In Togo, Cape Verdean Adventist Pastor Imprisoned on Dubious Charges

27 September 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Seventh-day Adventist lawyers and human rights advocates are calling for the immediate release of an Adventist pastor imprisoned in Togo on what they say are spurious charges. Antonio dos Anjos Monteiro was detained in March... Read more

A Call for Media Muscle behind the Adventist Message

28 September 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

To Tjeransen, tedNEWS

Seventh-day Adventist media experts from around the world recommend greater cooperation between media professionals to maximise effectiveness in communicating the gospel. A group of eighty Adventist media professionals from all regions of the world were called together at the... Read more

Adventist Church Launches Committee to Study Theology of Ordination

9 September 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Ansel Oliver, Mark A. Kellner, and Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders yesterday voted to establish a Theology of Ordination Study Committee, with a goal of delivering a report to the 2014 Annual Council, a yearly meeting of world church administrators. Four committee
Re-Opening of Keough House at Newbold College

12 September 2012 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Newbold College] On Sunday afternoon 2 September Dr Bertil Wiklander (Chairman, Newbold College Board of Governors) and Dr Philip Brown (Principal, Newbold College) unveiled a plaque to celebrate the much anticipated official re-opening of Keough House (Men’s Hall of Residence) on the Newbold College campus. Following this unveiling... Read more

Unsubscribe from this newsletter

Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
In Togo, Cape Verdean Adventist Pastor Imprisoned on Dubious Charges

27 September 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN] Seventh-day Adventist lawyers and human rights advocates are calling for the immediate release of an Adventist pastor imprisoned in Togo on what they say are spurious charges.

Antonio dos Anjos Monteiro was detained in March for conspiracy to commit murder after a Togolese man implicated him and two other Christians, one an Adventist, as conspirators in an alleged blood trafficking network.

The accuser had earlier confessed to the murder of some 20 young girls, claiming he worked for a criminal ring that trafficked human blood. The man had met Monteiro when the pastor previously ministered to him.

Monteiro, a native of Cape Verde, has served as the church’s Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the Sahel Union Mission, headquarterd in Lome, Togo, since 2009.

Even though a police search of Monteiro’s home and local church headquarters failed to turn up evidence, local newspapers earlier this year published inflammatory photos depicting containers of blood alongside stories detailing the allegations against Monteiro.

“To say that Monteiro is innocent I think almost goes without saying,” said Todd McFarland, an associate general counsel in the Office of General Counsel at Adventist world church headquarters.

“The suggestion that an Adventist pastor would hire someone to murder young girls and then traffic their blood is bizarre, fanciful and false,” he said.
Public pressure to solve last year’s string of murders, however, continues to thwart his release and exoneration, McFarland said. Prior to Monteiro’s arrest, human rights groups had accused Togolese police of not doing enough to solve the crimes.

In mid-September, church leaders met with government officials in Togo to expedite the case. The group included Gilbert Wari, president of the church’s West-Central Africa Division, which oversees Togo; John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Adventist world church; McFarland; and a lawyer from the church’s Sahel Union Mission.

“The Civil Prison of Lome, where Monteiro is currently detained.

“[The lawyer] is very hopeful. She said our visit created a strong impact on the government,” Wari said.

“At first we could see that the government thought they were just dealing with a small church in the corner, but now with this level of support and mobilization, they see that the Adventist Church is a worldwide church,” he said.

The Adventist Church’s top international liaison is currently working with the ambassador of Togo to help secure Monterio’s release.

“The ambassador cordially welcomed me and promised to contact high level officials from the president’s cabinet to facilitate the release of Pastor Monteiro,” said Ganoune Diop, the church’s representative to the United Nations. Diop, who met with the ambassador in July, has since requested a follow-up meeting.

Graz said he wants governments to know that an innocent Seventh-day Adventist facing arbitrary detention is not alone.

“He has millions of brothers and sisters around the world ready to rally in support. We will do everything in our power to help get Monteiro released, and we are confident that justice will prevail.”

There are more than 5,300 Adventist church members in Togo, and close to 880,000 in the church’s West-Central Africa Division.

Monteiro, who was initially held in solitary confinement in jail for 14 days, has since been transferred to the Civil Prison of Lome, where pre-trial detainees such as himself are held together with convicted felons.
Despite deplorable prison conditions, Graz said Monteiro remains “optimistic and in good health.”

“We strongly believe that Monteiro is a modern-day Joseph,” Wari said, referencing a Biblical story in which an Old Testament figure is falsely imprisoned. “Everything seemed desperate and hopeless, but God was working and he was able to glorify his holy name through the crisis.”

[tedNEWS]

------

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division. You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
A Call for Media Muscle behind the Adventist Message

28 September 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Tor Tjeransen, tedNEWS]

Seventh-day Adventist media experts from around the world recommend greater cooperation between media professionals to maximise effectiveness in communicating the gospel.

Division Communication Directors in the New ANN studio at the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. [Photos: Tor Tjeransen]

A group of eighty Adventist media professionals from all regions of the world were called together at the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA last week for a Global Media Communication Summit. The five-day meeting took place after an initiative by pastor Ted N. C. Wilson to gather a cross-section of creativity and experience in communication to explore ways to maximise the effectiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist communication to the world. In his keynote address, president Wilson expressed his desire for the meeting to “be a catalyst for the church and the world to wake up to the soon coming of Christ.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates a huge communication network using every possible technology, but there is a tendency for communication offices to work independently. Vice President at the World Church headquarters, pastor Ben Schoun, was responsible for the organisation of the meetings. Pastor Schoun stressed that the purpose of the meetings was to “learn how to work together so that we can accomplish things that we can not do individually.”

A view into the Hope Channel studio at the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

At the outset of the meetings Mrs Joanne Davies, a lay-member with many years of experience from the advertising industry in New Zealand, gave a passionate plea for greater co-operation between media professionals within the church. "The Seventh-day Adventist brand has been
dwarfed, and no-one oversees the strategic resource allocation,” Mrs Davies asserted and formulated her dream for greater impact in this way: “Let us put media muscle behind our message.”

Participants listened to presentations on a wide range of issues relating to communicating Adventist beliefs and values as a background to group work on ideas for greater co-operation and effectiveness. Pastor Claude Richli, Associate Publisher of the Adventist Review, gave a presentation on overt and covert branding. Richli reminded participants that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has one of the strongest brands in the world. “There are more Seventh-day Adventist church buildings in the world branded with our logo than McDonalds and Safeway have combined,” he said. In addition to this overt branding Adventist values and doctrines are being communicated by church members in ways that are not clearly marked as Seventh-day Adventist. Richly pointed out that both types of communication are necessary and said the covert branding is the only way to get our message across in many areas of the world.

A measure of the scale of Adventist communication is the fact that Adventist World Radio have 20 million downloads of their various pod-casts each month. Even with this kind of statistics Adventist communicators want to do better.

Miroslav Pujic, Communication and Media Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division, said there is a “need to harness technology in a way that is even more effective for the communication of the Gospel to the world.”

In addition to pastor Pujic, Frederick Duval, tedMEDiA Productions filmmaker, and Tor Tjeransen, Media Director of the Norwegian Union, participated from the Trans-European Division.

Recommendations from the Global Media Communication Summit will be brought to the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church, which will take place in mid-October. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division. You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Adventist Church Launches Committee to Study Theology of Ordination

19 September 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Ansel Oliver, Mark A. Kellner, and Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN] Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders yesterday voted to establish a Theology of Ordination Study Committee, with a goal of delivering a report to the 2014 Annual Council, a yearly meeting of world church administrators.

Four committee sessions, each meeting for up to three days, will precede the October 2014 report, leaders said.

“We want an open process,” Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, told the group’s Administrative Committee, or ADCOM, before the vote was taken. “We want to hear what God and the Holy Spirit want to tell us, through Bible study, study of the Spirit of Prophecy, and prayer.”

Yesterday’s move comes a year after the 2011 unveiling of a roadmap for the study process. Church officials meeting in ADCOM yesterday affirmed that outline and provided terms of reference for the study committee.

The committee is a direct response to a request during the 2010 General Conference Session for a church-conducted understanding of ordination.

The denomination’s Executive Committee at the 2014 Annual Council may decide to recommend action to the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas.

The committee will be comprised of a wide perspective of individuals to include “women, men, younger and, older members, theologians, Bible students, those who have written or spoken on the subject and some others.” The Committee will have no world church officers on it other than
chairman, vice-chairman and secretary, though the three executive officers will be ex officio members.

Wilson added, “There is no one who wants to do anything other than God’s will.”

The committee launch comes on the heels of independent actions taken by three of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s union conferences. The unions – North German, Columbia and Pacific – voted to ordain pastoral candidates without respect to gender. World church leaders had asked the unions to refrain, pending the committee’s formation and conclusions.

“When the process starts there are two issues that will be really studied,” said Artur A. Stele, head of the world church’s Biblical Research Institute and chairman of the new committee. “Number one, the theology of ordination, what ordination is or isn’t. Then, the second one, ‘What are the implications for Church practices with a special emphasis on women’s ordination?’”

Suggested names for the committee’s membership were requested from ADCOM members as part of the selection process. Names of the committee members have not yet been released, but it is expected that at least 24 members of the 102-person group will be women. ADCOM members of varying viewpoints expressed appreciation for a balanced listing of potential committee members.

Members are expected to represent a wide perspective of thought on ordination, and it is hoped they will also interact in a highly respectful and spiritual discussion setting. The committee will also include two delegates from each of the 13 world church divisions, which will work with regional Biblical Research Committees in the study.

An official statement voted by ADCOM emphasized that, unlike many church committees where actions are voted up and down, the panel’s terms of reference include “an aim of reaching consensus on as many points as possible.” Where differences are evident, they will be carefully noted for the final report to the 2014 Annual Council.

According to the statement, “Through strong prayer sessions, study of the Bible, study of the Spirit of Prophecy and the resulting careful discussion, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee should focus on solutions that would support the message, mission and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” [tedNEWS]
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Re-Opening of Keough House at Newbold College

12 September 2012 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Newbold College] On Sunday afternoon 2 September Dr Bertil Wiklander (Chairman, Newbold College Board of Governors) and Dr Philip Brown (Principal, Newbold College) unveiled a plaque to celebrate the much anticipated official re-opening of Keough House (Men’s Hall of Residence) on the Newbold College campus. Following this unveiling, a prayer of dedication was offered by Pastor Paul Goltz (College Chaplain).

[Photos courtesy Newbold College]

At almost 50 years on, Keough House has been showing its age and no longer offered the kind of accommodation that contributed to a positive student experience at Newbold College. From the outset of commencing as Principal in September last year, Dr Brown committed to rectifying this situation and so worked collaboratively with the Newbold College Board and the Trans-European Division in order to ensure that a refurbished and upgraded Keough House could be ready for new and returning students from the beginning of the new 2012-13 academic year.

In summary, the renovation of Keough House over the past six months has included the conversion of bedrooms into single and double units with ensuite facilities and the removal of existing showers and laundry rooms to make way for kitchen and dining areas. All rooms have been completely redecorated, including upgraded electrical services such as multiple double sockets and data points as well as new light fittings. There has been an upgrading of plumbing, including new basins and taps. There is also new flooring and furniture throughout, with lighting now improved in all common areas.

Dr John Baildam (Deputy Principal) welcomed invited guests and attendees to the re-opening ceremony. During the ceremony Pastor Henrik Jørgensen (Dean of Men 1991-97) and Dr Brown shared the Keough House story from the period prior to its construction in the early 1960s up until the present day. The
men’s hall of residence was originally opened and dedicated in early 1963 and is named in honour of George D. Keough, a pioneer missionary to the Middle East, and for many years a Theology teacher on campus.

“The College desires that the young men who call Keough House their home for a season will continue to dedicate their lives to follow in the footsteps of those alumni who have gone forth to lives of dedicated service in an ever-changing world,” said Dr Brown during the ceremony.

“We thank everyone present as well as those unable to be present who have contributed their time and funds to the refurbishment of Keough House. We also wish to thank those who have worked in the background to make the re-opening possible prior to the start of the 2012-13 academic year,” Dr Brown added.

