Hi, , the latest Ministry Magazine newsletter is here...

sharing ideas

During those early years attending Cradle Roll and Kindergarten Sabbath School classes, I was taught this version of the song: “O be careful, little tongue, what you say; O be careful, little tongue, what you say. There’s a Savior up above looking down on you in love; O be careful, little tongue, what you say.”

I thought about that song as I followed the recent saga of Donald Sterling, the embattled owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, a franchise in the National Basketball Association. During taped conversations he allegedly uttered a series of racist comments to a female acquaintance.

I am reminded of the words of the apostle James: “…the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts…. The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body….“ (James
The tongue can also be utilized for good, as James states in verse 9.

What does my daily conversation sound like? Does it edify? Or does it destroy? I must always remember, as it relates to what I say, that there’s a Savior up above looking down on me in love. And He hears everything I say.

- Willie E. Hucks II, associate editor

**featured articles**

**The Power of Words**

- **Power-packed Words**
  How we use words, their choice and arrangement, brings success or failure.

- **Word Power**
  God wishes His children to recognize the power of His word and He also wants us to be aware of the power in our own words.

- **Apples of Gold in Baskets of Silver**
  The wise man, Solomon, knew the almost unbelievable power of words when he wrote so long ago: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver."

- **The power of God’s Word**
  Renew your own experience and witness the ongoing power of Scripture by actively proclaiming the following realities of the Word of God.

**Student writing contest**

We’re happy to announce our fourth Ministerial Student Writing Contest. All students enrolled in a full-time ministerial preparation program on the undergraduate or graduate level may participate. [Learn more](#)

**Could the revival we long for come with our response to the invitation of Jesus?** [Read now](#)

**Hurricane season**

It’s important to list steps of your emergency plan and go over it routinely with your family, church members or school. Make sure everyone knows what role to play, and establish a single
video

Learning a New Language
Mark Finley shares ways to communicate with church visitors in a winsome way.

ministry matters

How to be a friendly church - by 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.

featured website

RevivalandReformation.org

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"Power-packed Words"

WORDS are the building blocks of communication. A structure of thought, blueprinted in beauty or ugliness, utilitarian or ornamented, transfers itself from one mind to another through the use of words.

Words link the world together, bind heart to heart, move mountains of doubt, march a people to war, fire the suicide's despair, capture slaves for ideology, pull the strings of imagination, create a nuclear physicist, fill the pocketbooks of Madison Avenue.

Informing, enticing, inspiring, bewitching, praising, condemning, words without end flow around us, toward us, into us, above us from the beginning to the end of our days.

Words created light out of darkness, formed the world from the shapelessness of the primordial state, justified the molding of Adam, seduced Eve to sin. Jesus Christ bears the name Word suggesting that even salvation itself comes as a structure of divine thought directed audibly and visibly toward humanity.

The Use of Words

How we use words, their choice and arrangement, brings success or failure. An educated man unable to shape his thoughts in coherent communication will fail; an ignorant orator will motivate his audience to action.

For the professional communicator—preacher, teacher, editor, author—words comprise the tools of his trade, the medium of his choice, the end product of his training. The more he knows about the use of words, the more successful he will be.

Too often the would-be professional communicator feels that he can make the leap from amateur to professional use of the language without thought or study. Unfortunately, it usually shows. Only seldom does environmental absorption of a language provide the basis for its professional use. All too often the person feeling called to preaching, teaching, or writing fails to recognize that success in this calling consists, technically at least, in the use of words. He may become brilliant in theology, learned in science, a master in literature, and yet fail in word usage. He may actually resent any studied attempt to shape the stream of communication, regarding it as manipulation of his audience, or feeling that what he possesses from experience is all that he needs.

Simple versus complex words. If you wish to know the simple use of words in the English language, listen to two people talking about everyday things. English stems from two distinct influences. When William the Conqueror crossed the English Channel, there rode with him an unseen army of words intent on conquest. Though he and his knights claimed Viking ancestry, they had long since shed their Norse tongue and had adopted the sophisticated French language, with its roots in Latin and Greek. Backed by the culture and authority of the Normans, French thought and words invaded the Old English forms.

