

Let My Pastors Go!

The reason why Jesus delays His return

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Endorsements

"I have known Wes McDonald for many years, listened to his seminars. I had him speak to my pastors and church members when I worked as conference president in Russia. He spoke to my church members in Australia and expanded our view of the church of the future. Now that his book has arrived, I feel excited. Wes offers a practical answer to how to revive and reform our church as a local congregation and globally. He brings us back to the roots of our church's early secrets of growth and success. He is promoting the true New Testament vision of professional ministry and total member involvement in the proclamation of the gospel worldwide. The time has now arrived to bring a movement of self-sufficient churches in the Western world, that are not dependent upon pastors. This book is a must-read for anyone who wants Jesus to come soon."

Pastor Vadim Butov, Victoria Conference evangelist, Australia

"Evangelist Wesley McDonald is a pastor/preacher whom God has used to bring hundreds of souls into His Kingdom. He has taught and preached the gospel around the globe. His seminars have been instructive in helping ministers and laity become more effective in leading men and women to Christ. You will be inspired as you learn how to be a greater tool in the hands of the Almighty."

Jerome L. Davis, Retired President of the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

"Wes McDonald has written a very powerful little book so pertinent for the time that we are living in. Every Pastor, church leader, and lay person would do well to take the time to read it. The principles he espouses, are exactly the vision our pioneers had for God's church to go forward and spread the gospel to the whole world. I believe this little booklet was written 'For such a time as this.'"

Linda Chodak, Deaconess, Sheboygan Seventh-day Adventist Church, Wisconsin.

Chapter 1

The Short Version –

The Most Important Theme First

From time to time, I have the privilege of giving seminars that stress the importance of planting churches in places where there has never been an Adventist church. While traveling, at times I have been asked what I talk about in my seminars. When there is not enough time for a full explanation, there is a short version I give that shares the essential point. Because you and I are probably not acquainted with each other, and I do not know your level of interest, how much time you have, or if you will even finish reading this book, I want you to have the same type of short answer first before reading the rest of the book. I want you to have the short version first.

The one thing that we all do wrong.

Almost all Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, are doing one thing entirely wrong. Christians of all faiths say that their common goal is to enlighten the world about salvation in Jesus. They want to save lost sinners as fast as possible. Unfortunately, most churches demand that ministers, the ones who are specifically called by God to enlighten the world with the gospel, spend their time every weekend preaching to church members who already know Jesus. Ministers are also expected to lead many other kinds of assemblies, social events, celebrations, deliberations, mediations, and meetings. They conduct the church and school boards; and regularly visit church members who already have a relationship with Jesus. The list of expectations for ministers is a very long list.

Meanwhile, millions around the globe never hear that Jesus died to take away their sins and go to their graves without salvation. Christianity no longer focuses its resources primarily on Jesus' mission. The church, in some areas the world, is becoming a mission unto itself, devoting only a small percentage of time every year to saving the lost. Church members, in some situations, are becoming the object of their own tithes and offerings. Although the members return their tithes and offerings with the desire that it be used to enlighten the ignorant, they do not realize that the demands which they place upon the minister are preventing that from happening. They do not understand that by consuming the minister's time, they are making the minister serve themselves, while the lost continue to remain lost.

Now that you have read the short version first, I pray that you will continue to read the rest of the book. I want you to know the history of how we got into this problem, what God wants us to do about it, and how we can accomplish His mission more effectively. By working in harmony with God's will and with power from the Holy Spirit, we can hasten the Second Coming of Jesus.

Questions for Consideration

1. How important is Jesus' mission to me?

2. What am I doing to help spread the gospel ([Matthew 24:14](#))?
3. What do I expect from my minister/preacher/pastor?
4. How can my spiritual needs be met by relying on God instead of relying on my minister/preacher/pastor?

Chapter 2

How Do Our Ways Compare with God's Ways?

How do we, as Seventh-day Adventists, compare our current model of ministry with the model used by the early Christian church in the days of the apostles? How does the labor of a minister now, compare with that of the apostle Paul, who is the example of what a minister should be? Are Adventist ministers today, doing the same kind of work that early Adventist ministers did in the 1800s? Even though we have correct doctrine, could the methods of ministry we use today, actually hinder the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages to the entire earth? Could we be delaying the return of Christ instead of hastening His return?

Question: Is it even possible for us to hasten or delay the coming of Christ?

Ellen White wrote in *The Desire of Ages*, (published in 1898) page 633, “God ‘hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world.’ [Acts 17:31](#). Christ tells us when that day shall be ushered in. He does not say that all the world will be converted, but that ‘this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ **By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord’s return.** We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God. [2 Peter 3:12](#), margin. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.”¹

If the church of Christ had done its work in the way the Lord ordained, Jesus would have returned before 1898. More than a century has passed since 1898. What is it that we have not been doing that the Lord instructed us to do? How have we failed? In the book, *Education*, Ellen White describes the world as a “lazar house.” A “lazar house” was a house for lepers to live in and receive treatment. Leprosy was one of the most dreaded diseases known to man, and “lazar houses” were places filled with unbearable misery. She writes of God’s pity and desire to put the misery to an end. On page 264 she wrote, “His Spirit ‘maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.’ As the ‘whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.’ (*Romans 8:26, 22*), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all. In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, **and He has put it in our power, through co-operation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end.** ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ [Matthew 24:14](#).”²

¹ [Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898,\) 633.](#)

² [Ellen White, *Education*: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903,\) 263-264.](#)

How soon after 1844 could Christ have come if "the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained"?³ In 1884, precisely 40 years after 1844, the following message from Ellen White was published in the book, *Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 4*, pages 291-292. It was reprinted later in *Great Controversy*, pages 457-458.

“The history of ancient Israel is a striking illustration of the past experience of the Adventist body. God led his people in the Advent movement, even as he led the children of Israel from Egypt. In the great disappointment their faith was tested as was that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Had they still trusted to the guiding hand that had been with them in their past experience, they would have seen of the salvation of God. If all who had labored unitedly in the work in 1844 had received the third angel’s message, and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. **Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of his people.**

“**It was not the will of God that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; he desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there, a holy, happy people.** But ‘they could not enter in because of unbelief.’ [[Hebrews 3:19.](#)] Because of their backsliding and apostasy, they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the promised land. **In like manner, it was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be so long delayed, and his people should remain so many years in this world of sin and sorrow.** But unbelief separated them from God. As they refused to do the work which he had appointed them, others were raised up to proclaim the message. In mercy to the world, Jesus delays his coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning, and find in him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.”⁴

“Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of his people.”⁵ EGW – printed in 1884.

Here is a sobering statement from Ellen White in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 373 and 374, “Every year millions upon millions of human souls are passing into eternity unwarned and unsaved. From hour to hour in our varied life opportunities to reach and save souls are opened to us. These opportunities are continually coming and going. God desires us to make the most of them. Days, weeks, and months are passing; we have one day, one week, one month less in which to do our work. A few more years at the longest, and the voice which we cannot refuse to answer will be heard saying, ‘Give an account of thy stewardship.’”⁶

Here is something profound from Ellen White in Letter 110, written in 1902, more than 100 years ago. “As a people, we claim to be giving the third angel’s message to the world . . . What a pity it is that the proclamation of the third angel’s message has not yet begun in many

³ [Ellen White, *Education*: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903,\) 263-264.](#)

⁴ [Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4: \(Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884,\) 291–292.](#)

⁵ [Ibid.](#)

⁶ [Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*: \(Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900,\) 373-374.](#)

fields! For years the Lord has kept before His people the necessity of entering new fields. O that God would work! O that He would bring to life and energize the dead, dry bones of the house of Israel, by breathing the Holy Spirit upon His people!”⁷

This book has been written to help us understand:

1. the reason for the delay of Christ’s return since 1844
2. how we have failed to follow Christ’s instructions to the church
3. what we need to do, to repent and hasten the coming of Jesus
4. how to follow God's specific directions, to reach every part of the world with the Three Angels' Messages more rapidly than we ever dreamed

[*Philippians 4:13*](#), “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

May God help us to repent, make the much-needed changes, hasten the return of Jesus, and still be alive when He returns.

Questions for Consideration

1. How does my church compare to the church of the apostles?
2. Where might my church’s performance be lacking?
3. How can we help our congregation to become more like the congregations that the apostles founded and loved?

⁷[Ellen White, *Letter 110-1902*, \(July 7, 1902\), paragraphs 12 and 13.](#)

Chapter 3

Finishing the Mystery of God

The Purpose for Chapter Three Explained

I have included this chapter for the following reasons:

1. It gives some knowledge that is needed to understand a very significant prophecy in Revelation, which helped the early Adventist to discover that the judgment began in 1844 and that the Second Coming was to be soon.
2. It shows that how soon Jesus returns depends upon man's cooperation in the fulfillment of [Matthew 24:14](#) and [Revelation 14:6-12](#). If early Adventists had understood this, they never would have set a date for Christ to return.
3. It brings us to an understanding that Christ wanted to return shortly after 1844, but that it became necessary for Him to delay His return.
4. It reveals who is responsible for creating the need for Jesus to delay His return.

This chapter sets the stage for later chapters which outline necessary changes that we must make to hasten Christ's return. We will be using the Bible, Ellen White's writings, and writings from other early Adventist pioneers in our study.

[2 Timothy 2:15](#) says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Now, let's begin by studying some passages of scripture in [Revelation 10 and 11](#).

The Seventh Angel: God's Final Warning to Planet Earth

The book of Revelation has many sevens. Seven churches, seven candlesticks, seven seals, seven trumpets, etc. The trumpets in Revelation are some of the most difficult passages in Scripture to interpret. Even among Adventist Bible scholars, there is not universal agreement in the interpretation of every aspect of the seven trumpets in Revelation. All Adventist scholars, however, agree upon one thing: the seven trumpets are warnings of judgments, during seven historical periods, that sequentially span Christian history from the first century A.D. to the end of time. The seventh and last trumpet, found in chapters 10 and 11 of Revelation, is the last warning message to all who dwell, that the final (investigative) judgment that precedes the Second Coming of Christ has arrived.

[Revelation 11:15](#), "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

If you read [Revelation 11:15](#) by itself, it is easy to get the impression that there is no time interval between the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the return of Christ. There is no mention of anything happening between the two events. For some, this could lead them to set a time for Christ's return. Comparing scripture with scripture, however, we gain greater understanding. [Revelation 11:19](#) gives more information about the warning of the seventh trumpet.

[Revelation 11:19](#) tells us, “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

In [verse 19](#), we find a scene in heaven resembling the Old Testament sanctuary with the Holy and Most Holy places. The Most Holy place was where the ark of the testament was located. The High Priest was the only person who could enter the Most Holy place. He was permitted to enter it only once each year on the Day of Atonement—a day of Judgment for Israel.

Ellen White helps clarify [Revelation 11:19](#) in *Great Controversy*, page 433. “‘The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.’ [Revelation 11:19](#). The ark of God’s testament is in the holy of holies, the second apartment of the sanctuary. In the ministration of the earthly tabernacle, which served ‘unto the example and shadow of heavenly things ([Hebrews 8:5](#)),’ this apartment was opened only upon the great Day of Atonement for the cleansing of the sanctuary. Therefore the announcement that the temple of God was opened in heaven and the ark of His testament was seen points to the opening of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 as Christ entered there to perform the closing work of the atonement.”¹

From this, we understand that the sounding of the seventh trumpet announces the commencement of the antitypical Day of Atonement; the beginning of the investigative judgment which occurs before Christ returns. It is the pre-advent judgment which began on October 22, 1844 and is still taking place in heaven today. This judgment will finish just before Christ’s return. Until then, the eternal destiny of each person who has ever lived is being decided. For those currently alive, their eternal fate could be forever decided even while they are going about their daily activities. The fact that Christ entered the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844, to perform the closing work of atonement, is a well-established fact in the Adventist church. It is unquestionable and beyond doubt for faithful Adventist believers.

The Seventh Trumpet: The Mystery of God

Now, let’s look at [Revelation 10:7](#). We will discover something that takes place during the sounding of the seventh trumpet—something that must be “finished” before Christ returns. [Revelation 10:7](#) “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, **the mystery of God should be finished**, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

What is the “mystery of God” which should have been finished during the time that the angel was beginning to sound? The seventh angel has been sounding the trumpet for a very long time—more than 170 years. We are many years past the beginning. What has happened? Was the “mystery of God” finished in the days “when he shall begin to sound”? It is essential that we understand what “the mystery of God” is because it defines our duty as Christians today. The Bible tells us how to discover the meaning of scriptural passages in [Isaiah 28:10](#),

¹ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911,) 433.*

“For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:”

The apostle Paul’s letters to the Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians contain the meaning of the "mystery of God" in [Revelation 10:7](#).

[Romans 16:25–26](#)

²⁵Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

²⁶But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

In commenting on [Romans 16:25-26](#), Ellen White wrote, “Before the foundation of the world the Son of God was given to die, and redemption is the mystery that was ‘kept in silence through times eternal’ ([Romans 16:25, R.V.](#)).”²

"Throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, God the Father and God the Son knew of Satan's ultimate apostasy and rebellion. They knew that Satan would plan to tempt Adam and Eve and plunge this world into misery and death. The vast, divine love of the Father and Son was manifest in the plan of salvation before this earth was created. The plan of salvation was known only by the Father and the Son - ‘kept in silence through times eternal’ ([Romans 16:25, R.V.](#)).”³ It was even hidden from the angels but was revealed when the knowledge of the plan of salvation was needed – when Adam and Eve sinned. The plan of redemption, salvation in Christ, is the "mystery" that must be preached to the whole earth before Christ returns, thus giving all humanity the opportunity to be saved. It will be "finished" when God's people fulfill [Matthew 24:14](#), "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

[Ephesians 3:1–6](#)

¹For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

²If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

³**How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;** (as I wrote afore in few words,

⁴Whereby, when ye read, **ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)**

⁵Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

⁶**That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**

² [Ellen White, In Heavenly Places: \(Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1967,\) 291.](#)

³ [Ibid](#)

The "mystery of God" in [Revelation 10:7](#) is the same thing as the "mystery of Christ" in [Ephesians 3:4](#). The Gentiles can only be "fellowheirs" after they have heard the preaching of the Gospel. It was a mystery to the Jews because they did not properly understand that salvation in God's kingdom, was to be equally shared by Jews and Gentiles alike. While it was revealed in symbolic form in other ages (Adam, Abraham, Jacob, etc.), it had not been revealed in the same way that it was revealed in the time of the apostles (Peter's experience with Cornelius, Paul's Damascus Road experience, the day of Pentecost, etc.) Even the apostle Peter would have never gone to the home of Cornelius to share the gospel if God had not given him the vision of the unclean beasts in a sheet.⁴ Therefore, finishing "the mystery of God" in the last days of earth's history is finishing the duty of preaching the message of salvation to every person on earth. It began in the days of the apostles and will finish just before the Second Coming of Jesus. "The messages of Revelation 14 are those by which the world is to be tested; they are the everlasting gospel and are to be sounded everywhere."⁵ For Adventists today, it means fulfilling the preaching of the Three Angels' Messages to the entire world urgently and rapidly, while asking for the help of the Holy Spirit. Revelation 14:6 says, "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." After this happens, then Jesus will return.

In [Ephesians 6:18-20](#) and [Colossians 4:2-3](#), Paul give more light on the meaning of the "mystery of God."

[Ephesians 6:18-20](#)

¹⁸Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

¹⁹And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

²⁰For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

[Colossians 4:2-3](#)

²Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

³Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

Why was Paul "in bonds" (prison) multiple times? He was in prison because he had been speaking "the mystery of Christ" (the gospel), to the Gentiles. The reason Paul was in prison is the same reason that many ministers in different parts of the world have been sent to prison. They have gone to dungeons and prisons, enduring torture and even death by neglect or execution; for preaching the message of salvation in Christ to the world.

⁴ [Acts 10:1 - 11:18](#).

