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'Bible 3D - Would the Bible fit in Harpa?'

24 February 2012 Reykjavik, Iceland

Reykjavik, Iceland provided the venue for a pilot outreach project which could serve as a new method within the most secular countries of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventists (TED).

During the period 4-16 February 2012 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Iceland organised an exhibition called 'Bible 3D – Would the Bible fit in Harpa?' Harpa is the capital's most well-known Conference Centre where the church rented a 144 square metre space for the exhibition, and a second hall to hold relevant presentations on social issues and biblical themes, concerts, and the performance of the 'Jesus Painter' from the USA.

The idea for the exhibition came out of a long study of the Bible and the local culture, and inspiration also came from the following Bible verse: NKJ Galatians 3:1 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?'

The organising team in Iceland led by Janos Kovacs-Biro, TED Evangelism Director, decided that there must be a way to present Jesus Christ in a very compelling and relevant way which would make sense to the present generation. After studying the local culture the team realised that the Icelandic nation had survived many centuries by accepting and communicating biblical principles through participating in the evening family Bible reading time. The present generation tends to forget about this practice – so the exhibition needed to remind everyone about the time when their nation had been strong and how that strength had been achieved.

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Today’s generation enjoys stories and wants to experience things, so this proved to be one of the strengths of the ‘Bible 3D’ exhibition. People could walk through the section on the story of redemption, experiencing a gospel presentation together with a comprehensive Bible-based story. At the first exhibition booth people were reminded of the Bible reading of their ancestors, then at subsequent booths they were introduced to the story of the Bible: Creation, the Fall, the promise of the Redeemer, Christ’s birth and His earthly life, Christ as Saviour, Christ crucified and resurrected, the offer of a personal relationship with Christ, ‘His Word is as good as His presence while we wait’, and the Restoration. In essence, the exhibition told the story of the Great Controversy.

About 1500 people visited the exhibition and received brochures of the relevant chapters of Ellen White’s books at every booth and everybody left feeling impressed and inspired.

The organisers had given prayerful thought to which topics were the most relevant issues facing society in Iceland, and during the evening presentations, the speakers delivered Bible messages which could help in the midst of the financial, relational and ecological crises.

Well known speakers were invited to address the following relevant issues: a philosopher talking on values; a police chief talking about crime prevention and the relevance of God’s law; a nutritionist addressing the need for a healthy lifestyle; pastors dealing with family relationships, children, grieving, and our responsibility while we wait for the return of Christ; an expert dealing with abuse; and a leader from the national rescue team talking about the importance of communication.

The music, organised by Gardar Cortes, director of the Opera in Reykjavik, was provided by the most well known choirs of the country. All the choirs gave a mini-concert of about five pieces – an excellent musical experience and a treat for the participants.

The Biblical messages were presented by Janos Kovacs-Biro, who addressed the most important Biblical principles for dealing with crises. For the last two
evenings the ‘Jesus Painter’ painted two beautiful and compelling images of Jesus while Kovacs-Biro spoke, ensuring that the word of God made a lasting impact on the participants.

To our great surprise, 28 of the 32 slots for school visits were booked quickly and about 500 young people aged 10-15 visited the exhibition with their teachers. The feedback, both from the children and their teachers was very positive. 'This was far better than I expected' was the comment of a teacher who obviously had entered the exhibition with certain reservations. 'This is the best exhibition I have ever seen' said one child enjoying the various activities provided to illustrate the message about Jesus.

The 120-150 visitors who attended each evening were extremely happy being part of the ‘Bible 3D’ project. In response to the question attached to the title of the event: ‘Would the Bible fit in Harpa?’, we can praise God that the Bible and its story could not only fit into a building, but also into the lives of the participants.

To those who are interested in the details of this new approach, please contact Janos Kovacs-Biro and if you would like to see more photos of this event, please click here. [tedNEWS]
LIFEconnect Comes to Sweden

24 February 2012 Jönköping, Sweden [tedNEWS] LIFEconnect, a new and dynamic initiative for sharing the Gospel on the web, was introduced last weekend by Pr Miroslav Pujic, Communication & Media Ministries Director for the Trans-European Division (TED), emphasising the power inherent in social media.