As in so many other fields, the English finally won the battle, but only through compromise. English today really consists of two languages welded smoothly and unnoticeably into one. When we talk with each other, we use the short, four-letter words of our English mother tongue; when we wish to be accurate, or flowery, or sound learned, we insert the words of the French invasion. Over 50 per cent of the words found in any English dictionary are either French or Latin in origin. The majority of words of two or less syllables are of English origin; most words of three or more syllables come from French or Latin borrowings.

A simple test of the power of the words used by preacher or writer lies in an examination of their roots. A powerful mover of men uses simple, short words of Anglo-Saxon origin. When he selects longer, and perhaps more
descriptive, words, he does so carefully, especially when they are words not normally used in everyday speech.

Of course, like all such observations, this one oversimplifies. No one can rely entirely on Anglo-Saxon words. English is one language, not a two-tiered structure, and the two language sources intertwine so thoroughly that any attempt to utilize only one ends in artificiality.

To sense the punch behind the shorter, Anglo-Saxon words we only have to think of such words as *rip*, *hate*, *love*, *snap*, *rush*, and so on. The four-letter word forms the basis of much of our stronger, harsher, more emotive reservoir of words, and the longer words give subtler tonings of mood, accurate description, or subtleties of thought.

*Word usage goes through phases.* In Shakespeare's day, the age of the King James Version of the Bible, Anglo-Saxon roots dominated. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the dependence of borrowings increased giving the flowing, and, to us, often rotund, style of John Ruskin, Tennyson, and the romantic poets.

From the moguls of the advertising world, the news readers, the mass media, and the realistic writers of our age, English has revolved once more to its Anglo-Saxon roots. We fret under the circuitous style of the bureaucrat, terming it gobbledygook. We resent the long sentences, the deliberate choice of complex words, regarding it as a "put on."

*Choosing simple words.* In preparing sermons, teaching assignments, or articles, a general rule is to choose the simple over the complex, the short over the long, the known over the unknown. Too many hearers of the word lose interest because the words live outside their world. Two aids assist the communicator in the choice of words:

1. A good dictionary. Some years ago I came across a new word in an article I was reading. I went to the dictionary parked outside an administrator's office. The word was not there. The dictionary was twenty-two years old. A new one arrived shortly after. I have a rule that if my dictionary does not contain the word I want, it is time to buy a new or better one. A dictionary should give pronunciation, meaning, and derivation. Better word banks will reveal the first known usage of the word and will quote it within literary sources.

2. A thesaurus. Here lies the key to word usage. Shades of meaning, synonyms and antonyms surface in the grouping of words in a good thesaurus. By combining dictionary and thesaurus, no communicator need be a purveyor of tired words.

*Using fresh words.* English has at least twice as many words as French, the language with the second-largest number. No preacher need bore his congregation with the repetition of thin words worn smooth and unattractive by repeated passage.

A few months ago a young minister sporting a M.Div. and well-advanced toward his D.Min. boasted to me that he never read a newspaper or news magazine, read no secular books, stayed only with theology, devotion, and inspiration. Such a retreat can lead only to staleness.

Never pass a word by without knowing its meaning. Our dictionaries should wear out faster than any reference book except the Bible.

**Words of Power**

The voice offers intonation, inflection, accent, emphasis to our words. But if the words are not chosen with care and arranged in appropriate order, they may fail in their purpose.

Grammar ranks right alongside foreign languages and mathematics in the negative popularity poll among elementary and high school students. Vast numbers of college students fail to distinguish between noun and verb, adverb and adjective, active and passive voice. Students may read and write, but are grammatically illiterate. Ask them to analyze a sentence, and they may con fuse it with the actions of a court of law!