⁵ [Ellen White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 17: \(Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987,\) 15. Written on November 8, 1896.](#)

Paul also speaks of "this mystery" in [Colossians 1:25-27](#), a familiar text which many people often think about when defining the "mystery."

[Colossians 1:25–27](#)

²⁵Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

²⁶Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

²⁷To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Notice that the "mystery" had been hidden in ages past but was now being made known to "his saints." That which was being made known to "his saints" was "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles." When a person accepts Christ as his personal Savior, he is also promised the opportunity to have the Holy Spirit working in His life; to give him a Christ-like character. This is what it means to have "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Ellen White commented on this in the book *Education*, pp. 171-172. ". . . the Bible; when its principles have actually become the elements of character, what has been the result? what changes have been made in the life? 'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' [2 Corinthians 5:17](#). In its power, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have been transformed into the image of God. This change is itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' [Colossians 1:27](#).

"A knowledge of this mystery furnishes a key to every other. It opens to the soul the treasures of the universe, the possibilities of infinite development."⁶

Elsewhere she says, "If Christ be in us the hope of glory, we shall walk even as He walked; we shall imitate His life of sacrifice to bless others; we shall drink of the cup, and be baptized with the baptism; we shall welcome a life of devotion, trial, and self-denial, for Christ's sake. Heaven will be cheap enough whatever sacrifice we may make to obtain it."⁷

The Gentile could not have Christ in them, "the hope of glory," unless Paul and others were preaching the Gospel to them. Similarly, this can only happen in our day if we are preaching the Gospel to the whole world. The Three Angel's Messages, the Gospel, "the unsearchable riches of Christ"⁸ must be preached "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue,

⁶ Ellen White, *Education: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association,) 171–172.*

⁷ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 2: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1871,) 72.*

⁸ [Ephesians 3:8](#)

and people."⁹ Giving them the Gospel will give them the opportunity to be saved; to have their sins forgiven; and allow them to have the sanctifying, life-changing power of the Holy Spirit working in their lives. They will be enabled to have Christ in them, "the hope of glory."¹⁰ Then, and only then, can it be said that the "mystery of God"¹¹ has been finished.

The finishing of the "mystery of God" in *Revelation 10:7*, is clearly established as the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. This verse, however, presents a problem for us today.

Revelation 10:7 "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

In this passage, the Bible indicates that the preaching of the gospel to the whole world should have been finished when the angel was beginning to sound, which started in 1844. "When he shall begin to sound" implies that there is *a period of time* during which the angel would be sounding the trumpet. It does not indicate a single blast of the trumpet. The words "should be finished," are linked to the time when the trumpet was beginning to sound. A "day" in Bible prophecy equals one year (*Numbers:14:34*, *Ezekiel 4:5-6*, *Daniel 9:24-27*, *Genesis 29:27-28*). Because *Revelation 10:7* tells us that the "mystery of God, "should be finished" in the "days" when the angel "shall begin to sound," it indicates that this would be a period of years, but not a long period of years.

Some may wonder if something is wrong here. The Bible prophesied that the preaching of the gospel to the whole world was supposed to be finished in the days when the angel was beginning to sound, starting in 1844—but the preaching of the gospel to the whole world was not completed during that time. Jesus has not returned, and we have not evangelized the world as a whole even after all this time. What went wrong? Is our understanding of the prophecy incorrect or is something else wrong? The answer is found in the correct interpretation of the phrase, "should be finished." For those who want to know more about the Greek in the text, see the footnote. ¹²

⁹ [Revelation 14:6](#)

¹⁰ [Colossians 1:27](#)

¹¹ [Revelation 10:7](#)

¹² In *Revelation 10:7*, the word "finished" is *τελέω* "teleo" in Greek. "Teleo" is defined as:

"1 to bring to a close, to finish, to end. . . 2 to perform, execute, complete, fulfil . . . 2a . . . to carry out the contents of a command. 2b . . . to do just as commanded, and generally involving the notion of time, to perform the last act which completes a process, to accomplish, fulfil." See <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/teleo.html> and <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/G5055/teleo.htm>

"Teleo" in this passage is written in the **subjunctive mood**. The Greek language can indicate "mood" in the spelling of a verb. Not all languages have that ability. Some languages add words to indicate "mood." The Greek subjunctive mood allows for some uncertainty. Someone may want something to happen at a specific time, but whether or not it occurs at that time depends upon circumstances.

The words "should be," which appear in the King James Version of the Bible, are not found in the Greek text. They were added to give us the same meaning found in the original Greek text. The passage was to direct the remnant people of God who lived during the 19th century to finish the proclamation of the gospel to the entire earth "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound" (*Rev. 10:7*). They were to work quickly and decidedly and be finished soon after 1844. The verse does not say that the "mystery of God" *would be finished* "when he shall begin to sound," but that it *"should be finished"* during that time. Whether or not the "mystery of God" would be finished at the predicted time, was dependent upon those who were living at that time. The evangelization of the world began in the days of the apostles, and it was to be finished by His remnant people shortly after 1844. [Matthew 24:14](#) had to be fulfilled first, as a condition for the timely fulfillment of [Revelation 10:7](#).

This is an example of something called conditional prophecy, similar in some ways to the prophecy of Jonah. In the book of Jonah, the prediction of the destruction of Ninevah was not fulfilled at the prophesied time because the people repented and God granted them mercy. Similarly, God's justice and mercy demand that the inhabitants of the earth receive the last warning message before probation closes and unrepentant sinners are lost forever. They must be given the opportunity to repent and be saved. The duty of providing them with that opportunity has been given to the church. By failing to warn the world quickly, we have played a significant role in delaying the return of Jesus. As a result, many people have been lost, and many are still being lost every day. Let us confess and repent of our sin of neglecting to proclaim the message of salvation to the world promptly. There are some in the church who have been faithful to their duty of sharing the Three Angels Messages without delay. The words of *Daniel 5:27* however, may apply to far too many of us—"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Let us dedicate or rededicate our lives to hastening the return of Jesus.

Questions for Consideration

1. What can I do to help reveal to the world "the mystery of God," thus hastening the second coming of Christ?
2. Do I fully understand the mystery of God, myself? What questions do I have? It is essential to be able to answer our own questions, that we might be better able to answer the questions of others.
3. How has accepting Christ as my personal savior changed my life? Share these testimonies! They create a fire within new believers; a desire to follow Christ and be more like Him.

The subjunctive mood is conditional. See <http://www.ntgreek.net/lesson29.htm> and https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-detail-frame.htm

It should be noted that the New Testament in the King James version of the Bible was translated from the Greek manuscript called the Textus Receptus. In *Revelation 10:7*, the Textus Receptus has the word "teleo" written in the subjunctive mood. In many modern versions, however, different Greek manuscripts were used as the basis for translation. In those translations, "teleo" is not in the subjunctive mood in *Revelation 10:7*, thus giving a different meaning such as "will be finished," etc. The early Adventist pioneers used the King James version as they discovered prophetic Bible truth.

4. In what ways can I become more welcoming to a life of devotion, trial, and self-denial for Christ's sake'?
5. Who do I know that would help me reveal God's mystery to the world?
6. What kinds of activities could I plan in order to share God's mystery?

Chapter 4

BUT – “he hath appointed a day . . .”

[Acts 17:31](#) "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Does this verse point to a specific day, which God has appointed for Christ to return or is it a conditional prophecy? First, we must understand that the day "in the which he will judge the world," is not the time of the pre-advent judgment. [Revelation 10:7](#) calls the pre-advent judgment, "the days of the voice of the seventh angel." The plural form, "days," indicates *a period of time*, not a specific day in time. The "day, in the which he will judge the world," is the same as the "day of the Lord" mentioned in [2 Peter 3:3-12](#); it is the Second Coming of Jesus.

[2 Peter 3:3-12](#)

³Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

⁴And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

⁵For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

⁶Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

⁷But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

⁸But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

⁹The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

¹⁰**But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**

¹¹Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

¹²Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

“Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.”¹³ The preaching of the gospel is the appointed work for the church to do, and we have been preaching the gospel in our churches every Sabbath for more than a century and a half. Why has Jesus not come? What is the matter? We have been preaching and preaching and preaching, and still, Jesus has not come. As previously mentioned, the pastors are being exhausted, trying to satisfy the demands of those who already have heard and accepted the gospel invitation. *Luke 10:2*, “**The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few.**” The few laborers that do exist are too busy caring for church members.

In America, we use the expression, “Are we preaching to the choir?”. Some other nations use a different expression to say the same thing. They say, “Are we knocking on doors that are already open?”. Jesus says in *Revelation 3:20*, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Jesus spends His time knocking on closed doors. We are expected to follow Jesus’ example and do likewise. Instead, we have been wasting far too much money, talent, and time knocking on doors that are already open. As a result, millions of people have gone to their graves lost, only to wake up in the second resurrection—at the end of the millennium to face eternal death.

On May 25, 2011, the Honorable Bharrat Jagdeo, president of the nation of Guyana, gave the keynote address a Guyana Conference business session. Regarding the mission of the church, his remarks were surprisingly accurate, especially when one considers that he is not a Christian. President Jagdeo is a Hindu. Portions of his address were printed in *Adventist World* magazine, August 2011, edition. Quoting from that issue, “Preaching to the converted once a week won’t transform the community, Jagdeo reminded session delegates. ‘Jesus’ life was characterized not just by prayer, but by service,’ he said. ‘So we need not just to pray in beautiful edifices, but go into the communities where the people are.’”¹⁴

Is it possible that a Hindu man, the president of Guyana, understood what it takes to spread the gospel better than we do? His statement was very much on target. I wish our example had been as good as his statement.

Jesus says in *Luke 4:18*, “The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

Mark 2:17 tell us, “When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” **Calling “sinners to repentance” is the single, most important thing that we can do.**

Because of their unbelief, the Israelites had to wander in the desert for 40 long years, and the adults died in the desert. Their children were permitted to go into the promised land. What does this say about the belief of the Adventist people when we have been wandering for

¹³ [Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898,\) 633-634. 12](#)

¹⁴ [Barbara Savory, “Guyana’s President Lauds Adventists,” *Adventist World*, August 2011. 3-4.](#)

more than 170 years since 1844. That is more than four times longer than the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. Are we more than four times worse than the unbelieving Israelites?

The only thing that God asked the Israelites to do was to act in faith by obeying His instructions to enter the promised land. By obeying God, the Israelites would have entered the earthly Canaan land 40 years sooner, but they would have still died on earth. The thing which God is asking the remnant church to do today is to preach the Three Angels' Messages to the entire planet with the help and power of the Holy Spirit. By doing that, we will get to enter the heavenly Canaan land, where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." [Revelation 21:4](#). There, Jesus will tell us "Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21. We have nothing to lose of eternal importance and everything to gain if we exercise faith through obedience to His commands. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and all the angels are waiting to help us to quickly do the work which He has asked us to do.

The next few quotations from Ellen White are quite profound.

Review and Herald, (March 27, 1894, paragraph 14). "Why has the Lord so long delayed his coming? The whole host of heaven is waiting to fulfil the last work for this lost world, and yet the work waits. It is because the few who profess to have the oil of grace in their vessels with their lamps, have not become burning and shining lights in the world. **It is because missionaries are few.**"¹⁵

"For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years. — Manuscript 4, 1883. We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course action. — Letter 184, 1901."¹⁶

We have been charged with the crime of "insubordination" against God! Fortunately, God's warnings and charges against us are also His expressions of His love and patience. His greatest desire is to see us repent and obey. He does not want to wait so long to return and take us home. In 1849, less than 4 and a half years after the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, Mrs. White wrote the following in *Broadside 2*, paragraph 13, published January 31, 1849, "I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished, and that time can last but a very little longer. . ." ¹⁷

¹⁵ [Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, March 27, 1894, par. 14.](#)

¹⁶ [Ellen White, *Evangelism: \(Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946\), 696.*](#)

¹⁷ [Ellen White, *Broadside 2*, January 31, 1849, par. 11.](#)

Jesus longed for the Second Coming to occur shortly after 1844. To be blunt about it, we were just not ready to tell the world about Jesus, and we were not prepared to meet Him either.

Regarding the conditional nature of the prophecies of Christ's return she penned the following, found in *Evangelism*, pages 695 and 696:

“The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional.

“God had given to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel's message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people. The Sabbath reform was to be carried forward. The breach in the law of God must be made up. The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice, that all the inhabitants of earth might receive the warning. The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.

“Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward.”¹⁸

How long will time last after the messages of truth have gone to the entire earth? There will be no delaying of the very last events.

It [the coming of the Lord] will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples. Shall we who claim to be students of prophecy forget that God's forbearance to the wicked is a part of the vast and merciful plan by which He is seeking to compass the salvation of souls? — *The Review and Herald*, June 18, 1901.”¹⁹

The critical point for us to remember is obvious. How soon Jesus returns, depends to a large extent, upon you and me.

Questions for Consideration

1. How might I be behaving like the Israelites in biblical times?
2. How can I behave less like the faithless Israelites that wandered the desert for 40 years?

¹⁸ [Ellen White, *Evangelism*: \(Washington, D. C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,\) 695-696.](#)

¹⁹ [Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, June 18, 1901, 1.](#)

3. When should I start spreading the 3 Angel's Message? What can I do to help spread it quickly and thoroughly?
4. In what ways can I help others to find Christ?

Chapter 5

How Many Would Be Lost If . . . ?

Some may be concerned about the safety of the church members if the ministers are away from the churches most of the time evangelizing and church planting. Will the church members survive spiritually, and will the churches prosper?

From reviewing data and speaking with denominational leaders in different parts of the world, one thing is very clear; when pastors have 10 and more churches (some have 30 to 40, even as much as 90 in Angola) in their districts, the churches grow faster and the lay people themselves, plant many churches. When pastors have one or only a few churches in their districts, the churches rarely experience significant and lasting growth, and sometimes they even have no growth at all. In these situations, the members expect the ministers to do most of the evangelism in addition to caring for baptized members. Ellen White said, "If the ministers would get out of the way, if they would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, **and their capabilities would increase by use.**— Letter 56, 1901."¹ This truth which Ellen White stated, has been proven in areas of the world where there are many churches and very few ministers. It has been more strongly proven especially in the few areas of the world where ministers are assigned to geographic territories instead of being assigned to specific churches (this will be shown later in this book). The same principle applies to the raising of children. When children learn to take responsibility and do things for themselves, they become more capable adults than when the parents do everything for the children year after year.

Safety: Consider the following scenario.

Suppose for a moment, that your minister became very ill with the flu, and was unable to preach in your church for a month. Worse yet, no other licensed or ordained minister was able to come and preach to your church during the same period. The elders, deacons and maybe others would have to take care of preaching, visiting, etc. Think about that for a moment and then answer this question. How many of the members who attend your church would be lost forever, burn in the lake of fire, and not go to heaven because of not being able to hear a sermon or receive a visit from a licensed or ordained minister? How many? Do you think maybe ten would be lost? How about five? Maybe two? The reality is that not even one of the members would be lost because of having to hear the sermons or receive visits from the elders. Not one. Why? Because the members already have a knowledge of salvation and know how to give their hearts to God daily. If anyone were to be lost, it would have to be for some other reason, and the fault would be his own.

What if the minister was sick for six months and no other salaried minister could come and preach or take care of the many other tasks which are usually done by ministers? How many members of your church, would be lost forever, burn in the lake of fire, and not go to

¹ [Ellen White, *Evangelism*: \(Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,\) 382.](#)

heaven because your pastor could not preach or take care of anything at your church for six months? As in the previous illustration, not even one would lose salvation for that reason.

Now, let's make it even more difficult. Suppose that all the ministers from all the churches were locked up in prison for five years because they had been preaching the gospel. How many baptized members would be lost due to having to hear sermons and receive visits from lay leaders instead of licensed or ordained ministers? Again, no one would forfeit eternal life for that reason alone. If a baptized saint were lost, it would have to be for some other reason, and again, the fault would be his own.