“The refurbished Keough House is a delightful development at Newbold College and it was long overdue. Students are the most valuable part of the College and the new Keough House gives evidence of this value. We are grateful to all who helped us do this and we want to see a continuation in other parts of the College campus,” said Dr Wiklander during the ceremony.

"In view of so many financial challenges today, the fact that we have been able to re-dedicate Keough House witnesses to the fact that God is leading and blessing our College. We praise Him and commit ourselves afresh to His service,” Dr Wiklander added.

“New and returning students are very happy with their accommodation. The level of cleanliness and comfort is vastly improved. A big thank you to the contractors and to everyone for their work over recent months,” said Derek Simon, a returning student and Keough House resident.

Following the re-opening ceremony, guests enjoyed an afternoon tea in the lower lounge of Keough House. This was followed by small group tours of the new rooms and facilities by the Dean of Men, Pastor Andrew Layland, and current student Resident Assistants, Derek Simon and Rene Bidstrup.

Keough House is built in the shape of a cross, with the original lounge, kitchenette and prayer room between the arms. Another feature of Keough House is the octagonal lounge over the multipurpose room of the same shape. Six sides are windows, overlooking the rolling green pastures of Berkshire. To coincide with the re-opening of Keough House, these two rooms have now become known as the Lingmoor Lounges – named after a lovely home on the edge of Bournemouth, with a view over pine woods to the beauties of Studland Bay and beyond.
This home was owned by Ettrick and Ida Whiting, whose daughter Jean spent many happy times there with her husband Denys and their two sons John and Andrew Baildam – all four of whom chose for at least part of their education to study at Newbold College.

When Ettrick died in 1986 he bequeathed his home to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for a variety of purposes and it is therefore the wish of Jean and John Baildam that these two refurbished rooms in Keough House be named the Lingmoor Lounges – Upper and Lower – in memory of Ettrick’s support of the Church and as a representation of what Newbold College has meant over very many years to the Baildam family, who reflect warmly on times past.

A final phase of the Keough House refurbishment is yet to be completed and this will include improvements to the reception/lobby, visitor bathroom, disabled room access and the dean’s office. This work is planned for completion in January 2013.

If you would like to donate towards the completion of this final phase of the Keough House project and have not yet done so, then this can still be done online via the College website, by cheque or by contacting the College directly.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support. [tedNEWS]
Statement on Women’s Ordination to the Pastoral Ministry

Presented at the TED European Pastors Conference
25 August 2012 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Bertil Wiklander, tedNEWS]

The Trans-European Division is a division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It means that TED follows General Conference policy, except in cases where we request and are given permission to apply a variance to the common world-church policy. The 11 unions within the TED are all members of the General Conference (and the TED) and in their constitutions and bylaws they state that their faith, church order, and working policies shall be in harmony with the GC/TED.

These regulations in our church law explain the position taken by the TED Executive Committee on women’s ordination to the pastoral ministry.

The matter of women’s ordination for ministry has been under discussion in the TED at least since 1968. In the 1970s and 1980s, the issues were usually about concerned women being ordained as elders and deaconesses. The General Conference Executive Committee had approved both ordinations, but with some restrictions, in the spring of 1975, and this was reaffirmed by the General Conference Annual Council in 1984. The former ordination, with right to perform weddings and baptisms, was endorsed by the General Conference Session in 1990 and the latter in 2010.

In May, 1989, a survey of our unions’ positions on the ordination of women was undertaken and a clear majority was then not in favour of actually ordaining women as pastors although they may not have considered it biblically wrong to do so.

The policies of the General Conference from 1990 and onwards allowed for ordination of women as church elders, employment of women as associates in pastoral care (if they were ordained as local elders), and also commissioning of women in ministry for pastoral type of work in a union. This gradually led to a greater openness and even a sense of strong need for ordaining women to the gospel ministry in the TED. This was the case in some unions more than in others, possibly depending on the cultural context in which we live and work.

In response to this development in the 1990’s and 2000’s, TED has for several years organised regular councils for female pastoral workers. We have seriously looked at recommendations from this group. Thus, salaries, employment conditions, titles, and job descriptions for male and female pastoral workers have been made more and more equal in many unions. On 18 November, 2009, the TED Executive Committee voted unanimously to provide ‘Revised Guidelines for Commissioning’ where all that was possible to do within policy to create equality between the genders in pastoral kinds of ministry was established for the TED.
In January–March, 2010, the General Conference President, Jan Paulsen, initiated a survey among the 13 world divisions regarding their position on women’s ordination. The TED invited all its unions to take part. The outcome was that all our unions unanimously accept that there are no biblical reasons for not ordaining women and that it would not be a problem if the General Conference granted the TED authority to let unions, who so request, the right to ordain women as pastors. Of all the 11 unions today in the TED, only one union president stated that his union would not at present ordain women as pastors, even if it was permitted, but he had no objection to this being done in other unions. However, a majority of world divisions did not share our view and the GC leadership decided therefore not bring the matter forward to the GC Session a few months later.

The issue was however raised on the floor at the GC Session in Atlanta in June/July, 2010, in connection with the discussion and acceptance of the ordination of deaconesses. It was voted that the church would study the theology of ordination and seek a better biblical understanding of what ordination really means: If the church can ordain women as church elders and deaconesses, then why not also as pastors? We now have a detailed time table for this study, and it is clear that it is going to be a very comprehensive work that includes women’s ordination and all aspects of ordination in the church. Each division has been asked to provide a research report through their biblical research committee, getting input from the unions, voting it in their executive committee, and sending it to the GC Biblical Research Institute. The TED is now fully engaged in this work and our executive committee will be asked to authorise our research report in November, 2013. A co-ordinating body at the GC will then study the research from all 13 divisions and provide a report which will go to the GC leadership in the summer of 2014. If recommended by the GC Annual Council in October, 2014, a motion will go to the floor of the GC Session in San Antonio in 2015. We take the view in the TED that we actively participate in the study of ordination and then we wait and see what will be the outcome, believing that the Spirit of God will lead this matter to a good solution for his church.

In November 2010, the TED Executive Committee voted a document called ‘The Leadership and Ordination of Women’. Its purpose was to address the tension between the extraordinary mission challenges facing the church within our territories and the need to mobilize all our members, male and female, on the one hand, and church policy on the ordination of women, on the other. Four requests were made to the General Conference. Those requests and the responses were as follows:

1. To request that the study of the theology of ordination as voted at the General Conference Session in Atlanta is prioritized. The General Conference has granted this.
2. To request the General Conference to review and amend General Conference policies, so that the wording is gender neutral and that all leadership pathways are open to male and female. No formal response has been received and we will continue to work with the GC Secretariat on this point.
3. To request the General Conference to grant a variance to the model constitutions and bylaws to accommodate the unique needs of the Trans-European Division with the insertion of “conference and union presidents should be ordained/commissioned ministers” in its policy language. We feel that this is a matter of some urgency and respectfully request that this be dealt with as soon as possible but no later than General
Conference Annual Council 2011. This was brought to the floor in October 2011, but it was not voted on formally, since a similar variance only relating to conference presidents was requested by the NAD. Their request was voted down and by common consent the TED motion therefore also failed.

4. To request the General Conference for permission to ordain women to the gospel ministry within the Trans-European Division thereby creating parity between female and male ministers and follow the same process and procedure as currently applies to ordained men and credentialed ministers. This point is in abeyance awaiting the outcome of the study on the theology of ordination.

In November, 2011, following the vote at Annual Council, the TED prayerfully considered how to respond to it. We consulted widely and received input from the unions. We recognise and understand that we are part of a global church and need to listen to and be in harmony with the decision of the church at large. The Committee voted:

1. To affirm again the role of its women leaders, pastors and lay members.
2. To pro-actively work to support the development of women in leadership within the TED and to present a road map to the TED Spring Meetings 2012 as to how this could be done. This work is on-going.

The big question is of course what the Bible says about women’s ordination. We will provide an answer from our perspective in November, 2013, based on a very comprehensive research. In the meantime, I would ask you all to pray for this study. Without the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ we can do nothing. But I would add that you can do more than praying. You can also study the matter for yourself, so that you understand what the word of God teaches on this point.

One way for you to get acquainted with the matter is by reading pastor John Lorencin’s booklet on women’s ordination—it is available in English with the title Priestly Ministry in the Old and the New Testament: Should Women be Ordained? (2012) Pastor Lorencin was the Yugoslavian Union President until 1994 and used to be very much opposed to women’s ordination. He admits that he took a traditional view and under the influence of his cultural context where there were three main religions: Orthodox Christian, Roman Catholic Christian, and Islam. He had not formed his opinion on the basis of the Bible, so when he retired he decided to study ordination in the Bible. In his book, as a pastoral Bible reader, in simple language, he goes through the whole Bible. He finds that in the New Testament, Christ has taken over the sacrificial priestly office from the Old Testament, so it is no more. Instead, Christ has fulfilled the sacrificial system and become our high priest in heaven where he now offers his benefits for us to God. As our high priest, he is also the head of the body of Christ, the church, which consists of the priesthood of all believers, which makes no distinction between male and female. He also points out that there is no word for ‘ordination’ in the Bible. It is used in the King James Version from 1611, but it is there based on old Roman Catholic translations from the 14th and 15th centuries. In fact, pastor Lorencin warns against letting the pastoral ordination be influenced by the Roman Catholic, unbiblical practice, which is rooted in the pagan Roman system of being promoted (Latin ordinatio) to a higher ‘order’ (Latin ordo) in the state offices. Any sense of the rite of ordination conveying a special status or character that is not already there through the gift of the Holy Spirit is unbiblical. Ordination is therefore a work of the Spirit and only recognised and confirmed by
the church. Many of the points raised here have also been pointed out in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, in the article on ‘ordination’ (1996).

And there is of course other literature on the topic. The teachers at Andrews University collected a number of papers on the topic in a volume called *Women in Ministry* (edited by Nancy Vyhmeister, Berrien springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998) and this valuable book is still available. I can add mention that Dr Jan Barna, one of our esteemed teachers at Newbold College, has written his doctoral thesis in 2009 on this topic and he is in negotiations to have it printed. His emphasis is the view of the Bible and the hermeneutics being applied in dealing with the matter of women’s ordination.

I want to say to you that I have never made a secret of my own personal conviction. I accept women’s ordination as being biblical and appropriate. But I am also very concerned that we manage this important matter in harmony and cooperation with the world church. I know that the Lord will bless our joint efforts to explore his word and to share it with our brothers and sisters world-wide. And I think the best thing we can do is to pray for the Spirit of God to lead his church to understand this matter in harmony with his will. As keepers of the heritage of the Protestant reformation, let us see this matter from a spiritual perspective and ask God to lead us to an understanding of his truth. And let us do it in a spirit of respect for each other, knowing that we all seek the truth and that Christ has promised that the Holy Spirit will ‘guide us into all truth’. [TEDNEWS]

---

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division. You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Hope for Healing in Hungary

30 August 2012 Pécel, Hungary [tedNEWS] On Wednesday 29th August 2012, leaders from the Christian Advent Community (KERAK), Hungarian Union Conference (HUC) and the Trans-European Division (TED) met at the headquarters of the Adventist Church in Pécel, Hungary. The meeting took place as a response to a request by Pastor János Cserbik, the newly elected president of KERAK, to Pastor Bertil Wiklander, TED president, to initiate a preliminary process to settle a 37-year schism between the KERAK Community and the Adventist Church in Hungary. The meeting was attended by Bertil Wiklander and Raafat Kamal from the TED, Tamás Ócsai, Ernő Ösz-Farkas, and Géza Hegyes-Horváth from HUC and János Cserbik, Zoltán Bodolai, József Végh and István Stramszki from KERAK.

The seven-hour meeting chaired by Pastor Wiklander commenced with worship and prayer and the spirit throughout was cordial, friendly, constructive, sincere and positive.

Some of the points agreed to and noted were:
1. The representatives from TED recognised and appreciated a remarkable commitment to unity in the KERAK and HUC delegations.
2. All affirmed that the goal of continued dialogue to organisational unity must be based on biblical principles and should agree with the GC Working Policy.
3. All recognised the need for sharing openly their respective concerns as we thrive towards unity.