Out of this pitiful ignorance of the science of language flows a welter of incomplete sentences, clouded concepts, and
obscure meanings that leave the speaker bewildered, the hearer frustrated. All too often the criticism, "I didn't get what he was driving at," reflects the speaker's inability to put words together in correct sequence and relationship.

Grammar teaches sentence structure, right pronunciation, language history. Syntax concentrates on the correct formation of sentences. A preacher, a teacher, a writer without a knowledge of both has about as much chance of controlling the thrust of his words as a ten-million-mile airline passenger has of piloting an aircraft successfully just because he has flown so often. He lives under the threat of always being a passenger of his own flight of words and never the pilot.

This does not mean that we should tolerate a stilted use of the language. Twenty to thirty years ago, split infinitives, certain collective nouns with plural verbs, and other usages would have appalled or confused many audiences. Today, usage is pushing such structures toward acceptance and correctness.

Here are some tips in making words more powerful:

1. Master the use of the simple declarative sentence. Consider the power of these sentences. "God is love." "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "The kingdom of heaven is within you." "Ye are the salt of the earth." A simple declarative sentence takes a subject and links it with an object by a verb. It states something in simple logical sequence. Of all sentence structure this is the most easily understood. We use it with children for that reason. We use it in the height of emotion. We say, "I love you," "Black is beautiful," and so on. Such sentences become catch cries that move people. They are easily remembered. They may be repeated without boring. Yet many communicators shy from them. They want to qualify with dependent clauses, explain with adverbial phrases, link two main clauses together, make the sentence complex and difficult.

2. Use a new sentence for each new concept. Mingling concepts within the one sentence frame obscures meaning. The mind has to evaluate which of the two or more concepts has priority, and while doing this either drops out altogether or falls behind.

3. Keep the simple, short words for the points of emphasis. Reinforce ideas by using the simplest of words and sentence structure to drive your point home. Go from the simple to the complex and then back to the simple again. Do it with both words and sentences.

It is said of Jesus that the common people heard Him gladly. It wasn't only what He said, but also the way He constructed His speech. He chose words the people understood to match illustrations they understood. His revolutionary ideas found acceptance through the simplicity of the words He spoke, as well as through His compassion, His honesty, His inspiration.

We have the best of examples in our Lord. He was not called the Word for nothing. Those who heard Him understood Him completely. He could only be the Word as He communicated accurately the message of divinity to humanity. His power lay in His words. And so may ours. We stand closer to Christ as we use the language with simplicity, purity, and understanding. The Holy Spirit has greater hope of directing us to the needs of others and directing them to their own needs through correctly used language.

It's something worth praying about, something worth working for.
EVERY detonation of an atomic device is a demonstration of the awesome, tremendous power of the word of God. Creation deals with anabolism, synthesis, the putting together and holding together of earth's component parts. The atomic bomb deals with catabolism, the breaking apart of that which God's word put together. As we reverently study the Creation and diligently consider the laws of nuclear fission, we begin to behold vast vistas of the power inherent in the creative word of God. God wishes His children to recognize the power of His word and He also wants us to be aware of the power in our own words.

The earth was created by words. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6-9).

Prior to the command, "Let there be light," there were no organized forms suitable for an inhabited planet. It is conceivable that the basic elements were here prior to Creation week, though God was in no way indebted to pre-existing matter. It was all tohu wabohu empty, void, and lifeless. The elements were unorganized and inanimate. God spoke and brought order out of chaos, creation out of confusion.

From the human point of view God created the world out of nothing. However, be assured that the creation of the world was not a sleight-of-hand magic trick. God operated according to His own creative law, which we do not fully understand. He created the world out of something. He created it out of the power of His spoken word. Now, it is not the purpose of this article to say that finite man can understand the creative power of God, for we cannot. However, we can understand "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deut. 29:29). And though we can never by searching find out God, "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20).

**Cosmic Clue**

At the sound of His voice the sound energy brought atoms and molecules together into functional configurations. Today, the same creative power manifested in the words spoken at Creation continues to hold minute particles of matter together.