The training started on Friday, 17 February with over sixty people who gathered in the Adventist church in Jönköping for a time of food, fellowship and worship where Berny Carlsson, Youth Director and Web Pastor for Sweden, spoke on the topic of Mission. He suggested that worship and fellowship that does not lead to evangelism and mission is hypocrisy. ‘We cannot ask God to bless us if we have no desire to share the good news’, he said quoting John 20:21 and Acts 1:8; 20:24.

Carlsson pointed out that LC had opened up his eyes to the fact that ‘opportunities to share the good news are staring at us in the face every single day’. Social Media and the Internet is very well developed and utilized in Sweden due to the ever-increasing advancements in technology.

On Saturday morning, the church in Jönköping, which usually seats between 65-75 visitors, was quickly filled beyond capacity. Extra chairs had to be carried into the church and people had to squeeze together. After a very inspiring message by Pr Pujic, it was time for a quick lunch followed by the LC training event.

During our first session Pr Pujic briefly introduced the concept of LC and how people in Sweden can use their own blogs and social networking profiles to bring interested people to the LC hub. In other words, digital missionaries can engage in discipleship through activities they already participate in.

Mirjana Kicusic, Marketing & Social Media Coordinator, emphasised the importance of content not only to attract visitors but also to ensure that what we are sharing is both credible and relevant to people’s lives and the culture we are living in. She also spoke about marketing and how online pastors and digital missionaries need to work together as a team in spreading good content and have a weekly strategy on how to market the gospel message in new and innovative ways.

Finally, Pr Pujic concluded the meetings by describing how this new frontline evangelism is based on Christ’s method to interact with people where they are: mingling – being online, using social networks, writing blogs; sympathising with them by chatting/interacting with people and meeting their needs; and most importantly, inviting people to get to know and follow Jesus.

Very excitedly, Julia Telfer, a student missionary at Ekebyholm school in Sweden commented: This is so wonderful that all countries should be doing it’.

Inspired by the words of the famous Adventist song: ‘We have this hope that burns within our hearts, hope in the coming of the Lord’, the evening finished with twenty-one people answering the call to become digital missionaries and help connect people to Jesus Christ.

LIFEconnect Internet Ministry is now available in 16 languages with few more coming soon. To register and select your language, please visit www.lifeconnect.info. [tedNEWS]

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New Boost to Anglo-German Relations

22 February 2012 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Newbold] Detailed discussions over the last six months with our state-recognised Seventh-day Adventist university in Germany have resulted in Newbold College being granted permission to offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees which will be conferred by the Theologische Hochschule Friedensau. This is excellent news and will enable the College to teach towards German university degrees as well as degrees through a UK university. On Friday 17 February Dr John Baildam (Deputy Principal) received confirmation from Dr Friedbert Ninow (Principal at Friedensau) that earlier that day the German education authorities in Magdeburg had cleared the way for Friedensau to enter into an academic partnership with Newbold College.

Dr Ninow was delighted to announce that the authorities had given an ‘absolute yes’ to our proposal. Newbold College Principal Dr Philip Brown, commenting on the news while out of the country, pronounced himself ‘delighted to learn that students of Theology at Newbold College will have the choice between German or British university qualifications’. Dr Baildam is ‘excited to know that much hard work at both institutions has resulted in a more formal relationship between them. The arrangement will be an outstanding one for our students, whether visa nationals or from within the European Economic Area. We very much look forward to this new era in Newbold College's history.’ [tedNEWS]
Militant Secularisation Threat to Religion

14 February 2012 London, United Kingdom [BBC News] Britain is under threat from a rising tide of "militant secularisation", Baroness Warsi and a conservative cabinet minister wrote in an article for the Daily Telegraph. Religion is being "sidelined, marginalised and downgraded in the public sphere... Europe needed to become 'more confident and more comfortable in its Christianity'. She will also highlight the issue in a speech at the Vatican on Wednesday. "I will be arguing that to create a more just society, people need to feel stronger in their religious identities and more confident in their creeds," she wrote in the Telegraph. "In practice this means individuals not diluting their faiths and nations not denying their religious heritages."