There was a time in our own Adventist history that in one of the nations which persecuted Christians we had 200 ministers and 198 of them were in prison. I met a minister from one of those countries who still remembers the day that his father, a minister, was taken to jail. He never saw his father again. The church members in that country did not lose the way of salvation due to that. They depended upon Jesus to sustain their faith and remained strong. The members today in that country are still faithful.

Now, here is a much more important question. How many people who are not baptized Christians, who do not know the way to salvation, may have been lost in the last five years and went to their graves without the assurance of salvation? How many will be raised up in the second resurrection, burn in the lake of fire, and not go to heaven because the licensed and ordained ministers have been preaching and visiting church members, instead of looking for lost sheep for the last five years? How many have been lost because the ministers have been knocking on doors that were already open?

One Sabbath in a three-church district where I was the pastor, I left the church service during a special program at one church (I did not have to preach that Sabbath) and went to visit a man and his wife who had stopped attending church. They were quite surprised to learn that I had left the church service to visit them. The visit made an impact on them. The lost members are very precious to Jesus, and the faithful church members need to know that. They need to see that they themselves need to make some visits and seek the lost sheep. The members of the church, whether lay leaders or not, are fully qualified to visit erring members and help restore them to fellowship with the church

What would you do or say if your pastor left the church service one Sabbath and told the elder or someone to take the sermon, while he went to try and reclaim a lost soul and that was the only day and time he could connect with the person? What would you do or say? Would you murmur and complain? Or would you learn the value of one lost soul for whom Jesus died? Would you feel guilty for having neglected to visit that person yourself previously?

[Luke 15:4-7](#)

⁴What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

⁷I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Questions for Consideration

1. Do you feel that you or your church members might lose salvation if your minister left to plant churches?
2. How important is a single lost soul's salvation to you, versus the importance of a large group who know the way of salvation?
3. How important was a single lost soul to Jesus?
4. Should a minister be expected to act like Jesus?
5. In what ways, regarding the answers to the previous questions, could a minister be more like Jesus compared to how they conduct themselves in our churches today?
6. How well would your congregation handle a situation wherein your minister is unable to tend the flock for a month? Six months? A year?

Chapter 6

The Duties of Members and Ministers

The duties of the minister are clearly outlined in the Bible, especially in the writings of Paul. The responsibilities are clearly shown in the writings of Ellen White as well. There is no need for us to be ignorant on this subject.

General Conference Bulletin, April 12, 1901, p.204.

“The work of a minister is to minister. Our ministers are to work on the gospel plan of ministering. It has been presented to me that all through America there are barren fields. As I traveled through the South on my way to the Conference, I saw city after city that was unworked.

“What is the matter? The ministers are **hovering over churches**, which know the truth, while thousands are perishing out of Christ.”¹

The word, "hovering," is commonly used in American English to illustrate someone who is intently supervising something.

Ellen White continues in the same article,

“If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work. But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them. They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that he may strengthen and bless them. They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again.”²

Can you see that we need to rethink how we use the gospel ministers? If you are so blessed as to have a minister assigned to your church, please don't use his or her time taking care of you. Why don't you let the minister lead you and other members out to labor as Christian soul winners? Let the minister train you for service, for evangelism, for outreach, for church planting. Let your church be known as a church which actively trains its young people for missionary service in different parts of the world, and then sponsor and send them.

This is one of the most striking statements regarding what ministers should not do.

Australasian Union Conference Recorder, August 1, 1902, paragraph 7.

“Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, **regarding the churches in some particular place as their special care**. And our churches should not feel jealous and

¹ Ellen White, *The General Conference Bulletin*, April 12, 1901, 204.

² Ibid.

neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls.”³

Did you catch that? That means no church assignments for ministers! Ministers are supposed to be like the apostle Paul and start new churches instead of taking care of old ones. In the early days of the Adventist denomination, the gospel ministers were not assigned to take care of churches. They were like the apostle Paul. They raised up new churches and ordained elders which had been elected by the churches. After that, the elders were responsible for pastoring and caring for the churches. Then, Paul would move on to other new areas to repeat the process, which is one reason that Paul had to write letters to the churches. He had left the churches in the care of the elders – he was no longer there.

God has a plan for his church today; the same method as in the days of Paul. God has not changed—and His plan has not changed.

What are church members supposed to say to the gospel minister? Should they whine and complain if the minister does not preach to them each week, or should they manifest true missionary spirit? In *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6*, p. 30, Ellen White tells us exactly how to act and exactly what to say to gospel ministers who have been spending all their time taking care of existing churches.

“Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the churches say to these laborers: ‘Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life. We will work for souls that are about us, and we will send our prayers and our gifts to sustain the laborers in more needy and destitute fields.’”⁴

In *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 1, 1901, Ellen White indicated that church members themselves are to play an active role in church planting.

“Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches. The express purpose of the church is to educate men and women to use their intrusted [sic]⁵ capabilities for the benefit of the world, to employ the means God has lent, for His glory. He has made human beings His stewards. They are to employ His intrusted talents in building up His work and enlarging His kingdom. Our churches, large and small, are not to be treated in such a way that they will be helplessly dependent upon ministerial aid. The members are to be so established in the faith that they will have an intelligent knowledge of true missionary work. They are to follow Christ's example, ministering to those around them. Faithfully they are to fulfil the vows made at their baptism, the vow that they will practice the lessons taught in the life of Christ. They are to work together to keep alive in the church the principles of self-denial and self-sacrifice, which Christ, His divinity clothed with humanity, followed in

³ Ellen White, *Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1902, par. 7.

⁴ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 6*: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1901,) 30.

⁵ The word "intrusted" is an archaic word that has the same meaning as "entrusted."

His work as a missionary. It is imparting the knowledge of Christ's love and tenderness that gives efficiency to all missionary operations."⁶

With this kind of support from the churches, the ministers would have better results for their labors. When returning to the churches from time to time, the mission reports they could give would be inspiring to hear. The ministers and the churches alike would have powerful, compelling stories to tell — stories of new Adventist churches being planted in cities where no Adventist presence had previously existed. Reports of new churches being planted with new converts rejoicing in the truth would fill existing churches with life and joy. The Saviour's work would be advancing as the churches hastened the coming of Christ. We could go home to heaven sooner. Amen and amen.

Our ministers need to be following the example of the early Christian church in the book of Acts, and the church members need to support that kind of ministry. The apostle Paul is the prime example.

From the book, *Gospel Workers*, p. 58, “Foremost among those called to preach the gospel of Christ stands the apostle Paul, to every minister an example of loyalty, devotion, and untiring effort. His experiences and his instruction regarding the sacredness of the minister’s work, are a source of help and inspiration to those engaged in the gospel ministry.”⁷

Paul labored for the one lost sheep, while he left the ninety and nine in the fold. His travels took him to areas of the world where the message of salvation in Christ had never been heard. He knocked on closed doors. His own stirring words, found in the 15th chapter of Romans, show his passion for Christ's mission to save humanity.

[Romans 15:20–22](#)

²⁰Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation:

²¹But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

²²For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

²⁰Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation:

²¹But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

²²For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

⁶ Ellen White, *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 1, 1901, Volume 1, page 1, paragraph 7.

⁷ Ellen White, *Gospel Workers: (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915,) 58.*

He did not make it a habit of settling as a pastor over an existing church and preach to church members year after year. He knew that the lost would remain lost without the living preacher seeking them.

[Romans 10:13–15](#)

¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

The gospel absolutely must go to the whole world before Jesus returns. How else can all nations be blessed as was promised to Abraham? How else can the heathen be saved?

[Galatians 3:8](#)

⁸And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Are we the children of Abraham today? Are we the spiritual seed of Israel? Are all nations to be blessed through us?

The Bible tells us that the work will be cut short in righteousness.

[Romans 9:27–28](#)

²⁷Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

²⁸For he will finish the work and cut *it* short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

[Romans 9: 28](#) is conditional as to when the work will be cut short. Ellen White shares just how and when this will happen.

“The Lord God of heaven will not send upon the world His judgments for disobedience and transgression until He has sent His watchmen to give the warning. He will not close up the period of probation until the message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. The law of God is to be magnified; its claims must be presented in their true, sacred character, that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. **Nonetheless, the work will be cut short in righteousness. The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.**”⁸

⁸ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1901,) 19.

Questions for Consideration

1. What are the responsibilities of the minister as defined by God through the Bible?
2. What responsibilities have been laid upon you or your minister that could be considered extraneous?
3. Who can those extra responsibilities be given to besides the minister? How would this affect your church?

Chapter 7

Who Will Provide Pastoral Care For the Existing Churches?

Whereas chapter 5 dealt with the question of whether the church members might lose their salvation if the ministers were assigned to plant churches instead of pastoring existing churches, it did not present much information on how the churches without ministers are to receive pastoral care. If the ministers are elsewhere planting new churches, who will be responsible for caring for the churches? Who will be in charge if there is no minister present?

From the *General Conference Bulletin*, March 30, 1903, Ellen White writes, "When we see what God can and will do for us, when we know that His church is the supreme object of His regard in this world, why are we not willing to believe His Word?"¹

God loves His church and has a plan for its care, the same plan contained in scripture and in the writings of Ellen White. God's church must have shepherds. God loves the saved as much as the lost. He loves the current church members as much as those who have not yet heard the message. He will not leave His church without caregivers. But who are those caregivers?

The writings of the Apostle Paul are very instructive in this matter. Paul is the example in scripture for the modern minister to pattern his method of ministry after. Paul spent most of his time raising churches in regions where churches had not previously existed. While He spent time with new churches instructing them on how to labor, he did not (as we have already seen) serve as their pastor for any significant length of time.

To understand God's plan for the pastoral care of churches, we need to look at how the New Testament uses a few words. Look at the following words found in the King James Version of the Bible, and the Greek root words from which they have been translated.

1. These three words (pastor, shepherd, and feed), come from the Greek root word, "*poimen*."
2. These two words (oversee and bishop), come from the Greek root word *episkopos*.
3. The word "elder," comes from the Greek root word "*presbuteros*."

Some words in Greek, as well as in English, have both the noun and verb forms. For example, we might say: "pastors (noun) can pastor (verb) churches," or "farmers (noun) can farm (verb) their farms (noun)." We will look at several passages to understand the plan which the Holy Spirit has given for the care of the churches. For an excellent and more

¹[Ellen White, *General Conference Bulletin*, Volume 5, Number 1. Page 10.](#)

complete examination of these passages, I would refer you to the work of Pastor Blake Jones, in his paper presented to the Adventist Theological Society on November 22, 2014, titled: “*An Apostle or Elder? The Critical Need to Define the Adventist Ministers’ Role.*” His paper was a blessing to me in gaining more insight into these passages.²

[Ephesians 4:11–12](#)

¹¹And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors (*poimenas*) and teachers;

¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

In [Ephesians 4:11](#), the Greek word for "pastors," is *poimenas*, the plural form for the noun *poimen*. *Poimen* is a root word which can be used as a noun (singular or plural), or as a verb, depending on how it is spelled. As a noun, it is found 18 times in the Greek New Testament: 15 times it is translated into the singular form as "shepherd," two times into the plural form as "shepherds," and only one time into the plural form as "pastors." In its verb form, *poimaino*, it is found 11 times: 4 times translated into the word "rule," and seven times translated into either "feed," "feedeth," or "feeding."

[Ephesians 4:11](#), is the only time it is translated as "pastors" and is used to identify a church officer. In Ephesians, however, the duties of pastors are not defined. To learn the responsibilities of pastors, we must look at other passages where the verb form, *poimaino*, is used when referring to church officers.

There are only two places where the verb form, *poimaino*, is used as it pertains to the duties of church officers.

In [Acts 20:17 and 28](#) we find that it is the elders (*presbuteros*), who have been made overseers (*episkopos*) of the churches by the Holy Spirit, and they are supposed to feed (*poimaino*) the church of God.

[Acts 20:17 and 28](#)

¹⁷And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders (*presbuteros*) of the church.

²⁸Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (*episkopos*), to feed (*poimaino*) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Likewise, in [1 Peter 5:1-3](#), we find that it is the elders (*presbuteros*) who are to take oversight of the churches and to feed (*poimaino*) the flock willingly.

[1 Peter 5:1–3](#)

² Blake Jones, *An Apostle or Elder? The Critical Need to Define the Adventist Ministers’ Role*, November 22, 2014. This is a paper which was presented to the Adventist Theological Society on November 22, 2014. The author, Blake Jones, can be contacted at blakejones123@gmail.com

¹The elders (*presbuteros*) which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

²Feed (*poimaino*) the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

In [Acts 14:23](#), we find that elders (*presbuteros*) were ordained in every church.

[Acts 14:23](#)

²³And when they had ordained them elders(*presbuteros*) in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

In [Titus 1:5-7](#), we find that Paul instructed that elders were to be ordained in every city. The qualifications of elders are also listed. We see that the word "bishop" is also used for an elder. The Greek root word for "bishop" is the noun *episkopos*, which means "overseer," also used in Acts 20:28 "hath made you overseers." *Episkopos* also has a verb form, *episkopeo*, which means to oversee or take oversight, which is also used in 1 Peter 5:2 "taking the oversight."

[Titus 1:5-7](#)

⁵For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (*presbuteros*) in every city, as I had appointed thee:

⁶If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

⁷For a bishop (*episkopos*) must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

"It would seem strange to have a standalone, separate office, never before or after mentioned in the New Testament, whose job was to shepherd the church when the task of shepherding the church was elsewhere said to be the role of the elders."³

J. N. Loughborough was one of the early Adventist pioneers. He saw Ellen White in public visions more than any other person except her husband, James White. In 1907, he published a book titled "*The Church: Its Organization, Order and Discipline.*" This book served for many years as a church manual until an official manual was adopted in 1932.⁴ In the book, he stated, "The term pastor is from *poimen*, and signifies literally a herdsman, a shepherd, especially a pastor, a teacher, a spiritual guide of a particular church. The definition

³ Blake Jones, *An Apostle or Elder? The Critical Need to Define the Adventist Ministers' Role*, November 22, 2014. This is a paper presented to the Adventist Theological Society on November 22, 2014. The author, Blake Jones, can be contacted at blakejones123@gmail.com

⁴ The **OFFICIAL** Ellen G. White Website <http://www.whiteestate.org/pioneer/loughborough.asp>

of this term shows that it signifies the same office as *presbuteros* (elder), and *episcopos* (bishop), a local office confined to a particular church.⁵

In the New Testament, a person who is an elder has been designated by the Holy Spirit to be the overseer of a local church. An elder is the equivalent of a modern-day lay-pastor.

In the early days of the Adventist church, using the Biblical plan for ministry as outlined in the New Testament, our denominational growth rate was tremendous. Other denominations wondered how we grew so fast. We had an unpopular doctrine, an unpopular day of worship, and many difficulties that other churches did not have, and yet we were growing more rapidly than any of them. The reason we were growing so fast was simple. The elders were taking care of the existing churches which gave the gospel ministers the ability to enter cities and areas with no Adventist presence and plant new churches. The existing churches could evangelize in the areas where they were located, under the direction of the elders. The Holy Spirit took care of the existing churches by using the elders as pastors, and Christ became their minister as the elders and members labored for souls.

Later in this book, you will see how much the growth rate decreased especially after 1932. That is when changes were officially made in the kind of work ministers were expected to do.

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pages 305-307, gives an illustration of some of the expectations for conference presidents, elders, and deacons in the late 1800s. While Ellen White was in Cooranbong, Australia, she wrote the following on September 10, 1896.