Pastor Wiklander commented on the meeting with the following words: “I was blessed and pleased with our meeting and sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit. We are eager to continue this dialogue that has begun so well. I ask all brothers and sisters in our church worldwide and in the KERAK Community, to pray for this process and that God will give us the wisdom to take the right decisions. What matters is that God wants us to be united (John 17:20-23) and to achieve His will we need to make the right sacrifices.”

The 37-year schism between the KERAK Community and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hungary has a long history and is complex in nature. Numerous reconciliatory attempts were carried out over the past 37 years by three General Conference (GC) presidents, three GC vice-presidents, three division presidents and five HUC union presidents that did not lead to healing and unity.

The Hungarian Union Conference comprises the Duna and Tisza conferences with 105 churches and a membership of 4,630. The Christian Advent Community comprises 6 geographical regions with 79 congregations and a membership of 1,620. [tedNEWS]
tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
The Meaning of Knowing God

Keynote address, TED European Pastors' Conference
21 August 2012 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Bertil Wiklander]

The London Olympic Games just ended. The whole world was watching. In British media, a phrase kept coming back, again and again: ‘This is what these Olympic Games are all about!’

And the phrase was used for many different things:

- It was said about the theme of the Games: ‘Inspiring a generation’
- A boy said it about getting to know new sports, such as handball
- About winning: Jamaica’s Bolt
- About counting the gold medals: Bolt got three of them for the second time
- About setting new world records: Kenya’s Rudisha led 800m from start to finish
- About an immigrant boy who made his new nation proud: GB’s Mo Farah
- About team work and friendship
- About Manteo Mitchell who broke his leg in the relay 4x400 but continued to run for the sake of his three colleagues
- Roger Bannister – the legendary British runner who was the first to run an English mile under 4 minutes: ‘The Games have given a sense of national pride and greater tolerance in multi-racial Britain’
- The Chinese took the view that the Games are about improving their performance every four years so that one day they will win all medals, proving that the Chinese social system is the best in the world
- Maybe in the end it was all down to ‘It’s Never too Late to Exercise’ (pic 15)

And so on… But what the world was watching is now over. But our Pastors Conference begins tonight! What is it all about?

- What is God’s mission all about?
- What is Seventh-day Adventism all about?
- What is being a pastor in this church all about?

I put it to you this evening that it is all about making God known.

This central idea stems from the biblical concept of the Mission of God. Driven by his love for the world, God wants to be known as God among its nations and peoples. This is the essence of the Plan of Salvation and the cosmic Great Controversy between good and evil. God wants relations with his created beings. That’s why he created the world and will heal and restore it to what he intended it (John saw it in a vision in Revelation 21:1-5). And then he will ‘live with men and they will be his people’ and ‘God himself will be with them and be their God’. Therefore, he has called the church to Make Him Known.
This is what the three angels’ messages are all about. To every nation, tribe, language and people the eternal gospel is:

Revelation 14:7: ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water!’

The second angel applies the eternal gospel that makes God known to God’s great adversary, ‘Babylon’, who rules the nations in rejection of God. The message is that, since God is God, Babylon will fall like Babylon of old, leaving no trace, and all the nations will rise in freedom from bondage and ‘come and worship before God, because his righteous acts will have been revealed’ (Rev. 15:4).

The third angel applies the eternal gospel that makes God known to all individuals who are caught in false worship, warning them about the consequences of not knowing God. The message is: Avoid the false worship of the beast that upholds the Babylonian oppression and falsehood. In saying this, the third angel implies that the God made known by the first angel is the only true God.

John, the visionary, records in his book that ‘patient endurance’ is the required attitude of those who already know God – he calls them ‘the saints who keep God’s commandments and the faithfulness of Jesus’. He records a heavenly voice that blesses those who are faithful to God, as Jesus was faithful to God, even to the point of dying in the Lord. And, finally, he records what the Spirit says, namely (a) that those who die in the Lord will have rest from their pains and labour (not like those who don’t know God, who will have no rest), and (b) they will be rewarded by God on the day of the resurrection, for ‘their deeds will follow them’. (Rev. 14:12-13)

Then, John sees ‘one like a son of man’ coming, seated on a white cloud with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand, and the final harvest begins (Rev. 14:14-20). Its outcome is that those who know God will be delivered and presented before God with the Lamb, whom they follow wherever he goes (Rev. 14:1-5), but those who reject God will be judged (Rev. 14:17-20).

Making God known in Europe is our great calling! But it is also a challenge. People in Europe believe they can handle life without God, and the result is a dysfunctional life, because you cannot live happily without being connected with your Creator. This is what the three angels' messages are all about. By making God known in Europe we do two things: we fulfil God’s special calling to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our part of the world, and we meet the needs of the people with whom we live.

But we cannot make God known unless we first know him! So, what does ‘knowing God’ really mean?

In the Bible, the term ‘know’ when applied to persons is not primarily an intellectual or factual matter—as we tend to think in ‘intellectual’ Europe. ‘Knowing’ God is not primarily about the facts of God, the existence of God, or even a doctrine about God. The Hebrew concept *jada‘,
‘know’, and its function in the Hebrew Testament and Jewish tradition has greatly influenced the Greek New Testament, going completely against the understanding of ‘knowledge’ in the Greco-Roman Hellenistic world.

To ‘know’ implies an intimate relationship, like the knowledge a husband has of his wife in their intimate communion. ‘Knowing’ God is to encounter him, finding out that he is who he says he is, and having active, practical communion with him. It is an experience with God, but an experience that makes you accept the consequences of that experience. It is knowledge that gives insight into the will of God in command and blessing. It is acknowledgement of God and obedient and grateful submission to what you know of him. The knowledge of God in Christianity is a service to God (1 Thess. 1:9). It changes your life, who you are, what you want and what you do.

To ‘know’ is a reciprocal experience in the Bible. If I know you, you know me. If I know God, God knows me. The apostle Paul hints at this concept when he says

1 Corinthians 13:12: ‘Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know [God’s love] in part; then I shall know [God’s love] fully, even as I am fully known.’

Another part of ‘knowing’ in the Bible is that, when it describes a relationship, it is always referring to a process. Either the relationship is growing deeper, more intense and mature, or it is becoming more superficial, slacker, and less filled with commitment. Knowing somebody requires work, a giving up of self and embracing the other to become one with her or him. Knowing God is to live life in partnership with God which is growing deeper, more intense and mature. Making God known is to share this experience with others.

But who then is God? The One we know and make known?

The biblical answer is that, while God ‘alone is immortal and lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see’ (1 Tim. 6:16), Jesus Christ made God known through his death and resurrection.

Colossians 2:9: ‘For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.’

1 John 5:20: ‘We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.’

The Bible goes on to say that knowing God in Jesus Christ means to live in his death and resurrection. Our baptism is a symbol of that. The apostle Paul said:

Philippians 3:7-11: ‘But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law,
but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead.

We must preach and teach Christ’s death on the cross and the resurrection, if we are to be true to the Word of God. All the four gospels aim at and reach their climax in telling the story about Christ’s death and resurrection. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 that the ‘gospel’ he preached to the Corinthians, and ‘by which they are saved, was something ‘he received and passed on to them as of first importance’. And this is it:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8: ‘Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve, and after that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, the to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.’

Then he explains the resurrection of the dead, saying that ‘if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith’ (15:14), repeating that ‘if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile’ (15:17). ‘If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.’ (15:19)

We have here, in the Bible, a revelation from God of first importance. Our faith, our preaching, God’s mission as we understand it in his word—everything—is based on the resurrection of Christ. But when did I hear a sermon on that topic in an Adventist church? We have even managed to lose sight of the resurrection in the three angels’ messages, for it is clearly central in Revelation 14:13 which we seldom refer to. The phrase ‘the deeds [of the dead who die in the Lord] will follow them’ is a set phrase in contemporary Judaism, meaning that the works of the righteous dead are being laid up with God and will be revived at the end of time when the righteous receive their reward, which is what Revelation teaches in chapters 20:4-6 and 19:1-8.

Yes, we are special in God’s sight.

Yes, we are a ‘remnant church’ and a ‘prophetic church at the end of time’.

Yes, we understand so much of Bible truth and we are richly blessed with light from Scripture.

Indeed, praise God for our church! For all the wonderful, loving and caring people God has brought together in our fellowship! For the love of God in us!

But whatever we say and do, even if you take all that is stated on the 700 pages in The Great Controversy, if you take the signs of the times, and if you take our sanctified and healthy lives, if we fall short on the very basis of our faith, on Christ who has made God known, on his death and resurrection, our preaching is useless and our faith is futile.

Who is the God we know?
Who is the God that we make known in our ministry?

It is the God who revealed himself in the love of Jesus Christ – as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 – and who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Death is the great tragedy of human beings, also in Europe. But nobody wants to talk about it. While the world was looking at the Olympic Games, a young girl, Tia Sharp, 12 years old, was murdered and hidden in her grandmother’s attic. And how many more lost their lives at the same time? And here we are, with the only piece of hope and good news from Jesus’ resurrection, but we are silent about it.

N.T. Wright in his book *Surprised by Hope* shows several radical changes that the first Christians brought – deviating from what people in those days believed about the resurrection. These changes can only be explained by something crucial and unexpected happening. All the New Testament is based on eyewitness evidence for the resurrection. The life and death of these witnesses prove to me that Christ is risen. This gives me a fantastic hope as a human being, it helps me live my life now and face death. Sharing this is to make God known.

As we read the Bible with new eyes, with the eyes of the Bible itself, only then can we share the genuine original Christian faith in Christ as the resurrected Lord who is now connecting us with God and soon to return.

Only then can we understand what the Christian hope really means and what our hope is. Only then can we experience our own death and resurrection in our baptism to a new life in service to God who raised Christ.

Only then there is hope for change, salvation, transformation and new possibilities in our world. Because it leads us face to face with the God who created the world, who has never given up his care for us despite all evil, whose mission it is to create all things new in order to live in an open fellowship with us, and who therefore taught us to pray: ‘Thy kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’

He, and none other than he, has given us the assurance that we rest in his arms when our life is ended and that he, and none other than he, has provided an escape from death: the resurrection from death in following Jesus and being faithful to God like Jesus.

God raised Jesus up!

He raised me up!

He raised you up!

He wants to raise the world up!

Therefore: Let’s make this God known!
By Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists
Our View of the Bible: Models of Understanding the Word of God

Workshop Lecture, Trans-European Division Pastors’ Conference
22 August 2012 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Bertil Wiklander]

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born and grew up in a Scripture-based environment where the canonical writings of the Bible were the fundamental authority for life and faith. In the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church -- voted for the first time in 1980 -- the preamble and the first statement show that this is still our view. The first sentence says:

‘Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.’

The word ‘creed’ comes from Latin credo, ‘I believe’. By describing the writings of the Bible as our ‘creed’ we state our conviction that they reveal

- God’s character and nature
- God’s will for our life
- God’s mission and plan of salvation on earth
- God’s commission to the church as his servant of making him known in the world

On all these points, it is our conviction that the Bible, as our ‘creed’, reveals ‘the truth’ as God’s Word.

By saying that the Bible is our only creed, we not only disapprove of the ancient creeds of the Christian church tradition as our rule of faith, but we also say that Ellen White’s writings are not our creed and, what is perhaps even more important, that our own opinions as pastors and leaders, our committee decisions, and our manuals and policy books are not our creed. As far as Ellen White is concerned, we confirm our view of the Bible in Fundamental Belief number 18:

‘They [Ellen G. White’s writings] also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.’

However, there is no statement of fundamental belief in our church that defines the role of the church, especially its leaders and committees in relationship to the Bible. The little we do say on this point can be divided into four areas:

Firstly, in the preamble to the Fundamental Beliefs, we say:

‘Seventh-day Adventists … hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures’ and that, ‘these beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a
General Conference Session when *the church is led by the Holy Spirit* to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds a better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.

If the Bible is our creed, however, the way in which the Church *understands and expresses its teaching as* ‘the truth of God’s Holy Word’ is fundamentally important.

If the Bible is our creed, what does the Bible teach regarding the role of the church in understanding and expressing the teachings of the Bible *on behalf of God*?