Those who are nuclear physicists explain that there is a mysterious force at the base of all matter. When matter is peeled down to its heart (like an artichoke) past the molecule to the atom, scientists are mystified as to what is holding the atom together. They only know that in the heart of the atom there is a tremendous amount of "holding energy." They call it a cohesive force. They call it the "binding of the nucleus."

There are more than twenty-five different theories as to what this cosmic glue is and how it holds. Any popular encyclopedia breaks it down into laymen's terms under Einstein's theory of the conservation of matter. We know what this cohesive force is. God "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and . . . revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). The power binding the atom together is the power of God's word. "For by him were all things created: ... all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist [or "cohere, are held together/Amplified Bible]" (Col. 1:16, 17).

Einstein's theory for the, con version of matter back into its original energy, expressed in the formula E=MC², spurred men to presume to tamper with the atom, to attempt to release the power that is holding it together. What happened is, of course, history. The power binding the nuclei of the atoms of a piece of U-235 (a peculiarly unstable element) the size of a grapefruit is what leveled Hiroshima near the conclusion of World War II. This is a modern-day demonstration of the power of the spoken word of God that brought that piece of U-235 into existence.

When Jesus came into the world He demonstrated for us the constructive use of word power. His words were
gracious (Luke 4:22). His words were with power (see verse 32). They were authoritative words (see verse 36). They were kind, gentle, loving words. They were sympathetic and cheerful, and spoken with simplicity and earnestness. His words were alive with healing power, for "the word of God is quick [alive], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

**Power Akin to Creator's**

It being the nature and quality of love to give, God has shared this word power with us. He has given to man "a power akin to that of the Creator." Adam was created with power to conceptualize, abstractly and concretely; power to symbolize verbally these concepts. Otherwise how could Cod come down to enjoy fellowship with His crowning creation in the cool of the day.

There is also great power in our words, and the Scriptures are replete with cautions and warnings concerning the way we use these living expressions that escape our lips.

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21).

"There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health" (chap. 12:18).

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (chap. 15:4).

"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (chap. 16:24).

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (chap. 25:11).

Eliphaz faintly recognized that man had also been given a bit of God's power to command and it would stand fast. He told his friend Job, "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee" (Job 22:28).

**Self-fulfilling Prophecies**

A few weeks ago I was going into a department store as a father and son were coming out. Obviously, the little fellow had done something that displeased his dad. There were words before I approached close enough to hear. I only heard the father decree, "Boy, you are pitiful!" The look on the young man's face showed plainly that the father had indeed decreed a thing and it was established. He had spoken and it was done, commanded and it stood fast in that impressionable young life.

When an individual who is significant to a child decrees some thing as being so, it becomes an established fact to the young mind. A child told "You're never going to amount to anything" may very well not amount to anything. Your pronouncement may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I'll never forget the time when I was pronounced dumb by a junior high school math teacher. She gave me a passing grade of "D" instead of "F" she felt I deserved upon the promise that I would never go to college. Her pronouncement stuck for years. I dropped out of high school after two years with the decree established in my young mind. It had to be true. The teacher said so. It took a series of divine providences to eventually shake off the effects of this misguided teacher's decree.

**Power of Words**

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Gen. . 2:8). It is likely that He planted the garden with His word, rather than His "green thumb." The original home was planted by the word and many a subsequent home has been destroyed by the power of cutting, sarcastic, unkind words. When King David returned the ark of the Lord to Bethlehem his exuberance was unbounded, to the extent that he literally
danced with reverent joy. The account says that Michal, David's wife, "despised him in her heart" (2 Sam. 6:16).

When David came home from the celebration Michal shredded him with a few choice words. These words destroyed the relationship and devitalized the marriage. "Therefore Michal . . . had no child unto the day of her death" (verse 23). Apparently David lost all desire for her.

What power our words have. How much better it is to use them to foster love, success, and happiness. Every day our words should contribute to our spouse's feeling capable, appreciated, and sweet. Our children need to be told that we see them as trustworthy, sensible, responsible. Our friends should understand that we look upon them as faithful and good, generous, kind, and valuable.