“Many presidents of state conferences do not attend to that which is their work—to see that the elders and deacons of the churches do their work in the churches, by seeing that a faithful tithe is brought into the treasury...Presidents of our conferences, do your duty; speak not your words, but a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” Elders of churches, do your duty. Labor from home to home, that the flock of God shall not be remiss in this great matter, which involves such a blessing or such a curse.”⁶

It is easy to see that the Biblical plan was in effect. Conference presidents were supposed to hold the elders and deacons of the churches responsible for collecting the tithes and offerings. This allowed the ministers to go and plant new congregations in areas where the Third Angel’s message had not been presented. The elders of the existing churches functioned like unpaid lay-pastors today. The ministers were much more itinerant than today. The ministers raised up new churches and then moved to other previously unentered areas to plant more new churches. Because ministers were so itinerant, it was necessary that the system of tithes and offerings be used to pay the ministers. They could not settle in one area for a long time and hold a regular job as the elders could do.

It is interesting that even in matters of church discipline, the elders functioned as pastors do today. In 1880, Ellen White gave some counsel to churches regarding how to carry out

⁵ J.N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order and Discipline* (Washington, D.C., Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1907) p. 129, paragraph 2.

⁶ Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Worker: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1923,) 305.*

church discipline. In one section of that counsel, there is shown the relationship between the local church elders and deacons and the conference presidents. “Young churches may have leaders in elders and deacons chosen to have a burden and care for the prosperity of the church, yet these men should not feel at liberty in their own judgment and responsibility to cut off names from the church. They should not have so much zeal as to make decisive moves of so grave a character. They should communicate with the one who has been appointed as president of their conference, and confer with him.”⁷ Please notice that there is no mention of calling a minister away from evangelism and church planting to come and settle church discipline issues in churches already established.

Elsewhere she speaks of great care in the selection of elders and deacons since they are to be entrusted with the flock of God. “May the Lord impress upon the minds and hearts of all connected with the sacred work of God the importance of ascertaining whether those who are to minister as deacons and elders are suitable men to be entrusted with the flock of God.”⁸

W. H. Branson said it well in *The Ministry, Volume 4, Number 1, January 1931*, “The Saviour Himself set us the example. We see Him going from city to city, teaching in the busy streets, on the hillside and the shore, but we never find Him settled as a pastor of some synagogue. We see the apostle Paul going from country to country, ordaining elders in every church and providing for the care of believers, but he himself ever pressing on to the unworked sections and planting the banner of truth in new fields.”⁹

Meanwhile, what were the regular members supposed to do? God has specific directions for regular church members as well. Christ promises special blessings to members who labor for lost souls.

“If our people would minister to other souls who need their help, they would themselves be ministered unto by the Chief Shepherd, and thousands would be rejoicing in the fold who are now wandering in the desert. Instead of hovering over our people, let every soul go to work to seek and to save the lost. Let every soul labor, not in visiting among our churches, but in visiting the dark places of the earth where there are no churches.”¹⁰

If you are bold for Jesus and step out of your comfort zone to seek lost souls, Jesus will be your pastor. He will be your shepherd. God does not always choose those who already possess many needed qualifications. While we are to do our best to become qualified, that is not what God wants the most. He can do for you what you cannot do for yourself if you submit fully to Him. He can give all the help and qualifications needed to do His work if you are willing to follow His leading, ask for and accept instruction and guidance from the Holy Spirit, and give your all to Him daily. But sadly, we have not cooperated with God as we should have. Many souls are being lost day after day as a result.

⁷ [Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 9: \(Washington, D.C.: White Estate, 1979\) 193-194.](#)

⁸ [Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 21: \(Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990,\) 3.](#)

⁹ [W. H. Branson, *The Ministry*, Volume 4, Number 1, January 1931, page 10.](#)

¹⁰ [Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, June 25, 1895 par. 6.](#)

Jesus said in [Luke 10:2](#), “The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.” He did not say to pray for laborers to be sent to those who are already harvested.

Today, God is looking for people like Isaiah, “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.” Isaiah 6:8. Isaiah did not already have all the qualifications needed to do his job. God was not looking for someone with all the necessary skills. God was looking for someone who was willing to be used by God, changed by God, qualified day by day by God, shaped and molded by His Holy Spirit.

Is God calling you today? Is He looking for you to say, “Here am I, send me.”

Questions for Consideration

1. How might we spread the 3 angel’s message faster?
2. How might elder-run churches help us to spread our message faster?
3. When selecting elders and deacons, what qualifies a person to do these jobs? Remember that the Bible has an answer to this, too.
4. What qualifies a believer to share the truth with others? What stops them?
5. What stops you?
6. How can you, personally, overcome these challenges so that you can better share the good news of Jesus?
7. For what reasons, do you think, does our church and member growth rate become so much higher with itinerant ministers?

Chapter 8

The Origin of the Protestant Model of Ministry

It is easy to see that the model of ministry that we are using today in most of the world is not like the model which the apostles and the early Adventists used. Today, in much of the world, Adventist ministers are responsible for oversight of the existing churches rather than letting the elders oversee the churches. Ministers of most other Protestant churches use the same method. What is the origin of the model of ministry used by Protestant churches?

One day, while visiting a deacon at his place of business, one topic in our conversation was: What is the origin of the model of ministry that we use today? Before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, the deacon had been raised as a Roman Catholic and served as an altar boy during his childhood. He made a comment that caught my attention. I believe that God directed him in his comment. He said, "It must be something Catholic." I had a Catholic encyclopedia on my computer hard drive, so I searched in it and found the origin of the Protestant model of ministry.

In the 16th century, during the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church became concerned as their members were leaving the Catholic Church to join the Reformation churches. Martin Luther and other reformers had done excellent work in building the foundation for many Protestant denominations. Martin Luther died in 1546, but the effect of his work lived on throughout history. Others followed in his footsteps with Bible truth and still do it today.

The Roman Catholic Church had to deal with the Protestant Reformation problem and addressed it in what is known as the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent was not just one session, but a series of 25 sessions over 18 years, beginning in December 1545 and ending in December 1563. During the 24th session, which convened in November of 1563, the following information was documented and is accessible today in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

The definition of the term "pastor," and the duties of the pastor are as follows:

"Pastor. This term denotes a priest who has the cure of souls (*cura animarum*), that is, who is bound in virtue of his office to promote the spiritual welfare of the faithful by preaching...

The Council of Trent (Sess. XXIV, cap. xiii, de Ref.) shows it to be the mind of the Church that dioceses should, wherever it is possible, be divided into canonical parishes (see Parish), to be governed by irremovable parish-priests. . . . Pastors, besides having rights, have also obligations. They must preach and take care of the religious instruction of the faithful." ¹

¹ Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 11, page 537. Copyright 1911, by Robert Appleton Company, Copyright 1913, by The Encyclopedia Press, Inc

A “diocese” in Catholic and Protestant denominations, is a geographic area. A “canonical parish” is a group of churches which are cared for by a priest or pastor. Adventists, by comparison, use the term “conference” when referring to a geographic area, and “pastoral district” when referring to a group of churches assigned to a pastor.

The parish priests were supposed to oversee the Catholic Church members who were already faithful very carefully so they would not convert to the churches of the Reformation. The priests were to do everything possible to keep Catholic members in the Catholic Church. While the origin of this model of ministry began long before the Council of Trent (perhaps as early as the Second Century, A.D.), the Council more clearly defined the duties of parish priests. Before that, the priests had minimal personal contact with the members of their parishes other than at the Mass on Sundays. The Mass was attended more by the wealthy, while poor parishioners rarely participated. Also, the work of the parish priest had little to do with spreading the gospel to those who had never heard it before. There was really nothing evangelistic about this model, nothing. That is why the apostle Paul did not use that method. The early Adventist church did not use that method either. Ellen White did not advocate that model. Instead, she strictly warned and counseled against it. The model which, over the centuries had become associated with the Catholic church, promoted the idea of members being dependent upon the priests for spirituality, instead of encouraging members to grow spiritually through personal devotions and Bible study. The early Adventist model was vastly different; it was like the apostolic model which was demonstrated in the ministry of the apostle Paul.

During the Reformation, the Protestants separated from the Roman Catholic Church because of Bible doctrines, not because of a model of ministry. The Protestants at that time kept the model of having salaried, settled pastors who were paid to oversee the church members and their spirituality. A few centuries after the Protestant Reformation, the early Adventist ministers had an intense urgency to spread the Three Angels Messages rapidly. This demanded a better model of ministry, a more itinerant model – the Biblical model found in the New Testament. After evangelizing and planting new churches, the ministers would ordain elders to shepherd or pastor the new churches. Then, the ministers would move elsewhere to evangelize and start more new congregations where the Three Angels' Messages had never been shared.

When we followed the example of the apostle Paul and the repeated counsels and warnings of Ellen White, our church multiplied rapidly. Other denominations were amazed at our growth. During the last years of Ellen White's life, there were some appointments of settled pastors over the largest churches, but these were exceptions to the rule of assigning ministers to territories to evangelize and plant new congregations. While still alive, she repeatedly counseled ministers and members alike, warning of the dangers of settling ministers over existing churches. After her death, the practice of assigning ministers to serve as settled pastors increased rapidly. In 1932, the first SDA *Church Manual* was published, and the official role of the ministers changed.² Ministers were then officially sanctioned to serve as local, settled pastors, and the overall growth rate of the denomination declined significantly over time. Our model of ministry began to look more and more like the model

² [General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual: \(Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1932,\) 23.*](#)

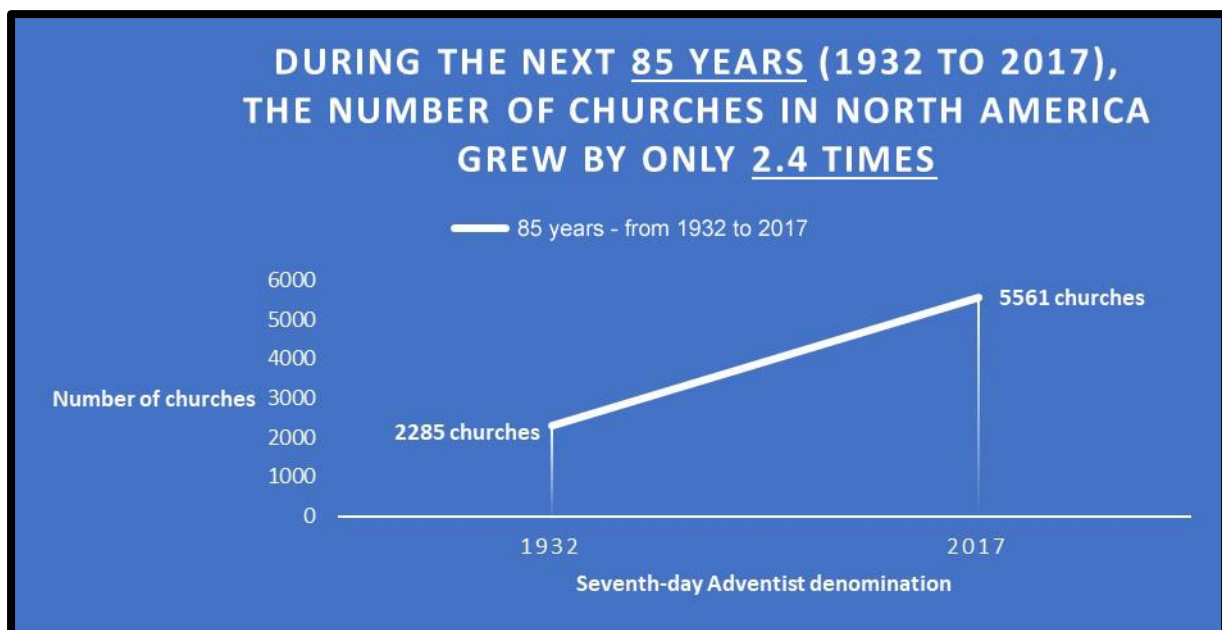
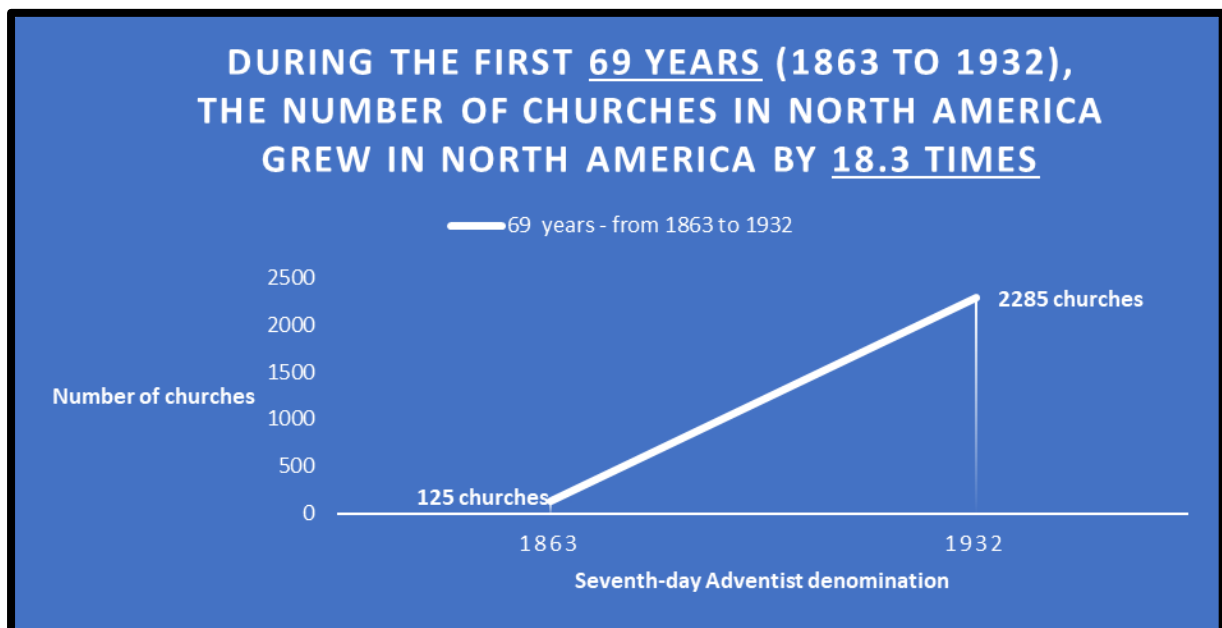
used by other Protestant churches. As a result, everything that Mrs. White predicted would happen as a result of ministers hovering over the churches became a reality. Many of our churches today are weak and in a state of decline. Young people are scarce in many churches. Churches are demanding the services of the salaried clergy to sustain them. Some churches in the more developed nations are essentially on life support. The ministers are no longer as free to plant new churches in unentered areas, and the populations in those areas remain ignorant of essential, last day truth.

In a letter dated May 15, 1980, Elder D. A. Delafield, Associate Secretary for the Ellen G. White Estate wrote to Pastor Jere Webb, giving answers to some questions he had asked. One question dealt with where the concept originated that each individual congregation should have a pastor. Elder Delafield's response was as follows: "On the matter of the first question, I have never found any support for the view that each individual Adventist congregation should have a pastor - - that is in the development of Adventist church history. This concept I think has come into our ranks from the evangelical churches where pastors are provided for each flock regardless of size. At least, in evangelical circles, and for that matter, in the moral liberal churches, the concept that congregations demand in each case pastoral care, has I think, itself led to an attempt to satisfy that demand. To be sure, whether we are discussing Adventist, or other churches, it would be ideal if such a program could be supplied. But the New Testament teaching that local elders should be appointed in every church, would represent, I think, God's plan that this need should be supplied by local elders, leaving the minister free to carry on this work as an evangelist and to raise up new congregations."³

A quick look at some data will show how the growth rate of both churches and members in North America decreased as the method of ministry changed. From 1863 to 1932, a period of 69 years, we used a more Biblical method of ministry, like the one we find in the New Testament. From 1932 onward, we adopted a different method of ministry similar to other Protestant denominations. Before examining the growth rate comparisons, something needs to be said. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have an autocratic leadership model for administrators, ministers, or for churches. General Conferences sessions are attended by voting delegates from all world divisions. The official delegates are made up of both church workers and lay members representing their various areas of the world. The changes that took place in the way ministers are assigned, were not the result of any one president, or any single GC Session. The changes took place gradually at first, then more rapidly, as both lay members and church workers alike, drifted away from the apostolic model in Scripture, and the counsel of Ellen White.