On these crucial points, the current Fundamental Beliefs do not say much at all, except that ‘the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth’. But what exactly does the Holy Spirit do for us in understanding and expressing the teaching of the Bible? How does it work? Can we understand it, or some of it? Or is it all veiled in mystery? There is not much material in the Bible that helps us deal with this issue. Maybe we should talk together about our personal spiritual experiences in reading and understanding the Bible, and the test them against the Bible.

Secondly, in Fundamental Belief number 12, ‘The Church’, the point is made that ‘the church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word’.

However, nowhere does the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs define how the church’s authority to understand, interpret and apply the Scriptures is being taught by the Bible itself. This is a weakness in our position and there is a danger that we abuse our rights as a church, as has so many other Christian churches in the course of history. If the Bible is ‘our only creed’, the church should act within the framework of what the Bible teaches, and this includes our acts of understanding, interpreting and applying the teachings of the Bible.

Let me take an example. Revelation says in its conclusion:

- ‘I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.’ (Rev. 22:18-19)

Maybe we prefer to read this in reference to those who have copied or translated the text. But notice that the warning *is to those who ‘hear the words of this book’*, so, what if this double and very serious warning also refers to those who interpret and preach from this book? Have we added anything that is not there or taken away anything that is there? This should make all of us, particularly we as Seventh-day Adventists, very, very humble, and study deeply and think carefully before we claim we have understood this important book.

Thirdly, in Fundamental Belief number 14, ‘Unity in the Body of Christ’, the point is made that ‘through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and
reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.’

This means that, since God is one and his mind is one, his expression of truth is somehow unified, although it may take various shapes and forms, and it is to be understood and taught in a unified way, although it may take various forms and shapes. But this does not answer the question of how we, as a church, with so many different peoples, cultures, languages, mental models of understanding ourselves and the world, can be sure that we are actually unified in understanding and applying the truth of the Bible. Since the Bible does not speak of itself, a human being has to read, understand, interpret, and apply it to our changing reality. In other words, human beings make the written Bible speak the truth (we pray that we are Spirit-led as we do so). And if the church collectively takes on this role, then how does a church with over 17 million members in over 200 countries do that in the same way?

Fourthly, based on Fundamental Belief number 14, ‘Unity in the Body of Christ’, we state that, in the Scriptures, God reveals his truth through Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, and this truth consists of ‘the same faith and hope and outreach in one witness to all’.

Our unity, therefore, is a unity in Jesus Christ and in what he reveals in Scripture. Consequently, our understanding and teaching of the Bible must be based on ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’ (Eph. 4:21). But we are not making it clear in the Fundamental Beliefs what that means and how it is done.

For example, Ephesians 4 could be a significant point of departure. After outlining the role of the various leaders in the church and how all of them have from Christ the function of ‘preparing God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ maybe built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’ (4:11-13), this passage goes on to say:

‘Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does it work’ (Eph. 4:15-16)

Seventh-day Adventist Bible understanding, interpretation and application must always be Christ-centred, and this means that there is no difference between being Christ-centred and Scripture-centred. Christ is the Word and the Word is Christ.

This is the background for what I want to share in this presentation. I am not suggesting that I have all the answers or that I cover this vast topic in full. What I am doing is presenting some suggestions that I believe are important as we continue to develop our understanding of our faith and mission.

I will proceed in three steps:

- How does the human mind understand meaning in texts?
- The shape of the Bible and our model of the Bible
A Biblical view of the Bible as a model of understanding it

1. How Does the Human Mind Understand Meaning in Texts?

We are talking here about *spiritual* reading of texts. We do not understand the Bible by human wisdom but by the Spirit of God, as clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16:

‘… We speak of God’s secret wisdom … But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God … no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words …’

When Paul stated this, his mind was focussed on the issue of Greek wisdom denying the possibility of the cross and the resurrection of Christ, and his answer was that the Spirit of God makes the mystery of the cross and the resurrection clear to those who have faith and are accepting the understanding from the Spirit.

I suggest to you, however, that the Spirit of God works in our minds by using the natural capacity of our brains to ‘understand’ and ‘know’. Insights from Epistemology, the Philosophy of Cognition or Knowledge, can help us understand more of how this works, especially as those insights are applied to textual understanding or literary hermeneutics. So, I am asking here: **How does the human mind understand meaning in texts?**

I am going rely on some passages from my doctoral thesis printed in 1984, *Prophecy as Literature* (pp. 26-38).

Firstly, the concept of ‘model’ is recognised as a valuable asset in the theory of knowledge. All human endeavour to understand what cannot be perceived by immediate observation requires some kind of preconceived idea or model of the thing to be grasped, i.e. a ‘model’ symbolising ‘the original thing’. In the natural sciences today, there is general acceptance that all observation is *theory-dependent*. My conceptual model of the text I seek to understand, therefore, will determine the outcome of my reading. Jesus’ saying applies very well to this phenomenon when he says that ‘to the one who has, it will be given’. We cannot understand the Bible unless we have a model of the Bible in our minds, and the better the model is, that is, the better it *imitates* the real thing, the better it will work. Truth can be found in the Bible only if we apply ‘true’ models of the Bible text. And if the Bible is our creed, we should try to find such models in the Bible.

Secondly, the meaning of a ‘text’ is not an automatic given which exists in the text as an objective reality, being immediately available to the perceiving human mind. It is rather something which arises from an organised interaction between

- *features in the text* (where the parts and the whole interact in the ‘woven’ text structure)
- *various factors external to the text*
Thus, the reader discovers and assigns meaning to the written text in accordance with his theory or model of ‘text’.
The driving force in the reader’s discovery of and assigning meaning to the written symbols of the visible text is his ‘sense constancy’. By this is meant that ‘we expect what we hear (or read) to make sense, and we analyse the incoming message so as to conform to this criterion’. Now, the process of making sense out of a text is governed by rules which decide what is ‘legible’ (or meaningful) and what is ‘illegible’ (not meaningful). These rules consist in the reader’s

• foreknowledge (theories, models of text)
• concerns (issues, interests, problems)
• process of reading, analysing and concluding (logic, criteria, etc.)

The process of reading is guided by the answers the reader finds to the questions he puts to the text. Those questions are part of his expectations, needs, or interests, and come out of the rules which decide for him what is ‘legible’ and what is ‘illegible’. Thus, the reader’s model of text has a guiding role in formulating well-organised, relevant, and adequate questions to which the texts provide answers.

Our Seventh-day Adventist view of the Bible, therefore, must guide us in understanding the Bible texts as appropriately as possible. If we say: ‘Brother, don’t worry. The Holy Spirit will take care of it all, and Ellen White has confirmed what we are to believe.’ Then, we will lose the opportunity of talking about what we find in the Bible text, comparing it and bringing it together in unity. Why is this important? Because people do claim the Spirit’s guidance for very contradictory things, not only between various churches but also within our church. Sometimes, people seem to claim the Holy Spirit’s leading only when the interpretations fit their own points of view. May that not happen among us!

2. The Shape of the Bible and our Model of the Bible

Our model of the Bible today is usually that it is one book in one volume, where the Holy Spirit has inspired the authors to say things that are essentially unified.

Originally, however, the external shape of the Bible testified to multitude and differences. The name Biblia, which means ‘books’, announced that the Bible was a collection of different books — often preserved in some sort of cupboard, as may be seen in the mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placida in Ravenna from about A.D. 450. The number of copies was limited.

The risk that the many different books would create confusion was counteracted by a conviction. Those who brought the Bible books together and kept them as a unit saw an inner connection and ordering principle because they were convinced that the Bible is ‘God’s word’ and that what had happened in Jesus Christ was its self-evident centre. The Bible became the Bible through a process of interaction between the written word of God and the person of Jesus Christ. In the
Christian community of faith, the relation between ‘the word of God — the Bible and Christ’ was a living experience.

Today, we encounter the Bible as one volume. Superficially, it looks unified. Over the world there are hundreds of millions of Bibles and the text can now be read in more than 2000 languages.

However, despite its unified form and enormous distribution, the modern Bible reader may face questions concerning the unity of the Bible. Faith in the Bible as the word of God and in Christ as its centre has faded away, and the result is that the unity and coherence of the Bible has become more problematic. A critical thinking is fostered which divides and separates the books and chapters of the Bible.

The model of the Bible I suggest will help us today is one that includes two features:

(a) It benefits from the unified appearance of the Bible as one book, while acknowledging that it is a collection of different books, different genres and text-types, written and collected for about 1,500 years.

(b) It clearly maintains the Bible as the written Word of God which makes him known in Jesus Christ, while recognising that the Bible expresses God’s revelation in Christ in many different ways and that being true to the Bible means not to reduce this variety by harmonisation but to allow the full richness and scope of Christ to come forward.

Let me share a personal testimony here. The book of Revelation is key to an understanding of Seventh-day Adventism’s view of the Bible, and the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14:6-13 summarises our mission. Being a fourth generation Adventist and a third generation Adventist pastor and church leader, I had all this with me for years. But I never became an avid reader of Revelation, and I do confess that for many years I did not understand the point of the three angels’ messages. Revelation’s message was kind of veiled in the readings of past generations of Adventists, but it did not become my reading. This has now changed completely. And the reason is that I spent time studying Revelation as a separate book, seeking to understand the book itself and ‘ignoring’ the rest of the Bible. What I found was a wonderful, inspiring vision of God’s mission for us as a people – you can read about it in the Festschrift to Jan Paulsen (2009). I abandoned the old view of the Bible where Revelation was integrated in the Bible and where verbal clues in many different Bible texts were brought in to decide the understanding – the ‘proof text method’ was popular in the beginning of our history as a movement, i.e. when you read the Bible through a concordance of words, but also among the scholars it has for decades been very common to read Bible texts comparatively, comparing them to other texts and seldom letting the text speak for itself.

Let us not forget the Holy Spirit. Ellen White said:

‘A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given.’ (Education, p. 189).

In our models of the Bible we tend to emphasise that the Spirit inspired the authors, so the text before us is an inspired text with authority. Good. But Ellen White reminds us of the other side,
equally important: We cannot understand the Bible unless the Spirit that gave the message now helps the reader to understand it. The Spirit works together with and blesses our human activity: By a well thought-out biblical model of the Bible, our understanding will be deeper and wider, and therefore more spiritual.

When we speak of the Holy Spirit in Bible reading, however, let us remember that the Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus Christ as our Counsellor:

‘I will send him to you ... He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.’ (John 16:7, 14; cf. vv. 5-15)

As we read the Bible in the Spirit, Jesus ‘sends’ the Spirit, the Spirit ‘brings glory to Jesus’; what the Spirit makes known to us in our reading is something that ‘belongs to Jesus’. Our model of the Bible must therefore be thoroughly Christ-centred and deeply spiritual.

Ellen White said:

- ‘You should search the Bible; for it tells you of Jesus.’ (Life Sketches, p. 293)
- ‘In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.’ (Gospel Workers, p. 315)

3. A Biblical View of the Bible as a Model of Understanding

Three broad principles form the basis for a Christ-centred approach to Scripture: The reader needs (1) a spiritual preparation, (2) a biblical view of the Bible, and (3) an understanding of the basic theme and unity of the Bible.

3.1 Spiritual preparation

The Bible reader needs to work with himself to attain an attitude of humility before the word. Ellen White says that ‘meekness’ is ‘among the first qualities for Christ’s kingdom’ (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 14) and it begins with receiving the word of God: it ‘opens the heart to God’s word’ (The Sanctified Life, p. 15). In numerous instances she says that the Bible can only be understood if approached ‘with great humility of mind’ (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 37), ‘with a humble and teachable spirit’ (5 Test, p. 303), ‘with a humble heart’ (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 25; 5Test, p. 214; 2Testimony Treasures, pp. 69, 332; Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 155); ‘with humble prayer’ (2Test, p. 343); ‘with humility of heart’ (The Great Controversy, p. 530); ‘with prayer and humility’ (The Great Controversy, p. 521).

I would describe this attitude as follows:

I approach the Bible in devotion and prayer, with respect and reverence, with an openness to receive and learn, with a longing for spiritual food, hunger for God and a determination to subordinate myself and obey the word, even if it means that I must change my ways and give up
attitudes and things I want. This spiritual attitude is expressed by prayer for power and wisdom to receive the word, while I empty myself of all that is me and mine, all everyday concerns, worries, human problems, and focus totally upon God, His mercy and grace.

