagos state has more than 8 million people according to census records from 2006. The division has also designated 50 other cities throughout the division for ministerial outreach.

**Adventist Mission**

The Adventist Church reaches more than 200 countries or territories, touching lives through medical care, media, education, missionaries, Global Mission pioneers, evangelism and centers of influence. The church’s current priority is mission to unreached areas and urban centers worldwide.

**Global Mission pioneers:**

- Volunteer to establish new groups of Adventist believers
- Live and work in their own culture
Speak the local language
Help meet physical and spiritual needs

Resources

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Be able to tell your own mission stories

Apr 23, 2013
ADRA’s ongoing aid to Syrian refugees includes women’s clinic, school

Jun 11, 2013 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has offered assistance to hundreds of refugee families fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria with a targeted focus on un-registered refugees, an agency official said.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency helped Syrian refugees with cash assistance for shelter in neighboring Jordan. Here, an ADRA worker dispenses funds in October. [photos courtesy ADRA International]

Over the past year, ADRA has offered cash assistance to more than 100 families to help cover rent in neighboring Jordan, said Thierry Van Bignoot, ADRA’s director of emergency management.

The agency also partnered with the government of Germany to distribute winter clothing to some 3,500 families living in the Al Zaatari refugee camp in Mafraq Governorate in Jordan.

For two years, refugees have fled Syria’s civil war, which has killed more than 70,000 people, according to the United Nations. More than 1.5 million people have fled, many to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Van Bignoot said ADRA estimates the number of refugees is higher because many have not registered.

“Some people are afraid to give their names for fear of retribution,” Van Bignoot said.

ADRA provided winter kits to thousands of Syrian refugees at the Za’atari refugee camp in Mafraq Governorate in Jordan. Here, workers unload supplies in January.

The agency last year partnered with ADRA Middle East North Africa and the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization to offer 100 Jordanian dinars (approximately US$140) each month for three months to unregistered families for lodging. Many are staying with designated host families, while some have found basement rooms or small apartments.

The assistance helped people such as Amara, who told local ADRA officials that she came to Jordan with her five children while her ex-husband remained in Syria with his new wife. With the extra cash, she was able to pay rent for an unfurnished and unheated apartment. She said she was also able to buy some necessary medication for her heart problems.

Another recipient was a man named Musa, who came to Jordan with his wife and six children. Their finances have been depleted after they sold the last of their gold jewelry they brought from home.
ADRA has identified other needs in the region and is now implementing a project to provide gynecological and obstetrical care to Syrian refugee women in West Bekaa, Lebanon. In Beirut, the agency is planning a school that would provide half-day classes to refugee children, who are without education. Another project proposes a mobile clinic in the Jordan Valley, an area where few nongovernmental organizations are involved.

“The needs are huge,” Van Bignoot said.

He estimated that more than 70 percent of refugees are women and children. Many men have stayed behind in Syria, he said.

**Humanitarian Aid**

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is a global non-governmental organization providing sustainable community development and disaster relief without regard to political or religious association, age, gender, race or ethnicity. The humanitarian arm of the Adventist Church protects the vulnerable, supports families, promotes health, provides food and water and responds to emergencies worldwide.

- ADRA works in more than 120 countries worldwide, working in harmony with a broad array of cultures, traditions and faiths
- ADRA publishes its Really Useful Gift Catalog each year for Adventists who choose to support development projects during the holidays
- Adventists believe the Bible gives the church a mandate to minister to the underprivileged

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**Hurricane Sandy and prophetic insensitivity**

Nov 02, 2012