Baroness Warsi, who is Britain's first female Muslim cabinet minister, went on to write: "You cannot and should not extract these Christian foundations from the evolution of our nations any more than you can or should erase the spires from our landscapes."

To read the full article please click here. [tedNEWS]

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Militant secularisation threat to religion, says Warsi

Britain is under threat from a rising tide of "militant secularisation", a cabinet minister has warned.

Religion is being "sidelined, marginalised and downgraded in the public sphere", Conservative co-chairwoman Baroness Warsi wrote in an article for the Daily Telegraph.

The Muslim peer said Europe needed to become "more confident and more comfortable in its Christianity".

She also highlighted the issue in a speech at the Vatican on Tuesday.

She wrote in the Telegraph that "to create a more just society, people need to feel stronger in their religious identities and more confident in their creeds".

"In practice this means individuals not diluting their faiths and nations not denying their religious heritages."

Baroness Warsi, who is Britain's first female Muslim cabinet minister, went on to write: "You cannot and should not extract these Christian foundations from the evolution of our nations any more than you can or should erase the spires from our landscapes."

'Totalitarian regimes'
She wrote that examples of a "militant secularisation" taking hold of society could be seen in a number of things - "when signs of religion cannot be displayed or worn in government buildings; when states won't fund faith schools; and where religion is sidelined, marginalised and downgraded in the public sphere".

She also compared the intolerance of religion with totalitarian regimes, which she said were "denying people the right to a religious identity because they were frightened of the concept of multiple identities".

Her comments come days after the High Court ruled that a Devon town council had acted unlawfully by allowing prayers to be said at meetings.

'Outdated and divisive'
On Baroness Warsi's article and speech, BBC political correspondent Louise Stewart said it was not the first time a senior Conservative had called for a revival of traditional Christian values.

"Last December, Prime Minister David Cameron said the UK was a Christian country and 'should not be afraid to say so'," she said.

The British Humanist Association (BHA) described Baroness Warsi's comments as "outdated, unwarranted and divisive".

"In an increasingly non-religious and, at the same time, diverse society, we need policies that will emphasise what we have in common as citizens rather than what divides us," said BHA chief executive Andrew Copson.

Baroness Warsi's two-day delegation of seven British ministers to the Holy See will include an audience with Pope Benedict XVI, who visited the UK in 2010.

It is understood it is the first time a serving minister of a foreign government has given an address to the staff and students of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, the British Embassy to the Holy See said.

This visit marks the 30th anniversary of the re-establishment of full diplomatic ties between Britain and the Vatican.

'No logical basis'
Meanwhile, new research suggests Britons who declare themselves Christian display...
Almost three quarters of the 1,136 people polled by Ipsos Mori agreed that religion should not influence public policy, and 92% agreed the law should apply to everyone equally, regardless of their personal beliefs.

It also found that 61% of Christians agreed homosexuals should have the same legal rights in all aspects of their lives as heterosexuals.

And a further 62% were in favour of a woman's right to have an abortion within the legal time limit.

The survey was conducted for the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science (UK), which describes itself as promoting "scientific education, rationalism and humanism".

Speaking on Baroness Warsi's comments, Mr Dawkins, former professor for the public understanding of science at Oxford University, told the BBC News Channel: "She is obviously a person who really wants to push religion. She is not Christian herself but nevertheless she sees religion as a good thing - it doesn't matter what religion as long as there's some religion and that's better than no religion."

"There is absolutely no logical basis for that."

I find the majority of comments on this article very encouraging for the future. In all circumstances now, whether it be work or personal life I very rarely meet people who are religious. People do indeed have the right to believe whatever they want but I certainly wouldn't help any form of growth in religious beliefs and the government certainly shouldn't either.

She misses the point of secularism. It isn't that all religion should be stamped out, it's that in a democracy the government should represent everyone, whichever religion or moral code they subscribe to. It is
preferable to have a government that engages in moral discourse while recognising different positions and beliefs than one that attempts to enforce a single religious doctrine on a people.