Nobody has this as an automatic given. It is a growing gift of God which must be desired, developed and cultivated. That is why *a regular, functional and growing personal devotional life is the foundation of a prosperous pastoral ministry in the Church.*

### 3.2 A Biblical View of the Bible

There are many, many views of the Bible, but far from all are trustworthy, make sense, or are fruitful. Since the Bible is our authority, I suggest that we need a biblical view of the Bible, which leads us to the only text in the Bible which at some length exposes what the Bible is, namely, 2 Tim. 3:15-17:

‘... and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Historical texts**

‘How from infancy you have known …’: It is clear from this statement that the Scriptures are *historical texts.* Timothy has known them for a long time, they existed before him, and witness themselves of the fact that they come from a distant past. We know today that the Bible was ready about 200 AD and that 1,800 years have passed since then. The oldest of the 66 books making up the Bible may date from 3,400 years ago. The Bible books, therefore, must be read in their historical contexts in order to secure the universal principles and messages that are relevant today.

A striking statement suggesting a lack of recognition of the Bible as made of historical texts is: ‘The King James’ Version was good enough for the apostle Paul, so it is good enough for me.’

So, we must accept that the Bible may have two basic meanings: as original text (what the historical author intended and to whom he addressed himself) and as a text providing universal principles and Christian messages valid for all times. Our view of the Bible should indicate how we distinguish between these two.

**Biblical Canon Determined by the Church**

‘The holy Scriptures’ at the time Paul wrote his second letter to the young Timothy were the Old Testament writings. Exactly which books were part of this canon in Paul’s days, especially in the third section called ‘The Writings’, is not fully certain, but in general the early evidence shows that the young church followed the Jewish way of determining the canon which was essentially established towards the end of the second century (R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, SPCK, London, 1985. pp.263, 274 ff.).
The New Testament canon was determined, not by a church council but by practices in the life of the church, where three concomitant factors dominated:

- apostolic authority (the words of Christ and of the apostles/eyewitnesses)
- right doctrine (preserve the teaching of the O.T. and of the Lord and his apostles)
- general usage (avoid sectarianism)

At the third Council of Carthage (397), the canon that had already gained widespread acceptance by such factors was simply confirmed.

The extent of the canon of the Bible is not determined by any clear Scriptural reference, but it was determined by the church. It is our faith that God led the church in establishing the canon as it now is. In the same way we believe that God has been involved in the Bible translations and the copying and preserving of the biblical manuscripts over the centuries.

The church that determined the canon saw itself as a fulfilment of the teaching of the Bible, namely, (a) as the body of Christ, which has Christ as its head ‘from whom the whole body grows and builds itself up in love’ (Eph. 4:15-16) and which Christ ‘feeds and cares for’ (Eph. 5:30), and (b) as keeper of the word of God, which ‘is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and judging the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart’ (Hebr. 4:12). Thus, the church’s decision on the canon is based on the inseparable identity between Christ and the Word, being kept alive in the church through the Holy Spirit and by Christ as the Head of his body.

**The Holy Scriptures are inspired by God**

What Paul meant when using the word *theopneustos*, ‘God-breathed’, has been the subject of extended theological study and discussion. But it is simple enough. Paul says that the Bible originated with God, not humankind. The Bible always underlines that the writers were inspired, but the words were their own. Ellen White gives the following summary of a biblical view of the Bible:

‘It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.’ (Manuscript 24, 1886; 1 SM 21)

This view of the Bible implies that the Bible text functions as the formal vehicle that conveys the message, meaning and spiritual impact of the Word of God on readers that are influenced by the Spirit of God. It also implies a view of inspiration that is not limited by the written signs in the text but by the event of communication between author, text and reader -- not only were the Bible authors inspired, but every time the Bible is being read, the reader who is led by the Holy Spirit understands God’s word. This is the point of 1 Cor. 2:10-16, being highlighted several times by Ellen White.
The Holy Scriptures give wisdom and knowledge for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus
This is the primary function of the Bible and we should read it with that expectation. Salvation by faith in Christ should be the biblical focus in our private lives, in our ministry and in the life of the church. This focus implies that, while we recognize that there may be truth that is not found in the Bible, the Bible alone provides the truth needed for salvation. It further implies that, as God’s people, we have no reason to proclaim any other truth than the saving knowledge by faith in Christ, since ‘in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form’ (Col. 2:3, 9).

The Holy Scriptures train in righteousness and equip for every good work
By daily Bible reading, we allow the Bible to be a useful tool for the Holy Spirit to teach, rebuke, correct, train and equip ourselves, leading us to incorporate principles of a Christ-like life and have a clear understanding of Bible doctrines. These are in no way separate from Christ. It is salvation by faith in Christ that equips us with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), who then explains the secrets of God’s word in a spiritual way (1 Cor. 2:10-16). Therefore, the best way to do evangelism and win souls should be to lead people to a faith in Christ as Saviour, rather than focus on an intellectual acceptance of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. When the believer believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit will provide a spiritual understanding of Bible doctrine, which helps to keep Christ and my spiritual communion with him as the central topic of the Bible.

3.3 The Central Topic of the Bible
The third basic principle of a Christ-centred approach to reading the Bible is the recognition that the Bible has one central topic, namely, ‘the mission of God as Creator, the love of God as his character, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as his power of salvation’. It may also be described as ‘the plan of salvation and the restoration of the image of God in man’. Ellen White states:

‘The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God’ (Education, p. 125)

When the image of God is restored in man, the love of God, his presence, is restored. So, Paul could say in Galatians 5:6:

‘For in Christ Jesus ... the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.’

This central topic of the Bible is ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’ Ellen White develops it further in Christ's Object Lessons. In passing, she mentions ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’ on p. 129. In the context of this reference, she says that the sources of truth are three:

’The great storehouse of truth is the word of God – the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience of God's dealing with human life.’ (p. 125)

What are we to find in the storehouse of truth? ’The heaven-born love of Christ’ (p. 125), ’the gospel’ (p. 133), 'the deep things of God’ (p. 133), and 'the truth as it is in Jesus’ (p. 129). Since all this has its source in God, who is boundless and Almighty, Ellen White repeatedly points out
that human beings must diligently search the truth. This search proceeds from a need, from our 'hungering and thirsting for the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ’ (p. 125).

Now, listen to this carefully: Since 'it is possible for us to see all that we can bear of the divine compassion’, the-truth-as-it-is-in-Jesus is unfolded to the humble, contrite soul. Thus, 'as we search the word of God in humility of heart, the grand theme of redemption will open to our research’ (p. 129). There is a connection between human emptiness and divine fullness: the more we humble ourselves and confess our needs, the more God is able to provide of his gifts. The way to growth is by an awareness of our own emptiness – like the tax collector standing at a distance, not daring even to look up to heaven, but calling to God for mercy upon his life as a sinner.

The door into our hearts for truth is our attitude of humbleness and total need of God. Even this is however a gift from Jesus:

‘Often there will come to us a sweet sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart ...’ (pp. 129 f.; italics supplied).

All this leads us back to the first point, the attitude of humility before the Bible. But it also provides the basis for the following argument:

If each Bible text is part of the whole of the Bible by links with ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’, then it is a crucial skill required by the serious Bible reader that he/she is able to find in each sentence the clue that connects it with the truth as it is in Jesus.

We must therefore train ourselves and develop our ability to master contextual Bible reading, applying the love of God and the plan of salvation as our main concern in reading. To you as an esteemed colleague, a fellow pastor, I say: Exercise your skill in making these connections from any text in your Bible! And teach your congregations and youth to follow!

Our mission is to make God known in Europe. We make him known by reading the Bible with people and enabling them to experience the power of his word in their lives. The devil knows that this is the way, and therefore he is now busy trying to lead our entire culture in the western world away from reading, away from the Bible. Let us protest against that and start communities where Bible reading is at the centre, so that the truth as it is in Jesus may be widely known!

---

*By Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists*
Let’s Make God Known

Concluding Address at the Trans-European Division Pastors' Conference 
25 August, 2012 Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia [Bertil Wiklander]

Let’s make God known!

Let’s know God, so that our witness to him is genuine and credible!

Let’s do it in being and living, in speaking and writing, in proclamation and dialogue, in preaching and teaching, in argumentation and invitation!

Let there be no doubt that this is not like going on vacation. It is a fight – ‘Fight the good fight of the faith’, says Paul (1 Tim. 6:12). Bear in mind what he says:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5: ‘For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.’

In another letter, Paul describes what our weapon is:

Ephesians 6:13-18: ‘Put on the full armour of God … Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.’

Making God known is part of the Mission of God to destroy evil and create a new heaven and earth where he has peaceful and growing communion with man (Revelation 2:1-5). As Creator of all, he is the God of all peoples, and he wants to be known to them all. He calls us to take up his mission to his world by making him known. Let’s make God known!

Making God known is part of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). God gave Christ all authority in heaven and earth in order to complete God’s mission. By this authority, Christ commissioned his disciples – you and me -- to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of God, and teaching them all that Christ stands for, i.e. the fullness of God. Christ promises to be with us always, to the end of the age, as we learn from him and come to know God in an even deeper sense. ‘Being a disciple is being an apprentice or a learner, who has decided to be with someone so that he can learn to do what that person does and become what that person is’ (Dallas Willard). We are learning to know God in Christ, ‘because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us’ (Rom. 5:5). This life that we are learning to live is what we must share with the world. Let’s make God known!
Making God known is part of the identity of Seventh-day Adventists, as we take up God’s end-time calling through the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14:6-13. Jesus is mentioned here only once, in verse 12, in the peculiar phrase πιστις Ἰησού, ‘faith of Jesus’. What does this phrase mean in the context of making God known?

Literally, Revelation 14:12 says:

**Revelation 14:12:** ‘This is the patient endurance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.’

The phrase πιστις Ἰησού, may be translated in four ways:

- faith of Jesus,
- faith in Jesus,
- faithfulness of Jesus,
- faithfulness to Jesus

As we make an informed choice from the biblical data, these observations stand out:

1. A subjective genitive fits the immediate context better (as demonstrated by Sigve Tonstad in *Saving God’s Reputation*, 2006, 179-185): it has to be πιστις of Jesus.

2. As a term rooted in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, πιστις means ‘belief (in God’s words), obedience, trust, hope, and faithfulness.’¹ A combination of the meanings ‘faith as trust or hope’ and ‘faithfulness or obedience as loyalty’ is supported by the close parallel in 13:10:

**Revelation 13:10:** ‘If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed by the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.’

Facing coercion and violent death, ‘the faith (of the saints)’ is both trust in God and faithfulness to God.

3. ‘The faith of Jesus’ in 14:12 is to be ‘kept’ by the saints — similarly to their ‘keeping’ or ‘preserving’² the commandments of God — in a situation of widespread idolatry and distrust in the true God, which suggests that what is at stake here is loyalty to God.

In keeping with these observations and seeing a connection between ‘faith of Jesus’ and ‘witness of Jesus’ in Revelation,³ I understand ‘faith of Jesus’ in terms of trust in God being demonstrated as faithfulness and obedience to God.⁴

This understanding of πιστις Ἰησού reflects most adequately the theme of the cosmic conflict in Revelation and keeps the character of the divine government in view (true love as sacrifice of self).⁵ (a) It is meaningful as a reference to Jesus’ faithfulness to God until death, which is the very point of the exhortation in Revelation 14:12; (b) it would mean that ‘the faithfulness of
Jesus’ is being *witnessed* to by the faithfulness of those who die in the Lord, who follow the Lamb and who are therefore being blessed in 14:13 – *but they also make God known!*

The saints are encouraged in 14:12 to endure in their loyalty to God. The basic meaning of Greek *hypomonē* is ‘steadfast endurance until the end under persecutions or temptations.’ In Revelation, the threat against the faith comes from divisive teachings and the blasphemy, religious coercion and death threats by God’s enemies.

The point of the encouragement in Revelation 14:12, however, is *faithfulness* that endures even *until violent death* by the sword. This goes back to the core value in Jesus’ teachings, that loyalty to God is more worth than life (Mark 8:35; Matt. 10:39; Luke 9:24). Peter tells us:

**1 Peter 2:20-23:** ‘If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. … When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.’