³ [D. A. Delafield, *Letter to Pastor Jere Webb*: May 15, 1980. \(Ellen G. White Estate: Washington, DC.\)](#)

North America – Comparing Growth Rates of Churches and Members from 1863 to 1932, and from 1932 to 2017.⁴



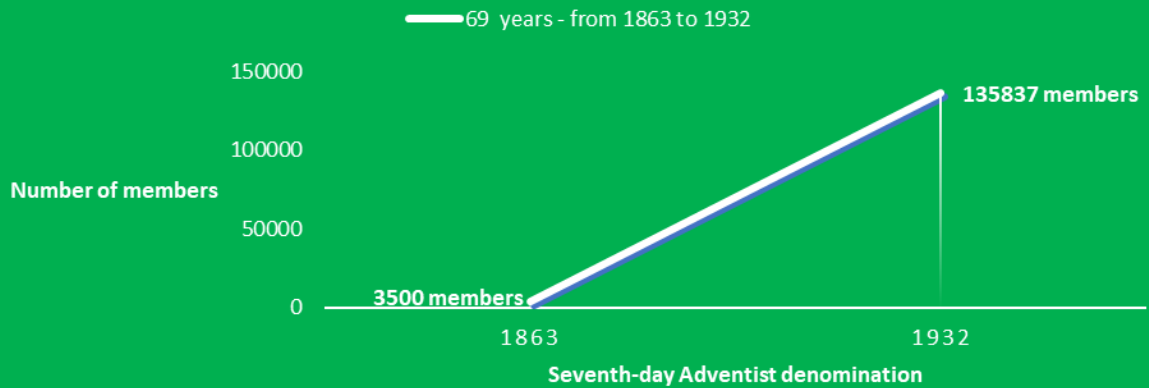
⁴ Information for the statistics used for the colored graphs can be obtained from the following documents:

[2018 Adventist Statistical Report](#)

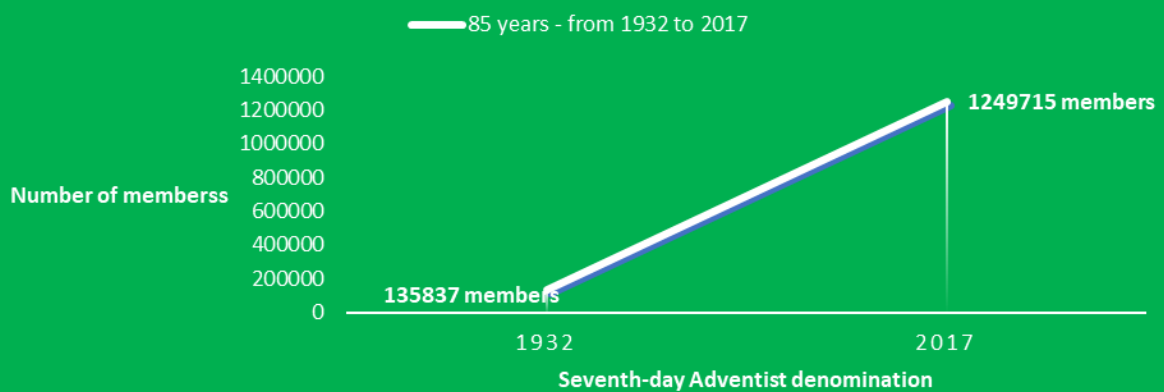
[1932 Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions](#)

[General Conference Yearly Statistics from 1863 to 1900](#)

**DURING THE FIRST 69 YEARS (1863 TO 1932),
THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS GREW IN NORTH
AMERICA BY 38.8 TIMES**



**DURING THE NEXT 85 YEARS (1932 TO 2017),
THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN NORTH AMERICA
GREW BY ONLY 9.2 TIMES**



As the focus on evangelizing and planting new churches in unreached areas changed to pastoring the existing churches, our growth rate for both baptisms and new churches decreased dramatically.

Questions for Consideration

1. In chapter 8 you learned that the idea of settled ministers comes from the Catholic parish-priest model and nothing of that idea is founded in Adventist doctrine- why do we to keep this model of ministry?
2. What possible benefits do we gain from having settled ministers?
3. Refer to question number 2. Why couldn't the same benefits be offered by an elder?
4. Refer again to question number 2. Which of these needs ought we be relying on God for, rather than ministers, elders, and deacons- who are mere men?
5. What benefits might we receive if we rely on God for all of the needs thought about in the previous question?

Chapter 9

The Effect of Not Using the Original Adventist Model of Ministry

As seen in the last chapter, the model of ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist Church has changed over the years since the beginning of our denomination. In the beginning, the church was very mission-driven, and the duties of the ministers reflected that. The church members lived for the salvation of the lost. The church at that time never had any plan to settle pastors over established churches. The ministers were to be church planters and evangelists who go into areas where there were no Adventist churches and start new ones, grounded in the Three Angels Messages. Then, the ministers would move to other unentered areas, and repeat the process. Established churches were pastored by locally elected church elders. It was a time when the Adventist church patterned itself after the apostolic church. Many new churches were planted, and the overall growth of the Adventist church was rapid.

Since those early years, many changes have been made in the list of duties that Adventist ministers are responsible for performing. Ellen White said: "There has been so much preaching to our churches that they have almost ceased to appreciate the gospel ministry. The time has come when this order of things should be changed. Let the minister call out the individual church members to help him by house-to-house work in carrying the truth into regions beyond. Let all cooperate with the heavenly intelligences in communicating truth to others. — *The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1895."¹ While there has been renewed interest in planting new churches lately, there has also been a trend for ministers to spend more time, energy and resources to strengthen the existing churches. Odd as it may seem, this effort by ministers to fix churches is counterproductive. Ellen White warned against ministers spending time trying to fix churches.

Ellen White writes in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 7, pages 18 and 19

“God has not given His ministers the work of setting the churches right. No sooner is this work done, apparently, than it has to be done over again. Church members that are thus looked after and labored for become religious weaklings. If nine tenths of the effort that has been put forth for those who know the truth had been put forth for those who have never heard the truth, how much greater would have been the advancement made! **God has withheld His blessings because His people have not worked in harmony with His directions.**

“It weakens those who know the truth for our ministers to expend on them the time and talent that should be given to the unconverted. In many of our churches in the cities the minister preaches Sabbath after Sabbath, and Sabbath after Sabbath the church members come to the house of God with no words to tell of blessings received because of blessings imparted. They have not worked during the week to carry out the instruction given them on

¹ Ellen White, *Welfare Ministry: (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952,)* [110.](#)

the Sabbath. So long as church members make no effort to give to others the help given them, great spiritual feebleness must result.”²

This has been going on in North America as well as many other areas of the world. There has been a progressive journey from the apostolic model of the early Adventist church to a model characterized today, by churches that are becoming more and more pastor-dependent and congregationalist in nature. Many steps have been involved in going from the apostolic model of ministry to where we are today. We will be looking at 6 of those steps, but first, let’s learn about the apostolic mindset of the early Adventists, as revealed in the writings of Ellen White and early Adventist leaders.

The Early Adventist, Apostolic Mindset

Perhaps one of the most interesting quotes from Ellen White on this subject is one where she clearly states that ministers should not even have districts of existing churches. We saw the quote already in chapter six, but let's look at a few sentences which follow also. "Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, regarding the churches in some particular place as their special care. And our churches should not feel jealous and neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear fruit to His glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object, - the saving of souls."³

The existing churches themselves were not the mission of the minister, but they had a mission for the minister to perform—the establishment of new churches. After elders and possibly deacons had been elected to care for a new church, the minister would leave to plant another new church somewhere else.

In the earliest days of the Advent movement, the ministers often worked without sufficient financial means. They were mostly itinerant, going from place to place without the company of their families for much of each year. The following is an excerpt taken from a message given by Elder James White to those assembled at the General Conference Session at Battle Creek, Michigan, held from June 3-6, 1859.

“We have no settled pastors over our churches; but our ministers are all missionaries, as were the early ministers of Jesus Christ, consequently they are most of their time deprived of the blessings of home. For Christ’s sake, and for the salvation of their fellow-men, they sacrifice the society of dear ones at home, go forth into a cold, selfish world, and wear out their lives in preaching unpopular Bible truth. God bless them! But they must be sustained, and God has made it the duty of the church to support them, as they go on their mission of love. . . While a great work is before the church, the time that remains in which to accomplish it must be short. The last events of prophecy are being fulfilled, and the last warnings for the church are being given. . . Our ministers must be regarded as very economical in their expenses, and abundant

² [Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1855,\) 18-19.](#)

³ [Ellen White, *Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1902, par. 7.](#)

in their labors. **Most of them preach from two to three hundred discourses in a year.** And it is a painful fact that they often suffer hardships, care and deprivation for want of means.”⁴

The *Signs of the Times*, a witnessing magazine, was published from 1874 through 1979. In the December 17, 1874 issue, Uriah Smith wrote an article titled “The Seventh-day Adventists. A Brief Sketch of their Origin, Progress, and Principles.” In explaining how the Seventh-day Adventists organized their local churches as they were planted, he wrote “This is exceedingly simple. A body of believers associate together, taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, and attaching their names to a covenant simply to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The Bible is their only creed. A clerk is chosen to keep the records of the church, and an elder, elected by vote of the church, is ordained to look after its spiritual interests. If the church is large, its temporal affairs are assigned to one or more deacons chosen by vote of the church for this purpose. . . **None of the churches have pastors established with them.** They maintain their worship without the aid of a preacher, only as one may occasionally visit them, leaving the ministers free to devote almost their whole time to carrying these views to those who have never heard upon them.”⁵

In comparing the differences of ministry methods and growth rates of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, James White wrote in the *Review and Herald*, November 20, 1879, “The widest difference between the Seventh Day Baptists and the Seventh-day Adventists, is in the manner of labor. For want of sympathy from other denominations, and for pecuniary and religious advantages, the S. D. Baptists, at an early date in their history, collected in certain localities. Their influence upon the world at large has consequently been small, hence their growth very slow. . . The growth of the S. D. Adventists has been rapid. Our existence as an organized body dates in the year 1860. We have no settled pastors, but like John Wesley, our ministers regard the world as their parish. They go everywhere preaching the word, and everywhere find converts. The field is a broad one, and the laborers are few.”⁶ It should be noted that the Seventh-day Baptists trace their roots to England in the 1600s. Today, in 2018, they have not more than 3000 to 4000 members and about 100 churches in the United States with approximately 50,000 members worldwide according to information obtained by phone with their world headquarters. By comparison, the Seventh-day Adventists which became a denomination in 1863, had over 13,000 (mostly in the U.S.) in 1879 when James White was writing the article and over 50,000 worldwide in 1897.

The following quotations from Ellen White illustrate the issue well.

In 1855, she wrote, “Our ministers are not to spend their time laboring for those who have already accepted the truth. With Christ’s love burning in their hearts, they are to go forth to win sinners to the Saviour. Beside all waters they are to sow the seeds of truth. Place after place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up. Those who take their stand for

⁴ James White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 9, 1859, p. 21.

⁵ Uriah Smith, *The Signs of the Times*, Volume 1, Number 11, December 17, 1874. p. 84.

⁶ James White, *Review and Herald*, Volume 54, Number 21, November 20, 1879. p. 164.

the truth are to be organized into churches, and then the minister is to pass on to other equally important fields.”⁷

In 1886 she wrote, “Do not, my ministering brethren, allow yourselves to be kept at home to serve tables; and do not hover around the churches, preaching to those who are already fully established in the faith. Teach the people to have light in themselves, and not to depend upon the ministers. They should have Christ as their helper, and should educate themselves to help one another, so that the minister can be free to enter new fields. An important work is to be done in the world. New fields are to be opened; and the zeal and the missionary spirit that Christ manifested are greatly needed. Oh that the power of God would set the truth home to every heart! Oh that all might see the necessity of having a living connection with God, and of knowing and doing his will from day to day!”⁸

Looking at 6 of the steps involved in going from the Biblical model of ministry to where we are today.

Step #1: Ministers began to spend too much time with the churches.

As the ministers began to spend too much time with the churches, time spent on the mission of the church to seek and save the lost was declining. Ellen White responded with messages from God. The following are a few samples of what she wrote.

“If the ministers would get out of the way, if they would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and their capabilities would increase by use.—Letter 56, 1901.”⁹

“The Lord’s vineyard is a more extensive one than the present working force is able properly to cultivate. Therefore it is necessary that every one should labor to the full extent of his ability. Whosoever refuses to do this, dishonors the Lord of the vineyard, and if he continues inactive, the Lord will disown him. As the human agent endeavors to labor, God works in him and by him. When the Lord sees that little real effort for the conversion of souls is put forth in regions beyond, when he sees that golden opportunities are lost, and that the spiritual physician is devoting his energy and skill to those who are whole, neglecting the maladies of those who are ready to die, he is not pleased. He cannot pronounce the “well done” upon such work; for it is not hastening but hindering the progress of his cause, when rapid advancement is most necessary. Time and energy and means are devoted to those who know the truth, instead of being used to enlighten the ignorant. Our churches are being tended as though they were sick lambs by those who should be seeking for the lost sheep. If our people would minister to other souls who need their help, they would themselves be ministered unto by the Chief Shepherd, and thousands would be rejoicing in the fold who are now wandering in the desert. Instead of hovering over our people, let every soul go to work

⁷ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1902,) 19-20.

⁸ Ellen White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*: (Basile: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886,) 139.

⁹ Ellen White, *Evangelism* p. 382, 1946. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,) 382.

to seek and to save the lost. Let every soul labor, not in visiting among our churches, but in visiting the dark places of the earth where there are no churches.”¹⁰

Please notice that Ellen White indicated that members, as well as ministers, were to be laboring and "visiting the dark places of the earth where there are no churches."

On April 15, 1901, at the 34th General Conference Session, held in Battle Creek, Michigan, Ellen White gave a talk to the ministers, titled "*An Appeal to Our Ministers.*" In her talk she said:

“My heart has been filled with sadness as I have looked over the field and seen the barren places. What does this mean? Who are standing as representatives of Jesus Christ? Who feels a burden for the souls who cannot receive the truth till it is brought to them? Our ministers are hovering over the churches, as though the angel of mercy was not making efforts to save souls.

God holds these ministers responsible for the souls of those who are in darkness. He does not call you to go into fields that need no physician. Establish your churches with the understanding that they need not expect the minister to wait upon them and to be continually feeding them. They have the truth; ' they know what truth is. They should have root in themselves. These should strike down deeply, that they may reach up higher and still higher. They must be rooted and grounded in the faith.”¹¹

Notice that the church members are not even supposed expect a minister to “wait upon them and to be continually feeding them.” They should have “root in themselves.”

Step #2: The practice of assigning ministers to labor in the churches began as early as the 1890s, while Ellen White was still alive. Her instructions against doing that were not followed.

The practice of assigning ministers to pastor churches, had its beginning even before the death of Ellen White in 1915, despite her God-given, repeated counsels against it. As early as 1895, we can see in her writings that the churches were calling for workers to labor in the churches and that the requests were being granted.

“The cities in America, in this country, and in other countries, are not worked as they should be, and yet we are admonished to be laborers together with God. Instead of this, many churches, collectively and individually, have been so far removed from God, so separated from his Spirit, that they have left souls to perish all around them, while they have been calling for workers to labor in the church. This labor has been granted them, and the impenitent and the sinner have been robbed of the messages which the Lord would have given to them. If the church were a living, working organization, having life in itself, its members would experience travail for souls. Individual members of the church would strive to impart the light of the knowledge of the truth to those who have never been enlightened by the truth.”¹²

¹⁰ Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, July 25, 1895, paragraph 6.

¹¹ Ellen White, *General Conference Bulletin*, Volume 4, Extra Number 12, April 16, 1901, page 267.