912. zee4
14TH FEBRUARY 2012 - 10:30 -158
Those who say religion has no place are wrong and divisive themselves. Secularism is a belief forced on us every day. Those who attack religion (ie Christianity) do so extremely aggressively which often makes me question their argument. If there's no moral 'absolute truth' in life there cannot be a truth there is no absolute truth. The Christians I know love God and love others. That is no crime.

871. crossalways
14TH FEBRUARY 2012 - 10:22 +212
It's precisely because of the predominance of secularism in the UK that has allowed the likes of Warsi to hold the office she does.

To throw religion back in the face of secularism is to deny the tolerance that is the point of secularism.

She needs to rethink.

726. erfalaswen
14TH FEBRUARY 2012 - 9:58 +194
I am a member of a minority religion. If I happen to mention my faith or practice at work, I am cordially reminded to leave my personal life at home. I am happy to do so provided that the same rules apply to all religions. As far as public life goes, religion should be marginal. Worship or religious practice is a private act, it should not have any place in work or in government or in law.

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Adventist Leaders Visit the President of Poland

14 February 2012 Warsaw, Poland [Andrzej Sicinski, AAI; tedNEWS] On 24 January 2012 Mr Bronislaw Komorowski, President of Poland, invited to the Presidential Palace representatives from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for a New-Year meeting. Christian denominations were represented by members of the Roman Catholic Church, member churches of the Polish Ecumenical Council, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Pentecostal Church. Judaism was represented by members of the Jewish Community, and Islam, by Muslim Religious Union representatives.

In his address, Mr Komorowski described Poland as 'a very diverse community of people in terms of language and culture, as well as religion. He focused on the idea of the state as an unhomogenised 'good community' which 'is able to embrace, hold, appreciate and bring out everything that is good in diversity'. Such a community is, on the one hand a reminder of the historical Polish Republic (Rzeczypospolita) of many nations, and on the other hand a challenge for the future, because, he concluded 'we still have the energy to work for a future in which the community is built on respect for diversity.'

The Adventist church was represented by ten delegates including pastor Paweł Lazar, President of the Polish Union Conference (PUC) and pastor Marek Rakowski, Secretary of the PUC. Pastor Rakowski, when asked about his opinion of the meeting, said:

'Speaking to such a diverse group of representatives from three major religions was not an easy task, but Mr Komorowski put it excellently, particularly when he was talking about the foundation of the values of faith, on which such a community should be based, without placing Christian values above the values of the other religions.'

Referring to the wide inter-religious formula of the meeting Rakowski noted: 'For me the very nature of the meeting was important. While hosting many significant dignitaries of the religious world, it was very neutral and – in the positive meaning of the word - secular. There were no prayers or rituals which could have caused any discomfort to any of the invited guests' – emphasised Rakowski.

'We chose that book', stated Rakowski, 'because for us Jesus has the highest value, and it is obvious that if we want to reach prominent people with the gospel, we have to share with them what is most precious to us. The reason we decided to include the films about reformation protagonists, is because it was they who fought for religious freedom and rights to practice and present the gospel. We think that our country and its leaders need to look back at the protestant desire of ages by Ellen G. White and a series of films on the heroes of protestant reformation.'

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been present in the Republic of Poland for more than 130 years and today has about 7,000 members. For more information, please click here www.adwent.pl [tedNEWS]
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Newbold College Joins Two International Associations

13 February 2012 Bracknell, United Kingdom [tedNEWS] Newbold College is now an international member of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). This is an association of 600+ small and mid-sized private liberal arts colleges and universities in and outside the United States. “I am delighted to welcome Newbold College of Higher Education into Council of Independent Colleges membership. My colleagues and I look forward to working with you” advised Richard Ekman, President, CIC.

It is good that we have been approved for membership in CIC” said Dr Philip Brown, Principal, Newbold College. “As a member of this association we will share common attributes with other members such as our dedication to teaching, purposefulness about moral and civic values, small class sizes, close partnerships between the campus and its surrounding community, and governing structures that are not part of government” Dr Brown added.

Dr Brown suggested that joining CIC was appropriate for Newbold College at this time, particularly given that the Adventist Colleges Abroad (ACA) Board of Directors voted recently (late October 2011) to welcome Newbold College as an affiliate member of Adventist Colleges Abroad, a consortium of Adventist colleges and universities in the North American Division. “Most of our Adventist colleges and universities in the US are members of CIC” Dr Brown confirmed.