Reading Revelation 14:12 as a description of the disciples of Jesus as those who ‘keep the commandments of God and the faithfulness of Jesus even until death’ is sustained by many features in Revelation as a whole:

(a) the righteous dead (Rev. 14:13) are asked to rest a little longer until their number is complete of those ‘who are soon to be killed as they themselves have been killed’ (Rev. 6:11);

(b) the killing of the saints is connected with a call for their ‘endurance and faith’ (Rev. 13:9-10);

(c) the righteous dead are being ‘beheaded for (their) witness of Jesus’ (Rev. 20:4);

(d) Babylon is described as ‘drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus’ (Rev. 17:6) (note also Rev 6:10; 16:6; 18:24; 19:2);

(e) keeping faithfulness *until death* is what Jesus’ is asking his followers to do at the beginning of the book: ‘Be faithful *until death*, and I will give you the crown of life’ (Rev. 2:10; cf. 3:10-11);

(f) The faithful are those who overcome the enemy of God ‘by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their witness, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death’ (Rev. 12:11).

We have here an important key to understanding Revelation 14, a passage that Ellen White described in 1904 as ‘a chapter of the deepest interest’ that ‘will soon be understood in all its bearings’.

(a) The saints’ *faithfulness until death* is their ‘witness’ (*martyria*) to Jesus (Rev. 6:9; 12:11, 17; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4) that follows the ‘witness’ (*martyria*) that Jesus gave through his death on the cross as the Lamb of God (Rev. 1:2, 5; 5:6, 9, 12; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8; 19:13).
(b) The ‘witness of Jesus’ is his faithful revelation of God, or ‘the word of God’ (Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10; 19:11-13; 20:4) through ‘the spirit of prophecy’.

(c) By obedience until death, Jesus’ life has displayed God’s faithfulness (Hebr. chesed) to his creation, or, in other words, God’s love (Hebr. chesed) for the world and his people, revealing the way in which God rules the world as opposed to how the satanic trinity (‘Babylon’) rules the world (by falsehood and coercion).

(d) In God’s mission to achieve the new world-order seen in vision by John in Revelation 21:1-5, Christ as the Lamb that was slaughtered is therefore the key. All is based on that.

And that is what makes God known!

Jesus is ‘the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth’ (Rev. 1:5). As the saints follow him, they witness to his faithfulness to God until death and will receive their share in his victory over death and rule the world with him.

Revelation 14:6-13 not only describes what it means to make God known to the world but what it means to be a disciple of Jesus at the end of time. The three angels’ messages are an intensification of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus at the end of time!

Seventh-day Adventists: We are called to this life!

Since the victory of Christ came from his faithfulness to God and his will, John encourages the Seventh-day Adventists to follow Christ’s victorious faithfulness — until death, if necessary. In 14:4, the redeemed are those who ‘follow the Lamb wherever he goes.’ Their faithfulness imitates the faithfulness of Jesus Christ who has authority over death:

Revelation 1:17-18: ‘I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades’.

In light of this, the blessing of the faithful who die in the Lord (14:13) acknowledges their claim to Christ’s victory over death and opens their path to the reward of eternal life. Thus, following Jesus’ faithfulness to God until death is our path to blessedness and rest in death and then to eternal life.

Do you see what I mean?

Do you see that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the whole book of Revelation?

Do you see that the faithfulness of Jesus in making God known, even unto death, is the reason for the resurrection? (Paul uses the term ‘humility’ instead of ‘faithfulness’ as the reason for the resurrection in Philippians 2:1-11.)
And do you see that we, the faithful, are to follow Jesus, learning from Jesus, and making God known in him?

Can we do this in Europe? Of course we can!

If you doubt that, you have been led astray by the mass media that bombard your mind every moment. In Europe, the tacit assumption is that there is no God. Even in the Olympic Games, there is no God and he is never being mentioned, although the winners make the sign of the cross and bow down on the tarmac to thank God for their victory. As Mo Farah won his two sensational gold medals on 10,000 m and 5,000 m, he bowed down first of all to thank God. And the British commentator did not know what to say, so he said: ‘He is having a private moment.’ That is how far you can go to make God known in the televised Olympic Games in Europe!

In the midst of all our sophistication, all our welfare, all our pretension that we are living in the best of worlds, however, Europeans fear death. They lack hope. They look for meaning in their lives and a better quality of life.

And here we are, God’s people, having the best that life can offer, because we know that God has defeated death in Christ and is working to accomplish his mission to restore everything according to the Creator’s intentions. And what do we do?

What are you going to take with you from this Pastors Council?

We normally read Matthew 25 and the parable of the sheep and the goats as referring to material help. When Jesus says:

Matthew 25:42–43: ‘I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

… we may feel urged to make a donation to ADRA. And let’s do that, but remembering that Jesus taught us that ‘life is more worth than food’ (Matthew 6:25) and that ‘man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’ (Matt 4:4).

What if Jesus’ words in Matthew 25 are also about peoples’ spiritual needs in Europe? On the great day of his coming, this is then what he will say to us, pastors and leaders of God’s prophetic church at the end of time:

Matthew 25:35–36: ‘I was hungry [for God] and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty [for God] and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger [and did not know God or feel at home in the church] and you invited me in, I needed clothes [that would cover me from the shame of my weaknesses] and you clothed me [with the love of God], I was sick [of the coldness of lost hope] and you looked after me, I was in prison [where my only exit was termination by eternal death] and you came to visit me [bringing me a way out].’
**Let’s make God known!** Bring it back to your churches and organisations: *Let’s make God known!*

**Deuteronomy 6:6-8:** ‘Keep it in your hearts. Impress it on your children. Talk about it when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie it as a symbol on your hands and bind it on your foreheads. Write it on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.’

**Let’s make God known!**

---

7 Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 6, 205-208
8 Tonstad argues for a sense that brings to view a legacy or a trust that is safeguarded and preserved as well as ‘kept’ in the sense of ‘put into practice’ (Reputation, 184).
9 Ibidem, 179-185.
4 For a discussion of the fine line between ‘faith’ as the confidence in God demonstrated by Jesus’ and ‘faithfulness of Jesus to God,’ see Tonstad, Reputation, 185-189.

---

*By Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists*
Managing Time

16 July 2012 The Netherlands [Wim Altink] Are we managing time or is time managing us? Are we in command of our schedule of activities or are the duties pushing and commanding us?

In this short essay I will share five practical insights on how we as pastors and leaders can avoid being slaves of our diary and the expectations of others.

1. Determine our personal tax

This sounds too good to be true. It is government which determines our taxes! In setting our own tax, I refer to the amount of work we can handle considering our own physical, mental and spiritual strength. Some of us can work 80-90 hours a week for a considerably long time without wearing out. Others know that their workload capacity lies at a maximum of 50 hours a week. A pastor in the Netherlands, who takes care of 4 churches in a large district, has set for himself the limit of 50 hours. He is faithful in not going over his own tax. He is able to continue through muddy waters and difficult times in some of the churches, because of this. Before that (crossing the 50 hours tax frequently) he had severe health problems.

2. Determine our personal schedule

Make sure that every week you have scheduled a day off. This is ‘holy’ time, do not squander it. Defend it with all your might and if there is any reason to work on that day, make sure you have created another day off. When it comes to daily appointments it is essential not to overbook your own diary. Open space in our schedules is like wind on a sunny Spring morning. We need to avoid only sitting in meetings, dialogues and conferences. It is healthy to – now and then – have only one appointment a day. The rest of the day you will enjoy time to walk around in the office and talk with the cashier, and the Bible correspondence coordinator. You will have time to
handle that unexpected phone call. You will have time to read that article which has been staring you in the face for some time.

3. Determine our professional priorities

Working in a team (as leaders in an office), or as pastors within the setting of church board members, it is essential to set your specific task and share this with the rest of your team. As leaders we like to do many things at the same time and tend to forget that we are part of team in which we find colleagues willing to do what we cannot do. I try to focus on three priorities in my work. I did this as a local pastor, and now also as a president. At the moment these are for me: (1) fostering a healthy climate concerning unity within diversity; (2) developing a strong stewardship concept; (3) stimulate leadership development.

4. Determine the quality of our working time

Our responsibilities tend to be far reaching and ‘heavy.’ The Dutch tradition of the ‘sacred’ mid-morning break, is not just to have time to drink but also to socialize. Many issues are beginning to be resolved in a relaxed atmosphere. Seeking humour in our work will make things lighter and more pleasant. Meeting with fellow workers around a dining table makes good progress and if you enjoy meeting people in their work setting, why not go there and visit them, instead of having them coming to you? When we go out and meet fellow believers where they are, it gives an important signal to those we meet and maybe, we can enjoy managing by walking around.

5. Determine a sense of working-time satisfaction

Our work is never finished and by the time we think we can quit, we realise that this e-mail needs to be written today, and that article I promised to hand in is too close to a deadline to ignore. With our own lap-tops we always take the office with us wherever we go. This is very handy and practical but we never close the door of the office, so to say. Managing time means that we plan our writing and speaking appointments in such a way that we avoid too much time pressure and when we have finished a certain project, we should be able to close the door behind us. I have promised myself, after finishing writing this essay, to sit in the sun for 10 minutes. The weather is just gorgeous.

Managing time is not a goal in itself, it is an instrument to create a balance in our lives. Managing time will help us to be in command of our lives and not to be governed by meetings and the expectations of others. Travelling around my two most essential working instruments are the Bible and my diary. To which a fellow pastor said: “and in fact my diary is most important. I can always buy a new Bible, if I lose it, but I can never replace my diary.” Well, that is true, isn’t it? When we have determined our do’s and don’ts and when we have put that in our diaries, let us be faithful to our own plan. As the old saying has it: “If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.”

At the end of the day, when we, falling more often than we like to admit, are managing our time, we are doing more than just that. Because we have reached a reasonable level of balance between work and private life, we are showing to others that we have found our fulfilment in doing our different tasks. We feel content being ministers, nurses, doctors, teachers and in
enjoying our calling, we are planting seeds for young people to hear the same calling. They are attracted by people who feel satisfied because there is a kind of harmony between our work load and our working strength. I hope that we can be such people. Managing time will surely help us in that direction.

By Wim Altink, MDiv, President, Netherlands Union Conference
Used with permission from Leadership Development Newsletter – March 2009
Abide with Me

01 August 2012 Washington State, USA [Wayne Blakely/Record] In addressing the United Nations prayer breakfast, Ravi Zacharias, the Christian apologist, asked the question: “How do you reach a generation that listens with its eyes and thinks with its feelings?” It’s a profound question that should not simply be addressed to leaders outside the Church, but to each of us in the Church. As earth’s history is rapidly approaching its conclusion, many of us have come to accept “feelings” as our guide to “truth”. And in no area is this more true than in the field of human sexuality.

Since the sexual revolution broke out in the West, society has been pressured over and over again to abandon sexual standards based on Christian ideals. First we were told that sex outside of marriage was not only morally acceptable, but a healthy part of human development. Then we were told that the idea of a lifetime commitment in marriage was an oppressive anachronism. It was a short line from there to adopt the posture that human life so inconveniently created outside of stable relationships was expendable. And then came the gay rights movement with the message that homosexual sex is not only natural, but morally good.

I, like many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, believed the new message of sexual liberation. After almost 40 years living an active gay lifestyle, however, I have come to a very different conclusion. I’ve seen friends die, I’ve heard the heart cries of people caught in complete hopelessness that comes with a cold permissiveness, and I’ve heard over and over again the love of my Father calling me back to a life of obedience. Today I know that the opposite of “homosexuality” is not heterosexuality as many are inclined to believe—rather it is holiness. It is the holy and wholly encompassing love of God that can fill the gaping chasm in our lives and give us the healing we all so desperately need from the sin that plagues all of us.

The narrative formed by gay rights activists, however, is finding an echo among those in the Church who believe by ignoring or excusing sinful behaviour, they are extending love. They are not. It is true that God loves us just the way we are, regardless of our sin, and every person—homosexual, heterosexual or asexual—can be deeply thankful for that. But it is not true that God leaves us desperately mired in behaviour that destroys us physically, emotionally and spiritually. Jesus desires something more from all who have been born with a sinful nature. He wants us to develop an intimate relationship with Him and invite the Holy Spirit to bring about change in our lives. But the change He promises us is not about making a gay person straight, any more than it is about making heterosexuals who struggle with lust into asexual beings who have no desire at all. No, it is more complex than that, but no less remarkable.