Our words are so powerful, so alive, so finely honed, so able to help or hurt, to heal or wound, that it is no wonder that the Master Teacher cautioned, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36, 37). Daily our hearts should breathe the prayer, "Let the words of my mouth ... be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).
THE wise man, Solomon, knew the almost unbelievable power of words when he wrote so long ago: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver" (Prov. 25:11, R.V.).

New words seem to be capturing the minds of men and women every day. Every new dictionary is bulging with words not used or understood fifty years ago, yes, even ten years ago.

Words are pictures. They have personality and character, like people. There are words that laugh like a babbling brook; words that cry. There are beautiful words and sacred words; yes, and there are ugly words. There are words that like a drawn sword hurt people we love, leaving scars that time will not erase.

Our text suggests the high esteem Solomon placed upon well-chosen words. In his day, when a banquet was given by an Eastern king it was customary to present each guest with a golden apple. These golden apples were placed upon the tables in lovely baskets of silver filagree work, and then through the meshes the glittering fruit delighted the guests.

Today, few human beings touch lives at more levels than does the Seventh-day Adventist minister, teacher, or Bible worker. We are often privileged to use kind words much as a skilled surgeon chooses ever so carefully just the proper medication or suture. No doubt each sincere worker for Christ can remember some of his own well-chosen words that indeed proved to be "apples of gold in baskets of silver."

But you say, "How is it ever possible to use kind words when one is faced with some of these impossible situations yes, situations which require some word of rebuke? How can one be kind then?"

The great John Wesley had the uncanny ability to rebuke in a most loving and kindly manner. One day one of Wesley's workers thrust the bejeweled hands of an embarrassed new convert before the gaze of that largehearted man of God. Wesley said simply: "You have such beautiful hands." It was enough. She never wore jewelry again. His loving, Christ-filled soul captured her.

The Best Words

Perhaps the best words are those words we sometimes leave unsaid. I am acquainted with one minister who while driving along the street in a large North American city thought of the apparent in gratitude of a subordinate. The more he thought of it the more upset it made him. He decided he would drive there at once and tell this friend a few things! But then the mood changed—a voice seemed to urge, "Don't do that." And he is glad that he did not, for he kept a true friend. Had he spoken his mind he certainly would have bruised a friendship, and for no good reason.

Probably all of us in our "trying hour" have gone to our files and pulled out an encouraging letter from a conference president or other leader. Every true minister for Christ has written many such letters himself. We all need these "golden apples" of encouragement; many a man has given up and died for the lack of them.

There was something wistful in the appeal the little boy made to his father when he cried, "I often do wrong, I know, and then you scold me, and I deserve it; but Father, sometimes I try my best to do right. Won't you let me know when I do please you?"

How many times have we left unsaid words, indeed apples of gold, when a word of sincere appreciation for a fellow worker's efforts could have buoyed him up splendidly in his Christian journey. At large funerals a small fortune is sometimes spent on expensive floral offerings when the man now dead might have given even greater and longer service to this cause had we reached down and given him a lift and a friendly word of helpful encouragement when he needed it most!
I like the words of one unknown author:

Bring me all the flowers today,
Whether pink, or rose, or red.
I’d rather have just one blossom now
Than a whole truckload
When I’m dead.

Begin at Home

Another area where we as leaders in God's cause can truly present “apples of gold in baskets of silver” in our choice of words is right in our very own homes. Someone has wryly said, "One can always be kind to people one cares nothing about," meaning, of course, that the businessman is always courteous with a client—he has to be—but the moment he steps into the house he takes his wife’s head off! Yes, the woman who has borne his children and bathed his wounds a hundred times "gets it."

I remember one woman, the daughter of a minister, who told me, "I have never heard my father raise his voice at home." I thought that because of her great love for him and because it happened only seldom that perhaps she could not remember it. But no, she said, "He never did."