In addition, Newbold College is now an international affiliate of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), an association of intentionally Christian colleges and universities with 116 member campuses in the US and 69 affiliate campuses located in 25 countries outside the United States.

“I am very pleased to inform you that the Board of Directors of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) approved the staff recommendation that Newbold College of Higher Education be admitted as an International Affiliate of the CCCU effective immediately” advised Paul R Corts, President, CCCU.

In welcoming this news, Dr Philip Brown, Principal, Newbold College said: “It is good to be partnering with an association such as CCCU that shares a commitment to advancing the cause of Christ-centred higher education and to helping institutions like Newbold College transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.” A related benefit for Newbold College joining CCCU as an international affiliate includes the opportunity to participate in a range of special programmes such as governance programmes and programmes for Presidents (Principals), governing board members and other senior administrative leaders

“These are exciting times as we seek to reposition Newbold College as the English-speaking Seventh-day Adventist Christian not-for-profit higher education institution of choice in Europe” Dr Brown added. [tedNEWS]
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Building Beneath the Surface - The Leader's Inner Life

Brooklyn Bridge is a famous landmark spanning the East River in New York City. At the time it opened (1883), it was the longest suspension bridge in the world — 50% longer than any previously built. For several years the towers were the tallest structures in the Western Hemisphere.

When the bridge opened there were many skeptics who claimed that such a large structure could not long remain suspended by cables. It could not bear the strain of traffic or wind and weather. Before long it would collapse into the river. Yet for well over a century it has served as a major transportation artery connecting the boroughs of Brooklyn and Manhattan.

During the early stages of constructing the New York tower progress was not apparent. Local citizens complained about the passage of time and the absence of any visible development. In response, the Chief Engineer wrote: "To such of the general public as might imagine that no work had been done on the New York tower, because they see no evidence of it above the water, I should simply remark that the amount of the masonry and concrete laid on that foundation during the past winter, under water, is equal in quantity to the entire masonry of the Brooklyn tower visible today above the water line."

The Chief Engineer's statement illustrates a vital truth about leadership: it is the work that is done inside the heart and mind, where people cannot see, that determines whether a leader will stand the tests of time and circumstance. It is the inner life, where only God sees, that informs, stabilizes, sustains or weakens and corrodes the visible aspects of leadership. This inner work is accomplished by worship, devotion, prayer and reflection about ethics, morals, and values.

Today one hears a lot about leadership strategy, leadership vision, the marketing and communication of leadership ideas. The risk is that a person may spend all his/her time on these leadership concepts and forget that character-building is the first priority for leadership.

Jesus spoke in graphic terms about the contrasts between the outer and the inner life. (See Matthew 23:13-28) The outside of cup and platter may be so clean as to glisten in the sun but the inside is full of corruption and excess. Religious leaders might be as attractive as newly-painted tombstones in a well-manicured cemetery but the inviting exterior only hides inner decay. This is the tragedy of leaders failing to recognize the importance of the inner life.

On another occasion Jesus spoke about the influence of one's life. "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" —John 7:37,38 NKJV

What Jesus is saying is that if you want your life to be influential the first thing is to make sure it is connected to the right source. Perhaps the leadership principle that is most important for spiritual leaders is that "when you guard your secret life with God, your public life will take care of itself." Jesus assures us that if we are connected to Him, the visible effect of our lives, however small, will be a blessing to the world.

Far too often news headlines these days describe the moral downfall of persons who have hitherto carried enormous responsibility and enjoyed public trust. And then to everyone's amazement the corroded inner life of such a leader is exposed—perhaps an act of financial fraud, failure to tell the truth in a moment of crisis, unfaithfulness to a spouse, or the cancerous effects of a private habit such as pornography. Leaders of religious organisations are not immune to public failure. The environment of power and the accolades of colleagues can easily blind a person to the risks that accompany position and prestige. It requires the inner life to anchor the public life.

How then do we attend to the inner life, the character-building work that is so essential to survival in public leadership? It happens primarily in what we do with our quiet time—those moments of the day that are reserved for feeding and focusing the mind. Those periods in private when we wrestle with huge questions: what kind of person do I want to be? for what purpose am I living? to whom do I turn for mentoring? what are the values by which I live?