When I immersed myself in getting to know Christ and submitted my will to Him, many amazing changes began to take place. He took over and revealed His perfect plan—a plan completely consistent with His revealed word, not a plan based on subjective feelings and emotive appeals that is at jarring odds with His revelation. He promises that as we trust and abide in Him, we become more like Him. The more we love Him, the more we are drawn to His holiness.
For decades many same-sex attracted people have experienced silence on the topic of homosexuality by the Church. In that silence, many have left the Church without knowing what God desires of them. Some have come to question whether or not God even loves them, accepts them, whether they are so broken they cannot be saved. Some have been treated like lepers—shunned, scorned and neglected as if their sexual temptations are somehow more sinful than everyone else’s. Others believe that God loves them, but begin to wrap God around self and live according to subjective truths rather than responding to God’s love with a desire to obey Him.

But praise God, there are those who have been reached through divine intervention and are claiming His victory and healing today. I am such an individual, “as were some of you”. Today, God has a ministry through me. He preserved me, and precious others, for such a time as this.

Often, it is not until we are cornered in the dark, that we are able to hear that still small voice. Humility, while frequently painful, can reveal light that seems to have been hidden by deception. When I was finally humbled before God, I recognised the voice of the Holy Spirit. My heart broke before God and I fell to my knees weeping and seeking His forgiveness. Where much is forgiven, there is much love, and today I love my Lord with my entire heart, soul and strength.

The clarity of what God revealed became awe-inspiring. Not just regarding homosexual behaviour, but with regard to all sin and His request of us to lay it at His feet, seek and live in His righteousness. It’s a lot more difficult than it sounds. But it is rewarding beyond any earthly pleasure. Temptation remains my reminder of how much I need Jesus and how I immediately must call upon Him to be in charge of my mind and my decision-making. But temptation is not sin—sin occurs when we give in to temptation rather than trusting in our all-powerful Saviour.

We are living in a world in which evil often appears to triumph and in which accepting God’s standards often makes us a laughing stock, or worse, actively hated. I know that by writing this piece, I will be mocked, my character will be attacked, and I will receive yet another wave of hate mail. It is the least I can do for a Saviour who suffered much more on my account.

Today, gay rights supporters often label anyone standing for a life of obedience to God a “bigot” or “homophobe”. They are the kinds of pejorative labels designed to marginalise and silence God’s call for obedience. I don’t believe that homophobia is the support of biblical sexual principles, but rather it is the refusal to reach out and share the love and gospel with the LGBT community. What kind of cold indifference would result in people who know God’s truth, who know His last day call to a loving, holy relationship, remaining silent as millions of people reject God and continue in sin? That isn’t love; that is a fear of homosexuality that is so strong, you prefer to see men and women lose their souls for eternity rather than have the strength of character to give an honest witness of grace, love, repentance and salvation.

More than ever before, leaders, pastors and teachers need to be educated by those who have experienced and chosen to live a redeemed life in Jesus. As He directs our hearts under His influence, we can all become the “new creation” as described in 2 Corinthians 5:17. By recognising His glory and authority we can choose to be called out of darkness and live in His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).
The Church cannot afford to be afraid of LGBT people—we are, after all, just people. You can’t afford to be indifferent—we need the love and healing of the gospel as much as anyone. You can’t afford to be so prudish you fail to discuss openly the issue of sexual behaviour. Everyone, everywhere is talking about it, and when the Church is silent, when you are silent, it isn’t neutrality or prudence, it’s cowardice and indifference.

That said, this issue does require thought and care. Calling LGBT people horrible names or expecting people to somehow magically transpose their sexual orientation is not the right approach. Shunning or shaming is also very damaging. Accepting, loving, caring, while always honestly representing God’s call to an obedient life for all of us—that is the way Christ treated all sinners, and it is the path we must follow.

God is on the move. He is holding back the four winds. He is revealing His truth. He is calling His beloved sinners to come home. I frequently teach in my presentations that we cannot share what we do not have. By engaging in an intimate relationship with Jesus, amazing changes occur. When we are living in a continual walk with Him, those we encounter will see Jesus in us and have a desire for the life He offers all.

Let those who you come in contact with see Jesus in your eyes and through your demonstration of His love. Live the love that draws the sin-sick soul into a relationship with Jesus. Christianity is not about “listening with our eyes, and thinking with our feelings”. But it is also not simply a prayer in the morning, evening and studying the Sabbath School lesson either. Victory and healing of all sin is in the continual, constant abiding in Him that results in a lifetime promise of true freedom, true acceptance and true love.

By Wayne Blakely

Wayne Blakely lives in Washington State, USA, where he works as an account executive. He has written for the Adventist Review and presented in a number of venues on the Christian approach to sexuality. He operates the <www.knowhislove.com> website.

This piece was originally published in the South Pacific Division Record, www.record.net.au
Never Give Up

Practical insights regarding reclaiming inactive youth

Stop your crying and wipe away your tears. All that you have done for your children will not go unrewarded; they will return from the enemies land. There is hope for your future; your children will come home. I, the Lord, have spoken. Jeremiah 31: 16-17 (Good News)

The loss of young people through the back door is a real issue for the church today. It is imperative that we take steps to make sure that as many as possible of those growing up in the church will remain to become active members. I also believe there is an overwhelming need to reach out to those who may, for whatever reason, have already become inactive over the years and reclaim them for the church.

In undertaking a doctoral level dissertation I undertook a pilot project at a local church. Although the numbers were limited, the findings were significant. The headline news is that over 90% of inactive youth responding to an initial contact, together with a short questionnaire, clearly still saw themselves as being Christian, and fifty per cent felt that they would one day return to the church of their youth.

So how do we help make this a reality? I think we would all resonate with the following assertion that the effective care of young people today must be seen as a) an immediate priority, b) a strategic priority, and c) a critical issue for all Christian leaders. I believe that the church – our church – has a limited window of opportunity which demands that the time for action is now.

Summary of Research Findings

A summary of the survey findings, that I personally conducted, revealed a number of interesting practical insights that can be summarized in the following ten points.

1. It is imperative that those who are inactive are followed up and not left to drift away unnoticed. From my limited sample, females seemed more responsive than males to cold contact, but males will respond once a real and warm link can be established.
2. In their early years, friends remain the top reason why young people enjoy attending church.
3. The early, mid and late teenage years are the focal point when youth make decisions for or
against continuing church fellowship. The peak age bracket for becoming inactive, in this study, was between ages fifteen and twenty.

4. There exists a continuing contact system through the family. This usually remains intact even when a young person has left church fellowship.

5. The church is not seen as warm and caring and youth often see church members as being critical and narrow minded. The attitude of older members was expressed as the top area of dislike felt about the church.

6. There exists a disconnect between dedicating young children and baptism. Only a third of the group were baptized. We are clearly not discipling enough of our own young people while they are actively with us in the church.

7. Some young people may be very sporadic in their church attendance but do not consider that they have cut all ties with the church. Church attendance does not seem to be a major priority for some during their early twenties or period of tertiary education.

8. Virtually half of the group felt they would return to church one day. This provides hope in so many cases that all is certainly not lost.

9. Overwhelmingly the young people surveyed showed that they still felt that Christianity was relevant in their lives.

10. Each young person is unique and has their own story to tell. We must never treat them as merely statistics.

Key Points

There are a number of key points that can be seen from this and other studies. Here I will highlight just three.

- The church needs a clear and effective discipling process for young people. This is as referenced in point 6 above. This year, being the Year of Discipleship, gives a window of opportunity to address this need for the Ambassador age group (16-21) through some pilot programmes in the TED territory. Additionally we will hold the first Youth Matters Symposium with the title “Discipleship that Lasts”, aiming towards establishing good discipleship models for Student-age Ministry.

- The Church Warmth and Thinking Climates are very important. This is as referenced in point 5 above and is powerfully backed up by the European Valuegenesis Survey. (see graph)

It is quite clear that both on the Thinking Climate and the Church Warmth measures decrease with age and that we are currently not meeting the needs of our older youth. The “thinking climate” measures to what extent a church stimulates its members to think, learn and ask questions. The “church warmth” measures how much a church is felt to be friendly, caring and an accepting environment. Both areas are of crucial importance in determining young peoples’ commitment to the church.

These areas can, and must, be readily addressed through a concerted relational ministry for young adults at the local church level.
Most definitely there are inactive members (please don’t use the term backsliders!) who will look to return at some point. Point 8 highlights this and the reasons, I believe, are centered in a number of issues involving the positive legacy of past church teaching, warm memories and a search for past identity. As one of the respondents to the pilot survey stated “I still carry and remember a lot of what I was taught every day.” Another reflected about a return one day and stated, “My departure from the church was a gradual one, if there is going to be a return, it’ll also be a gradual one.”

This was also found to be true in another study of returning Adventists who definitely expressed that they still had warm memories from their childhood. “Eight out of ten persons interviewed expressed memories of early Adventism that reminded them of happy times in the church.”

Roots and identity are a very powerful combination. The search for identity is not static and just as it is part of finding one’s own identity that pushes young people to challenge their value systems, and sometimes push them away, so too the reverse search for identity may well bring them back one day to their roots. Many young people who question their parents, values and beliefs ultimately accept them as their own.
Conclusion

The desired outcome is that returning “prodigals” will have a chance to return to a church that is ready and waiting to meet them. Such churches may vary in appearance from country to country but it is clear that any church that wishes to effectively nurture returning young people must make this a priority. In so doing they will need to have a well thought-out discipleship process in place, a warm climate that encourages spiritual growth and also an understanding of the need of many young adults to re-connect with their spiritual roots.

The good news is that no matter how long someone has been away returning always remains an option. Never give up, there is hope for the future.

2 Research carried out as part of DMin dissertation “Bringing Home Our Adventist Prodigals: A Strategic Plan To Reclaim Youth In The Trans-European Division.” (Andrews University 2009)
4 The TED Church of Refuge (CORe) initiative is dedicated to helping our churches to retain and reclaim young adults. For further information see www.churchofrefuge.eu

By Paul Tompkins, Youth Ministry Director, Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Leadership Development Journal - May 2012
Arriving in a new district or taking up a new position in an organisation is always fraught with anticipation, uncertainty and worry. This was particularly true when my husband took a pastoral position in an area with which he was not familiar. Shortly upon arrival, one well-meaning church member offered him very insightful advice. He said: ‘You cannot tell the people from our region what to do; you can only invite them to follow you’. What are the leaders’ characteristics that will inspire others to follow?

There is no shortage of literature identifying the most pertinent qualities that every good leader ought to have. We are told that amongst other traits leaders should possess cognitive strength, analytical reasoning, technical skills, inspirational motivation, vision, integrity, fairness, confidence and emotional intelligence. It is to be expected that a highly intelligent pastor or head of a department who oozes with confidence will generate respect from his congregation or his team. However, there are some indicators to suggest that it is in fact emotional intelligence, or as some termed it emotional literacy, that separates ordinary leaders from those capable of great things. What is more, it has been suggested that an ‘emotionally illiterate life’ that is often accompanied with emotional numbness and inability to respond to the emotional needs of others, is a significant shortcoming of those called to lead others.

Emotional intelligence, a concept that emerged in the 80s, has gradually entered into the vocabulary of psychologists, counsellors, life coaches and other professionals and it seems to be here to stay. However, what is emotional intelligence or emotional literacy? One of many available definitions suggests emotional intelligence to be ‘effective awareness, control and management of our own emotions and awareness and understanding of other people’. This human quality has captured the imagination of researchers resulting in what appears to be a convincing argument for the benefits of emotional sensitivity whilst pointing to the shortcomings in the case of its absence.