¹² Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1895, paragraph 4.

Even though the practice of settling ministers over churches as pastors began while Ellen White was still alive, it was limited. This can be seen from the following statement written in 1912 by Elder A. G. Daniels, who was the General Conference president at that time.

“We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; **for when we cease our forward movement work and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to weaken, and lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized and our work will be on a retreat.**”¹³

He went further to say, “Now when I entered upon the ministry, I never expected to do anything else but preach the message in new fields. I had not the remotest idea of anything else. It never entered into my head nor heart, nor was it a desire. I had one thought, and that was to go out and preach the third angel's message to people who did not know it. I did not think of anything else for a long time. As any man of any reason would do, I began to study how to do that work most successfully. That led me to study methods of labor, policies, ways of working; and. I will say, brethren, that for a dozen years, or thirteen I think it was, my whole time was spent in what we may call the field work, evangelistic, endeavor. I had no conference responsibilities, nothing in the way of administration. I was just plowing, plowing, plowing, all the time, in new fields.”¹⁴

Even though ministers were sent to pastor only the largest churches at first, what would become a growing trend had begun. The effect was disastrous. The Bible says in *Galatians* 5:9, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Ellen White was clearly against ministers presiding over churches because the practice would result in many souls being lost and the churches becoming weakened. Her warnings were not taken as seriously as they should have been.

After Ellen White's death, as the little bit of leaven grew, the rapidly increasing trend to assign ministers as settled pastors of churches could easily be seen by the early 1920s. The General Conference Committee was alarmed by this growing trend which was gaining momentum. Evidence of their concern is seen in the minutes of the 1923 General Conference Committee Autumn Council meeting. The minutes from October 15, 1923, contain a committee report with 20 recommendations. Recommendation number 18 stated: “That we view with concern the rapidly increasing practice of placing ministers over churches as settled pastors. We urge our conference committees to give careful study to this question with a view of developing as far as possible self-dependence and leadership in all our churches, leaving all able-bodied ministers free to establish the work in new fields.”¹⁵

¹³ A. G. Daniels, *Pacific Union Recorder*, Vol. 11, No. 01, April 4, 1912, paragraph 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, paragraph 6.

¹⁵ [General Conference Committee Minutes for 1923, October 15, 1923, page 486.](#)

Step #3: Ministers were assigned to all churches.

A. G. Daniels retired from being president of the General Conference in 1922. The practice of settling ministers over churches as pastors rapidly growing stronger as time went by. Regardless of repeated warnings from denominational leaders and the writings of Ellen White, the churches were crying for ministers to pastor their churches and their desires were granted.

F. M. Wilcox said, "Unfortunately, there is a growing tendency in the denomination today toward settled pastorates, and the time of too many of our preachers, instead of being occupied with carrying the message into new fields, has to be taken up in settling church difficulties, and in labor for men and women who should be towers of strength instead of subjects for labor. We cannot feel that this is in God's order."¹⁶

G. A. Roberts and W. C. Moffett,¹⁷ said in the *Review and Herald*, November 11, 1926, "There is a growing tendency to tie up ministers as settled pastors over churches. In every religious reform movement this has been one of the first steps leading to stagnation and decadence."¹⁸

By 1930, the practice of assigning ministers to pastor churches was becoming entrenched as the norm. This can be seen from an article written in 1930, by J. L. McElhany, president of the North American division at the time.¹⁹ It was published in the January 1931 issue of *The Ministry* magazine.

"Shall we go on year after year, simply pastoring our churches and engaging in spasmodic missionary endeavor, and expect to see this work finished? The insistent cry from our churches is for pastoral help, and one of the chief problems faced by conference administrators today is that of providing settled pastors for our churches. Yet this is quite contrary to the plain instruction which has come to us from the Spirit of prophecy."²⁰

At first, ministers who were settled pastors did not usually remain for a long time in their district before being moved to new districts, and baptisms were a major priority. Evangelism was still a vital expectation for all pastors. When my father-in-law entered the ministry in 1939, although he was given a church assignment, he was expected to hold an evangelistic crusade his first year and get at least one baptism in the crusade, or he would be put out of the ministry. Today, it is unfortunate that the importance of local church evangelism is not stressed as much as in the past.

¹⁶ [F. M. Wilcox, "Standing by the Preacher," *Review and Herald*, June 4, 1925, page 5. F. M. Wilcox was editor of the *Review and Herald* from 1911 to 1944.](#)

¹⁷ W. C. Moffett was the president of the Southern New England Conference from 1926 to 1928 and president of the Eastern Canadian Union from 1928 to 1932. G. A. Roberts was the Inter-American Division President from 1936 to 1941.

¹⁸ [G. A. Roberts and W. C. Moffett, "Building the Home Base," *Review and Herald* \(November 11, 1926\): page 8.](#)

¹⁹ J. L. McElhany served later as president of the General Conference from 1936 to 1950.

²⁰ [J. L. McElhany, *The Ministry*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1931, page 7.](#)

Step #4: Some churches began to request that pastoral candidates being considered, possess specific traits.

By the late 1960s or early 1970s, when a pastor would move to another district, some conferences were beginning to ask the churches what kind of pastor they would like to have. This created self-centeredness in some of the churches. In effect, many churches were becoming their own mission. By merely asking the churches what kind of minister they wanted, the message received by members and ministers could give the impression that the care of church members was a higher priority than seeking the lost. The term "Gospel Minister" now had a confused definition. The "Gospel Ministers" were spending more and more time preaching sermons to people who had the knowledge of the truth, and less and less time preaching the gospel to the lost.

Step #5: Ministers began to be interviewed by prospective churches.

The next step in the trend toward a more pastor-dependent model of ministry was that churches wanted to be able to conduct interviews with prospective ministerial candidates before pastoral assignments were made by the conferences. This gave the members in a church an opportunity to see if they wanted a specific minister before the conference would send the minister to pastor the church or church district. If the church members decided that they did not like a minister during an interview, the conference would often look for another candidate. In these situations, the church members could easily think of the minister as responsible to them to do as they wished. This method can have a damaging effect on the concept of the God-given mission of the church. Evangelism becomes less productive, and the maintenance of the existing churches becomes a significant focus. Baptism rates, as well as growth rates during this time, continued to remain low when compared to the years before ministers were being assigned as settled pastors. The planting of new churches was not as high a priority as in the past. During this time, I knew a minister who had pastored churches for 20 years but had never conducted a single evangelism campaign. Oddly, he was considered a good minister because the congregations liked him.

Step #6: A professional ministry which is trending in the direction of congregationalism is developing in some areas.

Churches today, are beginning to give the conferences the list of ministers they would like to interview. Sometimes ministers submit resumes to be placed on the list of potential candidates for pastoring a particular church. In this situation, it is challenging for a minister to take a firm stand on unpopular issues. It would be easy to allow political concerns to dominate in this kind of situation. Spirituality can decline in some cases. Sometimes the lost just remain lost because the primary mission of seeking the lost does not take the priority that it should. It can be very difficult for ministers who have an intense burden for saving the lost to work under these kinds of conditions. They have a God-given call and responsibility to spend more time to save the lost, but they are required because of their church employment to spend a large amount of time with the saved. One minister I know, in a group discussion, asked the question, "Is ministry a calling, or a career."

I can remember when I first got into professional ministry. Previously, I had served as a lay church planter while earning my living in health care. I spent most of my time with people who did not know the truth. I was called from lay church planting into professionally pastoring a church district in a conference. After being in the district a while, I knew something was wrong, but could not figure out just exactly what it was at that time. I

remember praying to God and asking Him something like this: How can I maintain my connection with the lost when I must spend so much time working with the baptized church members who already know the truth? Before becoming a salaried pastor, I had always worked among my evangelism target audience. When I became a salaried pastor, however, I could not spend as much time with lost people who had never heard the Three Angels Messages. I now know that this is not how Christ intended for His church to operate. This is not the Biblical model for either the lay members or the ministers. God has a better way.

To understand what the Biblical/New Testament model for both members and ministers should look like today, we need to re-examine the Biblical model in three areas: local church governance, professional ministry, and lay ministry.

Questions for Consideration

1. What justifies our continued use of settled minister?
2. What does it mean to minister the gospel?
3. When you think of the term minister, do you think of the leader of a congregation or a winner of lost souls?
4. How is a pastor's preaching affected, when the pastor is worried about how the congregation will like what he must preach?

Chapter 10

Biblical Model - Local Church Governance Today

In the New Testament as well as in early Adventist history, the elders who were elected by the churches functioned the same way that pastors of churches function today. In addition to the Bible, this is documented in the writings of Ellen White, as well as the writings of many prominent Adventist leaders, ministers, and writers. This has been covered in previous chapters of this book. Other church officers are also mentioned in the New Testament such as deacons, etc.

Persons elected to these various church offices were chosen by the vote of the members of each congregation. Leaders for local churches—the elders and deacons, were not appointed by either the apostles or the leadership in Jerusalem. The apostles simply ordained elders and deacons who had been elected by the various churches. The same practice should be followed today if we are going to have a genuinely Biblical model for local church governance.

In *Manuscript Releases*, volume 12, page 284, Ellen White gives counsel regarding the selection of leaders in newly organized congregations. "Lay hands,' said the inspired apostle, 'suddenly on no man.' [[1 Timothy. 5:22](#)]. Do not be in such haste to manufacture leaders, ordaining men that have never been tested or proved. Let the church be conducted in this manner: alternating with several, one leading one week and choosing another for the next week or two, thus keeping individuals at work in the church; and after a suitable trial select by the voice of the church someone to be the acknowledged leader, for never more than a year at a time; then elect again a new one, or the same one if he has been a blessing to the church."¹

The relationship between conference presidents and local church elders should be like the relationship between conference presidents and lay pastors, in areas where lay pastors are being used. In New Testament churches and in the early Adventist churches, local elders were equivalent to lay pastors today. As mentioned in a previous chapter, some of the duties of local elders included dealing with church discipline, as well as tithes and offerings.

In the writings of Ellen White and early Adventist church leaders, the ministers were not serving as settled pastors. Instead, they were involved in evangelizing new territory, leaving the governance of the existing churches to locally elected elders and deacons. In world divisions of the Adventist church where this method is most closely followed, the number of baptisms and the number of new churches planted each year is much higher than in other world divisions not using this method. The next chapter has statistical data to prove this.

If a church is blessed with more than one elder, all the elders share the authority and the responsibilities of leading and caring for the church. Like everything else, two or more elders are better than one. Different elders will have different talents, abilities, knowledge and

¹Ellen White, *Manuscript 1-1880*, (February 18, 1880), paragraph 42.

life experiences. When one elder is weak in one area of ministry, another elder will have strength in that area. Even in small churches with only one elder, the wise use of deacons can provide much assistance in the care of the congregation and in the outreach of the church. The Biblical method can provide a rich, more complete and balanced leadership for a church than simply having one pastor in charge of everything. For a more expanded view of the Biblical role of elders, see the research from P. Damsteegt.²

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, elders are permitted (with conference president permission) to do much of what ordained ministers can do. Some exceptions to this include ordaining elders or other officers, perform weddings, and organize new churches. Local church elders cannot function at large but are limited to operating only in the local church where their membership is held. Additionally, they serve only during a year when they have been elected to serve. In some situations, with conference president approval, an elder may serve in more than one church at a time. See the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual for details.³ Ordained ministers, however, can perform all functions of ministry and can function at large without having to be elected by the local churches.

The list of qualifications for an elder found in 1 Timothy 3 are the same qualifications one would want to see in a pastor or minister.

[1 Timothy 3:1–7](#)

¹This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

³Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

⁴One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

⁵(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

⁶Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

⁷Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

To remind us that having professional pastors is not Biblical, it would be good to look at another portion of the letter (the same letter mentioned in the previous chapter) which D. A. Delafield wrote to Pastor Jere Webb. “The genius of our work is that we are convert conscious. A woe is upon us if we preach not the gospel. Onward, ever onward, is the overpowering Adventist pre-possession. We cannot settle down, we cannot think in terms of appointing full-time ministers to care for little flocks. Their job is to provide an outreach to lead the people themselves into a witnessing program. They are not to settle down like

² Damsteegt, P. Gerard, "Have Adventists Abandoned the Biblical Model of Leadership of the Local Church?" (2005). *Faculty Publications*. 60.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/church-history-pubs/60>

³ The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual can be downloaded for free at www.adventist.org

mother hens over little chicks and warm the people with their presence. They are to teach the people how they can warm their own hearts through experiences in soul-winning work. Nevertheless, elders are to be appointed in every church. Laymen are to be the ones in charge . . .⁴

While churches vary in size, the Biblical principles of leadership remain the same. Regardless of the size of the church or the number of elders, God's plan is always best. Let's look at an example to show the benefit of following the Biblical model of church governance.

For our example, let's consider a church with 200 members and 6 elders. These elders are not youth, but persons of mature age and life experience. They have made their mistakes in life and have learned from them. They demonstrate temperance in their personal lives. They have raised their children well and have had stable marriages. They are known and respected in the community as being good, law-abiding citizens. They are hospitable. They are not novices and are members in good standing. They know the people, the demographics, and the politics of the local community. They know the members, the demographics, and the politics of the local church as well. Each elder has different strengths and talents; and together, their individual abilities contribute to better church governance.

Here is a question you need to answer.

Is it better to let these 6 elders collectively pastor the church, or would it be better to allow a new seminary graduate or even an experienced minister of the gospel, come and pastor the church and rule over the elders? Which is better?

God has a divinely appointed work to do for new seminary graduates, as well as experienced ministers, but there is no scriptural support for a minister of the gospel come and take on the job of the six elders, pastor the church, and “build upon another man’s foundation” (*Romans 15:20*). No support exists for this in either the Bible or the writings of Ellen White. There is a lot of counsel against it, but none to support it.

Besides, it is not wise to even consider asking a minister of the gospel to do the job that God, through the Holy Spirit, has specifically assigned to the elders of churches (*Acts 20:28*). It would be working against the specific instructions of the Holy Spirit.

⁴ [Delafield, D. A., Letter to Pastor Jere Webb, May 15, 1980, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, DC.](#)

Chapter 11

Biblical Model - Professional Ministry Today

It should be made clear that ministers of the gospel and local church pastors have two different roles. By definition, a minister is someone that is sent with a message – an emissary. Today, ministers of the gospel today should be the modern equivalents of the apostles in the Bible. Before the Damascus road experience, the unconverted Paul was an apostle of the Jews. He was sent by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem with a message for the synagogues in Damascus. The message was for the synagogues to persecute Christians. When he was converted to Christ, he became an apostle of Christ. After that, he was primarily itinerant as he was sent to the Gentiles in many areas, with the message of the Gospel of Christ. Today, the Adventist church must send ministers of the gospel to those who need the gospel. The church must not reserve the ministers of the gospel for the use of church members who already have received the gospel.

Seventh-day Adventists are unique among Christian denominations. God has given us a much more significant role than other Christians. Our ministers are to be sent with the Three Angels' Messages to those who need to hear them. It is imperative that they be more itinerant than ministers of other denominations because the population of the entire earth must be reached with the Three Angels' Messages before Christ returns. Pastors, however, are not itinerant. They are settled in specific areas and serve the needs, interests, and outreaches of established churches. Pastors are not "pastors of the gospel"; they are pastors of local churches. While they still preach and teach the gospel, they do it in the area that surrounds each of their local churches.

Why is it so important to preach, specifically, the Three Angels Messages, to the whole earth? The Three Angels Messages contain certain teachings which are not found in most other denominations. Every single topic generally seen in our evangelism campaigns fits, in one way or other, into the context of one of the Three Angels Messages. Some examples include the messages of the Sabbath, the change of the Sabbath, the entire law of God, the origin of evil, and the messages of [Daniel 2 and 7](#). These Bible truths are not found in most other churches. The Sanctuary message, however, is found only in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The Sanctuary message contains the truth of the investigative judgment, which began in 1844 and is still going on today. Right now, as you are reading this book, many people do not understand that they can be judged for eternity while they are still living. Their eternal destiny can be decided even though they are totally unaware that it is happening. How can we, as church members, be so callous as to ask our ministers of the gospel to preach every week to Adventist church members who already know the truth, while millions of people remain unwarned of the end time judgment? Time passes by year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation, and millions still have not been reached with this knowledge. Can we live with that? Can we even claim to be serving our Saviour?