It is a myth that a crisis develops character. It does not. Crisis only reveals character. The urgent lesson for leaders is that in changing times, in moments of crisis, strength comes from one's spiritual disciplines. These habits are not
developed on the spur of the moment. They yield their fruit only when carefully cultivated with consistency and honesty.

And there is a marvelous assurance that the inner life of dependence upon God will have its beneficial effect in one's public life. Jesus affirmed that in His statement about a person, who believes in Him, becoming a river of living water.

Ellen G White cautioned and encouraged leaders that, "It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill. Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you."

Building beneath the surface is the most important work that any leader can do.

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1 Ellen G White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 146

By Lowell C Cooper, General Vice President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Leadership Development Journal - January 2012
A World of Possibilities

It is canny how ideas converge to capture our attention. Among Heathrow’s advertising graffiti last week was the strap: HSBC - the Bank that sees a world of possibilities.

During a training event this month, school governors were introduced to the idea of ‘possibility thinking’ - what happens when a student believes that they are an A-grade student? What happens when teachers perceive their students worthy of the A-grade? It would appear that the students cease to operate from a basis of fear, or in a spirit of competition, they become adventurous and creative, they begin to live into their possibilities. They live into the person they want to be. Teachers find new respect and passion for those they teach and find common purpose with their students.

Coincidently one of the themes in our Trans-European Division meetings was ‘thinking possibilities’. We were challenged to think of 82,000 members all inspired to speak of God’s grace, people in twenty nations speaking to needs and conflicts of their communities, we spoke at length of the coming Christ who will overcome in the face of the saga of controversy during the last six thousand years of human history. We spoke with passion about recognising possibilities, gifts for service and leadership, in every person both male and female.

Ben and Roz Zander, in their inspiring 'The Art of Possibility' write as follows:

"The action in the universe of possibility may be described as generative, or giving, in all senses of the word - producing new life, creating new ideas, consciously endowing with meaning, contributing, yielding to the power of contexts. The relationship between people and environments is highlighted, not the people and things themselves. Emotions that are relegated to the special category of spirituality are abundant here: joy, grace, awe, wholeness, passion and compassion."

"You are more likely to be successful overall, if you participate joyfully with projects and goals and do not think your life depends upon them...resources are likely to come to you in greater abundance when you are generous and inclusive and engage people in your passion for life... In the universe of possibility, you set the context and let life unfold."

"The leader of possibility invigorates lines of affiliation and compassion from person to person in the face of a tyranny of fear",... we can exercise this kind of leadership whoever or wherever we are.

Clearly, when we think possibility with respect to our neighbours, we see them not as enemies to be conquered, or heathens to be converted, incorrigible secularists, but people created in the image of God who could grow into disciples of Christ. People like James and John, common fishermen, to whom Jesus simply said: follow me. The same people who years later described the vision of their experience: for we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.

Thank you for seeing possibility in the people you serve by offering them hope in these times of despair. Improbably, but with possibility!

By Victor Pilmoor - Treasurer, British Union of Conferences of the Seventh-day Adventists

Leadership Development Journal - January 2012
As a leader in God’s church, you will probably be asked on some occasions to deliver a sermon to a different audience and/or congregation. Wanting to do your task well, you will inevitably ask: How do I do this well? What is a good sermon? As a member of a local church and listener to sermons Sabbath after Sabbath, you ask that question too.

Is a good sermon a matter of taste, similarly to a good meal or music? Is it that our personal upbringing, culture, taste, how we are psychologically wired and other things, determine which sermons we consider to be good and which perhaps bad and boring? Any preacher who ever preached a sermon is aware of the enormous variety of different people’s perceptions in his/her audience.

A lot could be said about what is a good sermon, good preaching. For this article, let me just highlight two.

**Good news not good advice**

In my last church, one of my members came to me and said: “Pastor Duda, I am so disappointed with you. You have been our pastor for two years now and you have not preached against women wearing trousers yet!” Obviously, her idea of a good sermon was that it should tell people what to do (and not to do).