The far-reaching consequence of limited, or even non-existent emotional awareness is documented by an evaluation of the leadership qualities of past American presidents. Following the analysis of public communication, organisational capacity, political skill, vision, cognitive style and emotional intelligence of eleven presidents the authors acknowledge that ‘in the world of imagination it is possible to envisage a cognitively and emotionally intelligent chief executive, who happens also to be an inspiring public communicator, a capable White House organiser, and the possessor of exceptional political skill and vision. In the real world, human imperfection is inevitable, but some imperfections are more disabling than others.’ Having identified several presidents who despite some noteworthy historical achievements are responsible for ‘the most unhappy episodes of the twentieth century’ the authors reach a bold conclusion: ‘Beware the presidential contender who lacks emotional intelligence. In its absence all else may turn to ashes’.
This strong statement is not surprising given that an absence of emotional insight appears to have a profound effect not only on the leaders’ ability to understand his or her co-workers, but it is also responsible for the inaccurate appraisal of self. Daniel Goleman identified self-awareness as the first quality possessed by emotionally literate leaders. This includes ‘having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives.’ What is it that is making me happy, fulfilled and content? What, when and who brings the worst out in me? These are just some of the questions that need answering in an attempt to become an emotionally aware individual. Those people, the author continues ‘are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful. Rather, they are honest with themselves and others.’

A good starting point in becoming in tune with self and others is a systematic appraisal of ones own strengths and weaknesses. This soul-searching exercise is not about naming what I should or ought to be good at; instead, it seeks to identify the areas in which I do particularly well, the skills I accomplish with ease, and the tasks that capture my imagination. It is about the input that generates positive feedbacks from those I know are honest with me. Having identified all of my strengths, my limitations need careful and sincere consideration. Which aspects of my job make me very anxious or do not result in a positive response from others? What would those closest to me identify as my weakest point as a leader? Do I need help with any aspect of my life? Conducting an accurate evaluation of one’s weaknesses has the potential to contribute to a realistic approach to the challenges that any job brings. This is expected to include utilising strengths appropriately whilst being careful when engaging in the areas recognised as weaknesses. Furthermore, identifying appropriate strategies that will address the weaker aspects of my own performance is also an important aspect of this self-discovery.

An additional benefit of being aware of one’s own strengths and weaknesses might result in increased confidence as well as in the readiness to acknowledge one’s own limitations. I have recently been asked to teach and work closely with a young, sharp and very intelligent scholar who is leading some ‘cutting edge’ work in his area of expertise. It would be dishonest of me to omit the fact that I was concerned about being intimidated by him, but quite the opposite happened. In addition to his enthusiasm and his superior handling of knowledge, his readiness to freely identify areas which he apparently ‘knew little about’, and his modesty about his expertise made him not only approachable but also stimulated learning. This is not surprising because genuine humbleness, not unlike empathy, to be discussed next, is a quality that has enabling properties.

Empathy has been acknowledged as an important dimension of emotional intelligence that, whilst most easily recognisable, is frequently absent from the repertoire of essential leadership skills. And yet, an empathetic leader might be able to prevent the team and individuals from becoming overwhelmed, disillusioned, and even depressed in the course of duty. He or she will not remain silent about the professional challenges or personal hardships his co-workers are going through. Showing genuine interest in his or her workforce will be an integral aspect of the leadership style employed by an emotionally literate leader. Empathy discussed here however is not an ‘un-businesslike’ sentimental style of leadership, but a leadership capable of taking notice of employees circumstances, feelings and ability ‘in the process of making intelligent decisions’. These leaders are in tune with ‘the messages beneath the words being spoken’. This will also
include unequivocal respect for others as well as commitment to understanding the way culture impacts upon human interactions.

As a social work academic I am frequently involved in attempting to teach students to be both aware of their own feelings as well as being sensitive to the needs of those they will be working with. Positive regard for every individual alongside a related set of traditional values that, amongst others, includes acceptance, a non-judgmental attitude and a respect for people are deeply embedded in the knowledge base and skills passed on to social work students. Despite the noble intentions and genuine motivation of most students, this approach to training often feels as though one is trying to teach budding social workers to create a beautiful master-piece by ‘painting by numbers’. As a Christian who teaches at a State University I often question whether it is indeed possible to develop those qualities through education and training alone? Could it be that identified leadership techniques, including the emotional intelligence, might remain just a mechanical exercise without drawing on the power available to those who have a meaningful spiritual life?

There is no doubt that many Adventist leaders are known for their excellent leadership that includes the vast repertoire of skills expected of an effective Christian leader. Equally, as most leaders know, in the ‘hustle and bustle’ of pursuing the common goal, it is very easy to overlook one’s own emotional needs alongside the needs of co-workers. I have attempted to argue that a leadership that is committed to developing the emotional intelligence that includes keen knowledge of self and dedication to the understanding of others has the potential to overcome this omission. I would like to conclude by acknowledging that emotional intelligence that draws from Christ’s example and uses his power in achieving this goal will give real meaning to this important leadership skill. After all, He was the ultimate leader who only needed to say: ‘Follow me’, and the rest is history. [tedNEWS]

7 Ibid.

Dr Lidija Godina, Senior Lecturer, Applied Social Sciences at University of Bedfordshire

Leadership Development Journal - March 2012
Improving and Growing Yourself to Improve, Grow and Serve Your Church Organisation

28 June 2012 Bracknell, UK [Philip R Brown] In *The Twelve Absolutes of Leadership* Gary Burnison recounts the story of a farmer whose donkey fell into a well. The farmer frantically thought about what he could do as the stricken animal cried out to be rescued. With no obvious solution, the farmer regretfully concluded that because the donkey was old and the well needed to be filled in anyway, he should give up the idea of rescuing the beast. Instead, he should simply fill in the well and hope the poor animal would not suffer too much.

The farmer asked his neighbours for help and they all began to shovel earth into the well. When the donkey realised what was happening, he brayed and struggled. Then, the noise stopped.

The farmer looked down into the well and was astonished at what he saw. The donkey was still alive and was progressing towards the top of the well. By shaking off the dirt instead of letting it cover him, he could step on the accumulating soil as the level rose. When the donkey reached the top, he stepped over the edge and gave the farmer one last look. “Now who’s the jackass?” the donkey remarked, and trotted happily away.

This story offers a key insight for those seeking to be effective Church leaders, who must have and demonstrate *learning agility*. The latter can be defined as the ability to learn from experience and to apply that learning to new situations. Learning agility is not the same thing as having a high IQ or EQ (emotional intelligence). Rather, a Church leader with learning agility can excel at absorbing information from his or her experiences and applying it to the present – thereby creating an agile Church organisation that also learns, grows and adapts.
Yes, learning as a Church leader is often about adapting, being open-minded, and being willing to find solutions that are not always obvious. As a Church leader you cannot expect to learn from things you are NOT doing! Consequently, there can be times when you should expect to fail. Such situations demand that you choose not to blame yourself but rather to learn. In fact, it has been said that the only real failure is failing to fail. A Church leader who fails to fail from time to time could either be unaware of what is going on or simply be acting too cautiously.

So how do you improve and grow yourself in order to improve and grow your Church organisation? One key requirement is your own preparedness to maintain an open and curious mind. In their book *Great Leaders Grow* Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller suggest that for a leader growing is like oxygen to a deep-sea diver - without it you die. Unlike the diver, you may not physically die – but if you stop growing, your influence may well erode, and over time, you may even lose the opportunity to lead at all.\(^1\)

The failure to grow has sabotaged the career of more Church leaders than just about anything else. Hence, your capacity to grow is crucial in determining your capacity to lead. If you wish to improve or grow your Church organisation, then you too must continue to improve and grow. Blanchard and Miller have utilised the acronym GROW to remind leaders of the key ingredients for fostering their personal and professional growth:

- **G = Gaining Knowledge** – this ingredient includes knowing one’s own strengths and weaknesses; knowing the people one leads on a deep level (personally and professionally); knowing one’s industry extremely well; having a high level of mastery of the principles and practices of leadership; and having a detailed, written personal development plan.

- **R = Reaching Out to Others** – this ingredient includes always looking for ways to invest in the growth of others; having ongoing mentoring relationships with emerging leaders; frequently seeing and seizing teachable moments; frequently sharing with others what one has learned; and developing a high level of mastery in communicating one’s point of view on leadership.

- **O = Opening Your World** – this ingredient includes constantly looking for opportunities to grow at work; seeking new experiences outside the workplace; having a mentor(s) who helps you grow; always looking for additional opportunities to lead; and seeing every day as an opportunity to learn and grow.

- **W = Walking toward Wisdom** – this ingredient includes consistently telling oneself the truth regarding one’s leadership; actively seeking feedback from those you know to be truth tellers; having a group of people you trust to give you counsel on important issues; having mastered the art and discipline of asking profound questions; and being fully committed to a lifelong pursuit of wisdom.\(^2\)

Blanchard and Miller maintain that a leader’s capacity to GROW determines their capacity to lead! Further, improving yourself as a leader is crucial in seeking to improve and serve your organisation. Interestingly, it appears that in most organisations the best leaders choose to serve others. Servant leaders are normally those whose goals are focused on the greater good. In *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*, Blanchard and Miller offer a helpful description of
the ways in which a leader can SERVE. They utilise the acronym SERVE to highlight key leader behaviours:

- **S = Seeing the Future** – Servant leaders envision and communicate a compelling picture of the future. Leading always begins with a picture of a preferred future.
- **E = Engaging and Developing Others** – Servant leaders recruit and select the right people for the right job while creating an environment where people wholeheartedly invest themselves in achieving the vision.
- **R = Reinventing Continuously** – Servant leaders possess a never-ending focus on improvement. Progress is impossible without change.
- **V = Valuing Results and Relationships** – Servant leaders generate positive, measurable results, and cultivate great relationships with those they lead. Ultimate success always includes people and performance.
- **E = Embodying the Values** – Servant leaders live in a fashion consistent with their stated values. People learn more from what a leader does than from what a leader says.

Your willingness to keep learning as a Church leader can make a powerful statement to your entire Church organisation. A Church leader learns more lessons when mistakes are made than when successes come easily. Consequently, as a Church leader you should have a heightened realisation that you are not invincible or irreplaceable. The reality is that one day you will leave your current Church organisation. When you do, will your Church organisation be in a substantially better place than it was before you inherited it?

To improve, grow and serve your Church organisation you need to continue improving and growing yourself. An improving, growing and serving Church leader chooses to empower and inspire people to align with a greater purpose in order to improve and grow their Church organisation. Remember the story of the donkey – the day you (or your Church organisation) stops learning becomes the day you (or your Church organisation) may start dying!

---

3 *Great Leaders Grow*, p. 119.
The Art of Leadership – Some Reflections

28 June 2012 St Albans, UK [Bertil Wiklander] A colleague recently reminded me of Peter Drucker’s distinction between management and leadership:

‘Management is doing things right – Leadership is doing the right things.’

It made me think again of the real nature of leadership. What helps us know how to do the right things? See here the fruit of some of my reflections:

Art and Wisdom

- Leadership is the practice of an art. It is not an exact science and it is not accomplished simply by implementing rules.
- Leadership is based on wisdom acquired by making mistakes and learning the right lessons from them.

Character

- Leadership is best learnt and exercised by persons with certain personality traits.
- Leadership comes from feeling good about yourself – avoiding self-destruction and not being over-sensitive to criticism, being humble and yet fearless and bold.
- Leadership requires being energetic, persistent and self-disciplined and yet constantly encouraging others.

Abilities

- Leadership comes from being able to listen to, having empathy with, and reading the minds of other people.
- Leadership comes from being able to see the big picture while understanding how its elements relate to the whole.
- Leadership is not lost in the detail of things and never micromanages.
- Leadership comes from being able to focus on the essence in every given situation – a leader knows the difference between what is important and what is trivial.
- Leadership comes from being able to bring a group together that acts toward a common goal.
- Leadership comes from being able to communicate well – articulating your thoughts clearly while adapting to different kinds of situations and audiences.

Attitude to My Leadership Role

- Leaders understand their central role in the process of inducing others to act toward a common goal – and know how to master this role.
- Leadership is about relating so well to others that you are being followed.
- Leaders lead by their actions, not their positions.
• Leaders influence others by inspiring their trust, acting consistently, and motivating them by words and deeds.
• Leaders lead by legitimate authority, setting an example, setting goals, rewarding success and dealing with failure, organisational restructuring, team-building, and communicating a vision.
• Leaders act so that the organisation achieves its mission while all feel they were part of it.

By Dr Bertil Wiklander, President of the Trans-European Division

Used with permission from Leadership Development Journal - June-July 2012