What a magnificent thing to be said of any man! I am sure that Jesus always chose His words well. When He had to rebuke the people there were always "tears in His voice." May it be said of every Seventh-day Adventist worker: "That man is a true Christian in his home and in every relationship in life."

Life is short at best and one day some of these chairs about the dining room table will be empty. We really ought to treasure up every happy and lovely and wonderful thing to repeat at mealtime. We ought to make sure that we are at our very best in our homes.

You may breathe a pious blessing

Over viands rich and good,
But a blessing with long faces
Won't assimilate your food,
While a meal of bread and herring,
With a glass of water clear,
Is a feast if it's accompanied
With the blessing of good cheer,
Knowing something funny, tell it;
Something sad, forget to knell it;
Something hateful, quick dispel it;

AT THE TABLE.
—Author Unknown

Perhaps there is no other time when words can heal and lift as in that moment when another human being looks to his pastor for words of sympathy in the tragic moment of bereavement or in time of deep disappointment. Words of sympathy are "apples of gold," too. But even these should be uttered cheerfully. Few men have shown as much tact in using the right word at the right time as did John Wesley. On one occasion while speaking to a woman in trouble a trial that was beyond her comprehension and for which she could see no reason he said: "Do you know why a cow looks over a stone wall?"

The woman looked up with her eyes full of tears. "No," she answered. "Why," said Wesley, "it is because she cannot see through it, and that is just the way with your trouble. You cannot see through it so you must look over it, and go on doing your duty."

I am sure that that woman never forgot the happy comfort of that conversation.

Jesus charmed His hearers by His marvelous usage of words as they sprang from His great heart. May we in the great Advent ministry do the same every day as we lift up the regal Galilean.
Preaching the Word of God is life changing. As I write this column, I have recently completed presenting a series of public evangelistic meetings on the great themes of Scripture. About two dozen individuals responded by requesting baptism which is a credit to the quality of the pastors and congregation with whom I worked and to the continuing power of God's word to impact the lives of those who hear.

Furthermore, I am personally refreshed anew by experiencing the impact of preaching the message upon my own life—my ears hear the good news even from my own tongue and my soul rejoices in God's graciousness.

Although the resulting numbers of new believers vary from situation to situation, invariably lives are changed when God's word is proclaimed. This clearly demonstrates the appropriateness of the church's 1998 theme, "Experiencing the power of God's Word."

I encourage you to renew your own experience and to witness the ongoing power of Scripture by actively proclaiming the following realities of the Word of God.

**The Eternal Word.** First, and foremost, the Word of God is a person, the individual Jesus Christ. When you preach the message of Scripture, your listeners encounter more than themes, theory, or theology. They encounter the One who was in the beginning, the Word that was with God, who remains eternal with God, created all things, and who is very God, Himself (John 1:1-3). No wonder the prophet declares that the Word of God stands forever (Isa. 40:8).

**The Incarnate Word.** Glorious reminder of the gospel message—God with us! When seeking to save the lost, God did not look down from above and pull us up to heaven's expectations, rather Jesus emptied himself and became human, taking upon himself our very nature and our experience in order to lift us up with Himself into heavenly places (Phil. 2:5-11). To accomplish our salvation, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

**The Revealed Word.** Knowing that all people throughout history would not have personal access to the public ministry of Jesus when he was on earth, God also purposed to reveal His secrets to His servants, the prophets, in order to communicate His love, His purposes, and His grace to lost humanity (Amos 3:7), Using earthly humans to communicate heavenly concepts, God's Word reveals His saving intent. You extend that prophetic ministry today when you proclaim the good news of God's Word.

**The Written Word.** To perpetuate the faithful witness of His messages, God's Holy Spirit brought light and surety even in dark places by the prophetic word. These messages did not come about by human invention, nor by the will of man. Rather, godly individuals spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). Thus the recorded Word of God, our Scriptures, truly is God's words for our own lives and the lives of those to whom we minister.