However, from my experience as a pastor and administrator, most people know what to do; they are just not very good at that. My problem is that I already know that I am not what I ought to be; I know I am doing things that I ought not to do and that I am leaving undone things I ought to do. Like most people, I do not live my life crippled by moral indecision, paralyzed for lack of good advice. Our problem is not moral indecision, but moral impotence (Rom 7:21-25).

That’s why the remedy cannot be just good advice about what we ought to do, but good news about what God has done – “What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: by sending his own Son…” (Rom 8:30). Thus remedy and good preaching is not good advice about what we ought to do, but good news about what God has done. Ultimately preaching is about God, and what he has done, not just about us and about what we ought to do. Surely, our understanding of who God is and what he has done has implications for our lives. Our problem is not moral indecision, but moral impotence (Rom 7:21-25).

**Seeing yourself as part of God’s story**

Preaching is kerygma, the proclamation of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Preaching therefore must be biblical, or it is not preaching at all. The talk may be interesting or edifying, but it is not preaching. The sole source of our knowledge, of what God has done, comes to us through the text of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

However, the fact that a sermon is rooted in a particular text or passage is no guarantee that what we are saying is authentically biblical. It is not the frequency of quoting the Bible (or EGW) that makes it biblical. For a sermon to be biblical, it must be rooted not only in a specific Bible text or passage, but also the immediate and wider context of the passage and in the cosmic sweep of God’s story as a whole.
I have been teaching Homiletics for over 20 years. In my enquiries with pastors, theology students and members about the sermons which they remembered after a year, 5 or 10 years, or even more after the first time they heard them, I found one common denominator – a memorable sermon was one that somehow “clicked” the Bible material with the current experience of the listener.

The Bible did not come to us as a collection of proof texts, system of fundamental beliefs, a recipe on how to know God’s will, or seven rules for successful leadership. It came to us as a story that has its beginning and its climax. Thus good preaching must recognize not just what God has revealed to us, but how he has revealed it. The gospel that we preach has come to us through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments telling God’s story. This needs to be connected to our story, which is part of the bigger story.

The stories of the Bible are not merely illustrations of the revelation of God, they are the revelation. Biblical truth is the Event (not just cerebral doctrine) and the Event is what God has done in our creation and recreation (salvation), in what He is doing now and in what he is yet to do before the story ends.

Good preaching is telling and retelling God’s story and our stories from creation to the Second coming (not in one sermon hopefully!). The Bible speaks about this special type of remembering (OT zakar, NT anamnesis), a remembrance which does not merely call to mind the things past, but makes them real, present, potent and demanding here and now.

The gospel is no longer the story of something that God did once for all, far away then and there. It is now also the story of our world, our society, our culture, our individual lives in all the complexity and strange mixture of glory and shame.

That’s why we need to do not only the exegesis of the Bible text, we need to do the exegesis of life. If we have no idea where people are today, the complexities of their lives, the demands of their environment and allurements of culture in which they live, then even the most brilliant exposition of historical details of Ezekiel is not going to connect with them. However theologically sound, however exegetically accurate, however historically informative, however interesting and inspiring it may be, until the saving acts of God which He accomplished once for all then and there have become embedded in our experience, our culture, our history, our individual lives, we have not preached. We might have delivered a religious talk, but not a sermon, and certainly not a good sermon.

A good sermon is not just remembering His story, it is also the remembering of ours. And when our story becomes part of His story, His bigger story, we have a good and a memorable sermon. The two stories are not two anymore, they have become one as we begin to live, however imperfectly “in Christ”. As the apostle Paul put it: “the life that I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

We preach the good news that in Christ God’s kingdom has come, a new kind of life has been made possible here and now, a new kind of humanity has been born, a new kind of community has been established. The critical and decisive battle with the power of darkness has been fought and won, not by us, by what we do, but by Christ and what he accomplished on the cross of Calvary 2000 years ago. The war is not yet over, but the outcome is no longer in doubt.

Our personal future may be uncertain, but the outcome is not unknown for those who know the story of God. We know for sure how His story will end. Paradise lost has been regained and will be restored by Him. And we all can be a part of it. That’s what good preaching is all about!

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