The Bible gives us examples of what we must do and how we must do it. From Ellen White, "Foremost among those called to preach the gospel of Christ stands the apostle Paul,

to every minister an example of loyalty, devotion, and untiring effort. His experiences and his instruction regarding the sacredness of the minister's work, are a source of help and inspiration to those engaged in the gospel ministry."¹ If we want to know what a Biblical model of professional ministry should be like today, we must examine the following 3 examples of ministry:

1. The ministry of Jesus when He was on this earth.
2. The ministry of the apostle Paul.
3. The ministry of the early Adventist pioneers.

Jesus' Ministry on Earth

We need to know what Jesus did and what He did not do when He ministered on earth. Jesus never settled as a pastor of a synagogue. He preached in synagogues, but his purpose was to point synagogue members to Himself as the long-awaited Messiah. Essentially, He was preaching to convert them to what would later become known as Christianity.

Jesus was itinerant. He was continually moving from place to place in search of lost souls to help, heal, and preach to them. Jesus was efficient in His mission to save those who were lost. He did not spend a lot of time with those who had already accepted Him, except that they followed Him and received training as He went on His mission to save the lost. Ellen White had this to say regarding how He trained His disciples, "It was by personal contact and association that Jesus trained His disciples. Sometimes He taught them, sitting among them on the mountainside; sometimes beside the sea, or walking with them by the way, He revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. **He did not sermonize as men do today.** Wherever hearts were open to receive the divine message, He unfolded the truths of the way of salvation. He did not command His disciples to do this or that, but said, "Follow Me." On His journeys through the country and cities He took them with Him, that they might see how He taught the people. He linked their interest with His, and they united with Him in the work."² Jesus method of teaching His disciples would be similar in some ways to what is now called "on the job training," or mentoring.

Ministers today can do the same kind of training. In previous evangelism campaigns, both in the US and abroad, I have used this method of taking church members with me as I visited people who were attending the campaign, in their homes. While driving to visit non-Adventist attendees, there is often the time for instructing and mentoring the church members who accompany the minister or evangelist. Also, special instruction sessions for all church members who are willing to be involved in evangelistic visitation is useful. This dramatically expands the ability to handle larger audiences as the church members are empowered to do effective visitation. In many instances, there are not enough ministers available to do this kind of work in campaigns. I used this method in Romania when I held an evangelism campaign in a church when the pastor was not even in Romania at the time. The attendance was large. I used a translator to help me train the members in visitation, both in special sessions as well as in actual visits. The results of that campaign were blessed, resulting in many baptisms. The lay members were empowered to be better soul winners. Visitation and

¹ [Ellen White, *Gospel Workers*: \(Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,\) 58.](#)

² [Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*: \(Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898,\) 152.](#)

mingling among the people are critical in gospel work. While texting and social media are highly beneficial in evangelism, it is not wise to consider them as adequate replacements for personal, face-to-face visitation.

“Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He carried His instruction into the household, bringing families in their own homes under the influence of His divine presence. His strong personal sympathy helped to win hearts.”³

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”⁴

Jesus said in [Mark 2:17](#), “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” A doctor cannot be very successful in treating patients if his focus is on something other than his patients.

The examples which are provided in Jesus' ministry, shows that Jesus spent His time focused on lost humanity. That was Jesus' mission. The disciples were not the focus of His mission. Instead, they were given on-the-job training to focus on His mission which was lost humanity. Thus, He gave them His mission to carry the message of salvation to the ends of the earth. Ministers today should strive to copy Christ's model of ministry.

In training His disciples, He sent them “two and two” on trips into areas where the people needed to know about salvation through Jesus. He never had a practice of sending someone alone to a territory to minister. Let’s look at two familiar verses in Luke, and we will see something which most people overlook.

[Luke 10:1–2](#)

¹After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

²Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

When Jesus sent out the seventy, He sent them "two and two," and told them that the harvest was very large and that there were only a few labourers. Then, He instructed them to pray for more laborers. Why didn't Jesus send them out one by one, so that they could go into twice as many places? He sent them out "two and two," because the labourers were too few. If there had been more than enough labourers, He could have sent them out in larger groups than just two to each place. Two is the smallest number which God will approve when

³ [Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*: \(\(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898,\) 151.](#)

⁴ [Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905,\) 143.](#)

sending ministers to labor in unreached areas. Jesus only said things which were approved by God the Father.

[John 8:28-29](#) tells us the following:

²⁸Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

²⁹And he that sent me is with me: The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

By comparing [Luke 10:1-2](#) with [John 8:28-29](#), we learn that Jesus never did anything that was out of harmony with God the Father and what the Father had taught Him. From this, we can know that God the Father was responsible for Jesus sending out the seventy “two and two,” even though there were very few workers.

Ellen White tells us, “I am instructed to say that where an effort is made to open the gospel work in a new field, there should be **not less than two speakers** to labor together in the ministry. When Christ sent forth His disciples on their missionary tour, He sent them out two by two. This is the Lord’s plan.”⁵

In 1892, Ellen White wrote, “Why is it that we have departed from the method of labor which was instituted by the Great Teacher? Why is it that the laborers in His cause today are not sent forth two and two? “Oh,” you say, “we have not laborers enough to occupy the field.” Then occupy less territory. Send forth the laborers into the places where the way seems to be opened, and teach the precious truth for this time. Can we not see the wisdom of having two go together to preach the gospel?”⁶

Ellen White states in *Gospel Workers*, page 481, “The Lord does not apportion to any one man some special territory in which he alone is to labor. This is contrary to His plan. He designs that in every place where the truth is introduced, different minds, different gifts, shall be brought in to exert an influence upon the work. No one man has sufficient wisdom to manage an interest without helpers, and no one should think himself competent to do so. The fact that a person has ability in one direction, is no evidence that his judgment on all other subjects is perfect, and that the wisdom of some other mind does not need to be united with his.”⁷

The apostle Paul tells us how the Lord gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit to different individuals. In [1 Corinthians 12:7-11](#), he says:

⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

⁸For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

⁵ Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15: (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1986,) 59.

⁶ Ellen White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 19, 1892, first page.

⁷ Ellen White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 13, 1886, paragraph 2.

⁹To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

¹⁰To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

¹¹But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

The Holy Spirit does not give to any individual all the gifts needed to reach everyone in an unentered territory.

The method that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit created, has not changed from the time of Christ to the present time. [Malachi 3:6](#), “For I *am* the LORD, I change not” [Psalms 89:34](#), “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.”

The Apostle Paul’s Ministry

Since we have already examined the ministry of the apostle Paul, elsewhere in this book, this section will focus on a few areas not previously covered. In doing that, it will be helpful to compare the religious groups in the Roman empire at the time of Paul, with the religious groups of today. In the apostle Paul’s day, there were 3 kinds of religious groups.

Religious Groups in the Roman Empire During Paul’s Time

1. There were both Gentile and Jewish Christians who accepted all the Old Testament Bible truths including the Sabbath and the other commandments, plus the truth about Christ as their Saviour. This group would compare well with Adventists today.
2. There were Jews who accepted the Old Testament Bible truths including the Sabbath and the other commandments but had not accepted the truth about Christ as their Saviour.
3. There were also Gentiles who did not accept Bible truth.

Religious Groups Today

1. There are Adventist Christians who accept all Bible truths.
2. There are Jews and other kinds of Christians who accept some, but not all Bible truths.
3. There others who do not accept Bible truths, due to either ignorance or rejection.

Even though Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he made it a practice of preaching in the synagogue first, when going into new territory. Since the Jews already had Biblical knowledge, he did not need to spend a lot of extra time teaching them all the essential doctrines and lifestyle issues. He only needed to share the truth of Christ as their Saviour. Some accepted Christ as their Saviour, and Paul was able to add to his force of gospel workers quickly in the new territory. This method added efficiency to his work and enabled the gospel to spread more rapidly. If Paul had spent all his time with the Gentiles at first, it would have taken much longer to get a knowledgeable workforce capable of helping him to spread the gospel.

Similarly, Adventist ministers today, who go into unentered areas (areas with no Adventist presence) might do well at first to attend the Sunday Schools of other denominations from time to time and participate in the discussions.

Regarding this kind of method, Ellen White said, “Let some of the workers attend religious gatherings in other churches and, as there is opportunity, take part in them. Jesus when only twelve years old went into the school of the priests and rabbis at the temple and asked questions. In this temple school, studies were conducted daily, somewhat as we conduct Bible studies. Jesus asked questions as a learner, but His questions furnished new matter for those learned priests to think upon. Similar work might be done today. Judicious young men should be encouraged to attend the meetings of the Young Men’s Christian Association, not for the sake of contention, but to search the Scriptures with them and suggest helpful questions.

“Had work in these various lines been done earnestly and vigorously after all our camp meetings,⁸ many more souls would have been gathered in as the fruit of the seed sown at the meetings.”⁹

I like to visit Sunday Schools from time to time. When I arrive at the church, I introduce myself to the greeter as an Adventist minister. Then I let the greeter know that one benefit of preaching on Saturdays, is that it allows me to visit other churches on Sundays. This usually puts them at ease, and they laugh. Then I attend an adult Sunday School and participate in the discussion when appropriate, in a way that is not confrontational. I like to meet the pastors and pray with them for God to guide and direct in their ministries. Whenever a new pastor comes into the area where we live, I like to go and welcome the pastor to town and have prayer with him. Friendships develop, and much prejudice and resistance can be overcome or avoided this way.

Ellen White said, “When our laborers enter a new field, they should seek to become acquainted with the pastors of the several churches in the place. Much has been lost by neglecting to do this. If our ministers show themselves friendly and sociable, and do not act as if they were ashamed of the message they bear, it will have an excellent effect, and may give these pastors and their congregations favorable impressions of the truth. At any rate, it is right to give them a chance to be kind and favorable if they will.”¹⁰

Elsewhere in the same book she wrote, “Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ’s messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock.”¹¹

In several different Sunday churches, I have been invited to teach their Sunday School class. In one, I taught the health message for two weeks. In another, I taught for about 5 months while covering the subjects of [Daniel 2](#), [Daniel 7](#), the Sanctuary doctrine, the Sabbath, and the change of the Sabbath. Also, during those 5 months, 13 weeks were spent on

⁸ Camp meeting in Ellen White’s time were similar to evangelism campaigns today. Churches were often planted from the newly baptized members in these camp meetings.

⁹ [Testimonies for the Church. \(1855\). \(Vol. 6, pp. 74–75\). Pacific Press Publishing Association.](#)

¹⁰ [Ellen White, *Evangelism*: \(Washington, D. C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,\) 143.](#)

¹¹ [Ellen White, *Evangelism*: \(Washington, D. C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,\) 562.](#)

the parables of Christ, using the abridged form of Ellen White's book, *Christ's Object Lessons* as their quarterly. The shortened form, *He Taught Love*, has 13 chapters. These different opportunities might not have ever been possible if I had not become friends with the pastors and attended their Sunday Schools and church services at times.

Paul did not pastor any church for a considerable length of time after it was planted. Even in the extremely pagan city of Ephesus, he stayed only 3 years. Much of that time was spent in evangelism. Successfully evangelizing profoundly pagan cultures requires more time than when working among people with some Bible knowledge. When he was finished though, he did not ask the leaders in Jerusalem to send a pastor to care for the church in Ephesus. He ordained elders which the church elected. Then, he left the care of the church with the elders, who sought guidance and instruction from the Holy Spirit.

Both Jesus and Paul used the “two and two” method. That method is still the God-given method for the end-time remnant church to use, as also evidenced in the writings of Ellen White. Even the wisest man, King Solomon, declared the following:

[Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](#)

⁹Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

¹⁰For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

¹¹Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

¹²And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Jesus sent his ministers “two and two” to the lost; Paul went “two and two” to minister to the lost; the wisest man, King Solomon, said, “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.”; and Ellen White wrote that we need to send ministers “two and two” to the lost. Since Jesus, Paul, King Solomon, and Ellen White all agree, why do we avoid sending ministers “two and two” to the lost, but send them alone to take care of baptized Adventist church members in established churches?

Like Jesus, Paul was itinerant and had no plan to settle in any area and pastor a church long term. He never planned to come after another pastor left and take over a church district. [Romans 15:20-21](#), “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, **lest I should build upon another man’s foundation:** But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.”

One thing that needs to be understood is that the call to gospel ministry is a divine call, not merely a career choice. The call to gospel ministry does not always come with a salary. Do you remember reading about the times when Christ sent his disciples on missionary journeys without money, clothing, etc.?

[Matthew 10:7–10](#)

⁷And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

⁸Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

⁹Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

¹⁰Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Some people understand the last part of verse 10 to mean that when you are sent to minister, you should receive a salary from the conference. That would be nice, but it is not always going to happen. This is the reason why Paul supported himself by his trade of being a tentmaker. But there are other times when you may have to do gospel work without any money from a trade, profession, or the church. We need to understand that verse 10 is in context with the rest of the passage where Jesus is sending them on a missionary trip with no money and no other financial support. They were not going to be preaching to people in churches already in existence. **They were going to be taken care of by the people for which they would be ministering, the non-Christians. Just because you receive no paycheck from any conference does not mean that Jesus has not called you to evangelize unentered areas. God has many ways to take care of you with or without a paycheck.**

“Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet.”¹²

My wife and I have experienced that kind of ministry first-hand in church planting efforts. We were functioning like Paul who made his living from tent-making. We were planting with no paycheck from a conference, in a previously unentered area where the people were mostly Roman Catholic. At one point, however, I was unable to get a job. I had no income. The target audience, non-Adventists, took care of us. One day, non-Adventist neighbors came over to the house and said, "Wes, we want you to go online and show us which iPad you want." Over time, non-Adventists provided many things which I used in my ministry – a new iPad, a new iPhone, new Sabbath shoes, new Sabbath preaching suit, new tires on my van, etc. I never once asked for these things. One time, a pastor from another nation was visiting us. As we were about to leave town on a speaking itinerary which included two of our Adventist universities and 3ABN, a non-Adventist neighbor came to our residence and said, "Here is a check for your trip." The check was for \$700. The neighbor just gave it to me without any request on my part. As for my wife, neighbor ladies treated her to lunch 3 to 5 days each week in different restaurants for about 3 years, and the neighbor ladies paid for it all. They just did it without us ever asking. We were treated like royalty.

There is a Sunday pastor in the area where we now are planting, who regularly prays during his first service on Sunday, for the Lord to bless me and my ministry. The only thing I ever did was to go and welcome him to town when he first moved here from another parish. I became his friend. He acknowledges that the Sabbath is Saturday. God works on the hearts of the pastors of other denominations. We need to befriend them and pray with them and for them. God works in mysterious ways. One day, even pastors of other faiths will rally to the call and join the Adventist remnant movement.

¹² [Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*: \(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905,\) 481.](#)

For those who must labor like Paul who earned his living with his hands, and for those who may from time to time have no paycheck at all, the words of Christ in Matthew 6 are reassuring.

[Matthew 6:11](#) “Give us this day our daily bread.”

In the Lord's prayer, we are taught to ask for our daily bread. Each day tell God what you need and don't worry about tomorrow. Further, in verses 31-34 He says:

[Matthew 6:31-34](#)

³¹Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³²(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The Adventist Pioneers' Ministry

The early Adventist pioneers became Adventists by studying the truths in the Bible. The model of ministry in the Bible is not the Protestant model, some variation of which is seen today in almost all non-Catholic churches. The early Adventists used the Biblical model we have been talking about. They worked in the gospel vineyard the same way that Jesus and Paul worked. This has already been explained earlier in this book. There is a popular expression in America, “Don't try to fix something which is not broken.” The Biblical model of ministry used by Jesus, the apostles, and the early Adventists is not a broken model. There has never been anything wrong with it in the past. There is nothing wrong with it today. There is no need to try and fix it.