**The Proclaimed Word.** Power accompanies the preaching of God's Word. In fact, although it may seem foolish to depend upon personal proclamation in an age of multi-media communication options, the Scriptural promise remains true—faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Something powerful occurs when any individual asks God's blessing upon our efforts to effectively communicate His message to the lost. Faith is awakened as the Word is opened.

**The Saving Word.** God's Word comes with the specific purpose to save the lost — "having been born again, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23). By feeding upon Christ's body and His blood—the words which Christ spoke—we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Do you want to become more like Jesus? Spend more time feasting upon Him through His words.

**The Teaching Word.** The power of the Holy Scriptures still makes people wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. A four-fold purpose of Scripture is to teach us sound doctrine about Jesus, to reproof our rebellious
wanderings away from Jesus, to correct our steps back to Jesus, to instruct us in the continuing walk with Jesus, and to completely equip us for loving service in Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Even the very stories of Scripture are told with the purpose of teaching us about how to live within God's plan for our lives (Rom. 15:4).

**The Authoritative Word.** When Jesus personally spoke, He came with an authority beyond human capability or reasoning (Mark 1:22). Today, His Words remain authoritative for all people of all time. God clearly warns against adding to or detracting from God's Word by including our own pet theories or excluding His own clear instructions (Rev. 22:18-19). In an age that resists authority, God's Word remains the rock upon which His people can securely fasten. "The reason many in this age of the world make no greater advancement in the divine life is because they interpret the will of God to be just what they will to do. While following their own desires, they flatter themselves that they are conforming to God's will." ¹

**The Transforming Word.** Jesus will receive me, "just as I am." But through the transforming power of His Word, He will take me "just where He wants me to be." Our Lord prayed, "sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth (John 17:17). The Word of God has power to sanctify our lives as it effectively works in the lives of believers (1 Thes. 2:13). The Scriptures have such power that we can be kept from sinning by feeding deeply upon the Word (Ps. 119:9,11).

"With the growing contempt for God's law, there is an increasing distaste for religion, an increase of pride, love of pleasure, disobedience to parents, and self-indulgence ... What can be done to correct these alarming evils? The answer is... 'Preach the Word.' In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man's understanding the great problems of life; and to all who heed its precepts, it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort."²

**The Living Word.** Finally, God anticipates that His Word will take root in the lives of His followers so that they, too, will become living epistles of His saving grace. As the little children sing, "Don't you know, 0' Christian, you're a sermon in shoes." Our lives, known and observed by others may be the only sermon that some individuals will ever hear (2 Cor. 2:2-3). The influence of a godly life in an ungodly world has powerful impact for the saving of souls. Many who would never darken the door of a church to hear you or any other speaker preach the Scriptures, will have their hearts warmed by your living epistle that spreads the good news in the midst of your daily activities.

2. Ibid., 506.
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.”

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.
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.[ii] 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?”
Ministerial Student Writing Contest

Ministry, International Journal for Pastors, announces its fourth Ministerial Student Writing Contest. All students enrolled in a full-time ministerial preparation program on the undergraduate or graduate level may participate.

Grand prize: $750  First prize: $500  Second prize (five possible): $400  Third prize (five possible): $300

The evaluation panel will determine if all prizes will be awarded. The decisions of this panel are final.

Submission requirements

1. Writers must choose a category from the list below for their submission.
   - Biblical studies
   - Historical studies
   - Theological studies (including ethics)
   - Ministry (preaching, leadership, counseling, evangelism, etc.)
   - World missions

2. Submit your manuscript in MS Word by using the form below. If you experience any problems, contact us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org.

3. Ministry will accept only one submission per writer.

Publication

1. All submissions become the property of Ministry and will not be returned.

2. Writers who are awarded a prize give the rights to Ministry as outlined in the Writer’s Guidelines. While the editors intend to publish such manuscripts, publication is not guaranteed.

3. Manuscripts that are not awarded a prize may be purchased at a price to be negotiated.

Submission deadline

All submissions must be received no later than June 30, 2014.