Why then, did we abandon that model and spend more than a century being disobedient to God? Our long experiment in disobedience has predictably failed. Confession and repentance are required now.

Chapter 12

Biblical Model – Lay Ministry Today

The following quotation from Ellen White's writings, used earlier in this book, is worth repeating here.

“Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches. The express purpose of the church is to educate men and women to use their intrusted capabilities for the benefit of the world, to employ the means God has lent, for His glory. He has made human beings His stewards. They are to employ His intrusted talents in building up His work and enlarging His kingdom. Our churches, large and small, are not to be treated in such a way that they will be helplessly dependent upon ministerial aid. The members are to be so established in the faith that they will have an intelligent knowledge of true missionary work. They are to follow Christ's example, ministering to those around them. Faithfully they are to fulfil the vows made at their baptism, the vow that they will practise the lessons taught in the life of Christ. They are to work together to keep alive in the church the principles of self-denial and self-sacrifice, which Christ, His divinity clothed with humanity, followed in His work as a missionary. It is imparting the knowledge of Christ's love and tenderness that gives efficiency to all missionary operations.”¹

If God Himself has laid the burden of planting new churches upon all who believe, we must believe that this burden is light. Jesus said in [Matthew 11:28-30](#), “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” We must follow the same instruction that Moses gave to Joshua in [Deuteronomy 31:7-8](#). “And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” We cannot fail as we follow God's instructions in faith and humility because “God is our refuge and strength.” [Psalms 46:1](#).

[Mark 9:23](#), “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth.” If we truly believe, we will have faith. If we have faith, it will be manifest by our works because “**Faith without works is dead.**” [James 2:26](#). Even if you do not currently possess any formal ministerial training, God can train you as you go forward in faith.

For lay members to have a thoroughly Biblical model of ministry, it will require some ministers to step out of their way, thus enabling the laity to gain experience in the absence of professional ministers. Ellen White stated, “If the ministers would get out of the way, if they

¹ [Ellen White, Pacific Union Recorder, August 1, 1901, Volume 1, page 1, paragraph 7.](#)

would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and their capabilities would increase by use. — Letter 56, 1901."²

She wrote this very uplifting paragraph in the *Review and Herald*, June 9, 1895:

“God has given ‘to every man his work.’ Why is it that ministers and Conference officers do not recognize this fact? Why do they not manifest their appreciation of the help that individual members of the church could give? Let church-members awake. Let them take hold and help to stay up the hands of the ministers and the workers, pushing forward the interests of the cause. There must be no measuring of talent by comparison. If a man exercises faith, and walks humbly with his God, he may have little education, he may be accounted a weak man, yet he can fill his appointed place as well as the man who has the finest education. He who yields himself most unreservedly to the influence of the Holy Spirit is best qualified to do acceptable service for the Master. God will inspire men who do not occupy responsible positions to work for Him. If ministers and men in positions of authority will get out of the way, and let the Holy Spirit move upon the minds of the lay brethren, God will direct them what to do for the honor of His name. Let men have freedom to carry out that which the Holy Spirit indicates.”³ — The Review and Herald, July 9, 1895.

Ellen White even tells church members what to say (respectfully) to the ministers who are hovering over the established churches. “Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the churches say to these laborers: ‘Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life. We will work for souls that are about us, and we will send our prayers and our gifts to sustain the laborers in more needy and destitute fields.’”⁴

In 1989, there were a few Adventists who lived in Fulton County, Pennsylvania. There was no Adventist church in that county. Each week they would travel through part of Fulton County, then through a part of the state of Maryland, then into West Virginia to go to church. They decided to plant a church in Fulton County. The goal was to have an Adventist presence in that county; a base from which to evangelize that area.

The group did not want to have a minister preach to them each week. They planned to take care of the pastoral needs of the congregation according to the Biblical model. They planned to evangelize the county themselves as knowledgeable Seventh-day Adventists. They desired that the tithe they sent to the conference each month, would be used by the conference to pay a minister to plant another new church in another unentered area. They had no desire to be the object of their own tithes and offerings.

Some members of the group found a church building for sale in a town called Needmore. In November of 1989, a mission group was established in Needmore, Pennsylvania. The mission group progressed and became an official church in the Pennsylvania Conference. The name of the church is the Needmore Seventh-day Adventist Church. The name says it all. We

² Ellen White, *Evangelism*:(Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946,) 382.

³ Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895, page 434.

⁴ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6: (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1901,) 30.

really do Need More Adventist churches in every nation, state, county, parish, borough, city, town, and many villages all around the globe.

Today, as I am writing this book (2019), the Needmore Seventh-day Adventist church still operates each week as a lay planted, lay pastored Seventh-day Adventist church in an area which had no Adventist church before. The members still faithfully return their tithe to the conference but do not drain the time of a professional minister. The church has grown and is flourishing even though it is in a rural area.

We are in a war against Satan and his angels. Our duty is to reclaim lost sinners. Every single church member is to be busy, with the salvation of lost sinners being the highest priority. No one is excused. No one is exempt from active service to God in His mission to reach all inhabitants of this planet with the good news of salvation through Christ. “The harvest is truly great, but the labourers are few.”⁵ Are you an active soldier, fighting against Satan's plan to destroy all who are created in God's image? Or, do you just go to church on Sabbath, listen to the sermon, and then just quietly mind your own business through the week making no real efforts to reclaim lost sinners?

We must be very cautious. If we are satisfied to just attend church, letting the professional ministers do all the soul-winning work while we demand a sermon every week, then we are consumers and not producers.

Total Member Involvement

“It is not only upon those who preach the word that God has placed the responsibility of seeking to save sinners. He has given this work to all. The words, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,’ are spoken to each one of Christ’s followers. All who are ordained unto the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow-men. The same longing that He felt for the saving of the lost is to be manifest in them. Not all can fill the same place, but for all there is a place and work. All upon whom God’s blessings have been bestowed are to respond by actual service; every gift is to be employed for the advancement of His kingdom.”⁶

“The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant. In reviewing our past history, having travelled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment and with confidence in Christ as Leader. **We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history.** We are now a strong people, if we will put our trust in the Lord; for we are handling the mighty truths of the word of God. We have everything to be thankful for. If we walk in the light as it shines upon us from the living oracles of God, we shall have large responsibilities, corresponding to the great light given us of God. We have many duties to perform, because we have been made the depositories of sacred truth to be given to the world in all its beauty and glory. We are debtors to God to use every advantage he has entrusted to us

⁵ [Luke 10:2](#)

⁶ [Ellen White, North Pacific Union Gleaner, December 4, 1907, page 4.](#)

to beautify the truth of holiness of character, and to send the message of warning, and of comfort, of hope and love, to those who are in the darkness of error and sin.”⁷

While it is a good thing to evangelize the same territory year after year, it is not good enough. It will not be good enough until we have accomplished the mission which God has specifically given to the Seventh-day Adventist church. The mission for both members and ministers is to take the Three Angels' Messages to all who live on this planet. There should not be any inhabited area on earth where there is no current, strategic plan to reach the inhabitants with the Three Angels' Messages. When we become producers instead of consumers in God's work, He will bless our efforts, and Jesus will return when we "finish the mystery."

⁷ Ellen White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29, 1893, page 24).

Chapter 13

God's Plan Still Works Today

“In places where the standard of truth has never been lifted, more souls will be converted as a result of the same amount of work than ever before. The Lord Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth. If you will draw upon it, combining the strength of Heaven with your own, precious souls will be converted. The presence of the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed to all. Christ, our Mediator, renews our strength by the power of his presence. **Every agency is to be set in operation, not to work for the churches, but to work for those who are in the darkness of error.** When souls are converted, set them to work at once. . . . Teach the newly converted that they are to enter into fellowship with Christ, to be his witnesses, and to make him known unto the world.”¹

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination is a worldwide movement. The church has divided the earth into 14 major world divisions, plus one separate mission field. Each world division, consisting of a number of different nations, is further divided into unions and conferences. In this chapter, we will be comparing the increase of both new members and new congregations in four world divisions. The statistics cover a 12-year period from the end of 2003 through the end of 2015.

1. The comparisons will show the differences in growth rates between two kinds of divisions:
2. In two divisions, the ministers are assigned to care for specific churches in church districts. This is the most common method in use by the church today.
3. In two other divisions, the ministers are not assigned to care for churches. Instead, they are assigned to geographic territories where they are responsible for evangelizing and/or planting of new congregations. The existing churches are overseen and cared for by the locally elected elders of the churches.

In the western hemisphere, we will be comparing the Inter-American Division with the South American Division. These two divisions are adjacent to each other (neighbors) and are demographically similar. They have similar politics, cultures, and similar economics. In the Inter-American Division, the ministers are assigned to oversee groups of specific churches. In the South American Division, instead of being assigned to church districts, the ministers are assigned to geographic territories, to evangelize and plant new churches among unreached populations.

We will do the same kind of comparison for two adjacent and demographically similar world divisions on the African continent – the East Central Africa Division and the South Africa/Indian Ocean Division. In the East Central Africa Division, ministers are assigned to oversee groups of specific churches. In the South Africa/Indian Ocean Division, ministers are

¹[Ellen White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 25, 1895, page 402.](#)

assigned to evangelize unreached populations in geographic territories. Locally elected elders care for the churches. This is similar to the method used by the South American Division.

By comparing divisions that are geographically adjacent and demographically similar, we can evaluate the effectiveness of the two methods of ministry. We can make conclusions about the methods of ministerial assignment, without the confusion of demographic bias. The territory method, a Biblical method like the method used by the apostles and the early Adventist ministers, is compared with the method of assigning ministers to pastor specific churches, like the method used by most other Protestant churches.

In the graphics which follow, there are terms which must be explained. The term “accessions” refers to baptisms and professions of faith. The “increase in congregations” is the number of churches and companies added to the divisions during the 12-year period. “Minister salaries for the 12-year period” represents the number of ministers on the payroll each year, added together for the 12 years. “Members per accession” is the number of existing church members per each baptism or profession of faith. If a church of 100 members has 10 baptisms after an evangelistic campaign, that would be 10 members per each accession. Rows in **yellow** are world divisions where minister's assignments are based upon territories in which they are responsible for evangelizing and planting new churches. The pastoral care of the existing churches is given to the elders and other lay leaders. The other divisions assign ministers to take care of groups of churches. For a map showing the locations of the different world divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, go to <http://adventiststatistics.org/> The data used to compile the information in the tables which follow was taken from the same site. You can also access much useful statistical information on that site.

Western Hemisphere Comparison of World Divisions

Division	Increase In Congregations During 12 year period	Minister Salaries per Each New Congregation Added	Total Accessions During 12 year period	Minister Salaries for 12 year period	Members per Accession
South American (SAD)	9303	4.6	2711155	43215	10.2
Inter- American (IAD)	5638	6.6	2278030	37137	16.7

The South American Division is demographically similar to the Inter-American Division. The South American Division, however, assigns ministers to evangelize and plant new churches, in geographic territories where churches are needed. The ministers are not primarily responsible for taking care of the existing churches. The existing local churches are

cared for by the elected elders and deacons. The Inter-American Division assigns ministers to care for groups of churches, sometimes large groups.

On the Western Hemisphere Spreadsheet, the South American Division with territory-based assignments for ministers, the growth in members and new churches was significantly higher than in the Inter-American Division. Although the South American Division did have 16 percent more ministers employed than the Inter-American Division, it had 19 percent more accessions and 65 percent more congregations planted. Church planting was a major focus in the South American Division. 3,665 more new congregations were added than were added in the Inter-American Division. The Inter-American Division, which had church-based assignments for ministers, required 61 percent more existing members for each baptism or profession-of-faith as well. The method of assigning ministers to care for existing churches is not nearly as productive in soul-winning and church planting as the territory-based method.

African Continent Comparison of World Divisions

Division	Increase In Congregations During 12 year period	Minister Salaries per Each New Congregation Added	Total Accessions During 12 year period	Minister Salaries for 12 year period	Members per Accession
South Africa-Indian Ocean (SID)	5968	2.8	2337245	16856	12.8
East-Central Africa (ECD)	6119	4.2	2322203	25504	13.3

In the African Continent example, you will notice that the South Africa-Indian Ocean Division and the demographically similar East-Central Division, had very similar increases of both accessions and new churches. In the South Africa-Indian Ocean Division, evangelism was a higher priority than church planting. The difference in the number of salaries required to achieve similar results in the two divisions is very significant. During the 12 years, the East-Central Africa Division with church-based ministerial assignments, needed 51 percent more ministers than the South Africa-Indian Ocean Division with territory-based ministerial assignments, to achieve the same results in the growth of members and new churches.

Simply stated, when ministers and lay people are permitted to work using God's methods, they can baptize more people and start more new churches using less money.

Two other illustrations worth considering

Mongolia Mission

In 1990, Adventist Frontier Missions volunteers Brad and Cathy Jolly entered Mongolia as the first Adventist missionaries in that nation. They worked hard and started an excellent work. In 1998, the project was turned over to the General Conference and became the Mongolia Mission.

In 2016, It Is Written sponsored a medical/dental mission trip to Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia. I decided to go, but before I went, I took a look at the mission's growth statistics from the *Adventist Statistics* website.² I discovered something which caught my eye. I saw that in 2008 there was a 50 percent increase in the number of ordained or licensed ministers, but the next year there was a 50 percent decrease in the mission's growth rate. There was no increase in churches or companies but just an increase in ministers. As of 2017, the growth rate had never returned to the same level in 2008 or before.

I called the General Secretary, Pastor Bold Batsukh, and asked him about the figures. What he told me was interesting. He indicated that adding more ministers to care for the existing churches was bad for the churches, because the lay people just relaxed and did not share their faith as much. It is very simple – when there are more ministers per number of existing churches, the lay people witness less and the growth rate decreases.

This phenomenon can be seen in other conferences and areas of the world. Mongolia Mission is not an isolated instance. When there is a significant increase in the number of ministers for an existing church or group of churches, the growth rate can be expected to decrease within a year or two and possibly not return to the higher rate of growth. If additional ministers are sent to evangelize and plant new churches, instead of being used to add extra ministerial staff to the existing churches, the addition of ministers will not adversely affect the growth rate of the area or conference.

Western Kenya Field – Education Project

I learned this next story from Elder Peter Kereri, who was the treasurer for the Western Kenya Field at the time. Later I confirmed the story with Elder Christopher Misoi, president of the Great Rift Valley Conference, Elder John Tuwei - ministerial director for the Western Kenya Union Conference, and from Daniel Bett – headmaster of the Kingsway Preparatory School in Kenya.

In 2002, the Western Kenya Field had nearly 90 ordained and licensed ministers. About eighty percent of those ministers did not have a bachelor's degree. The East African Union designed an educational program in cooperation with Baraton University, whereby employed ministers in the different conferences and missions in Kenya, could get a bachelor's degree if they wished while remaining fully employed. The ministers would be allowed to leave their districts twice a year for several months and go to Baraton University and take intensive classes. Total time away from the church districts was about five months each year. The

² Spreadsheet Link for the Mongolia statistics

http://adventiststatistics.org/stats_y_stats.asp?FieldID=C12034&view=y_stats&StartYear=1998&EndYear=2017&submit=Build+Table.

education program was a five-year program. Each minister in the Western Kenya Field had an average of about 26 churches and companies to oversee in his district. 34 ministers (almost 40 percent) took part in the program. John Tuwei and Daniel Bett were two of those students.

The eight-year average for accessions (baptisms and professions of faith) before the ministers went back to school was approximately 3400 per year. The first year that 34 of the 90 ministers in the Field were away from their district almost half the year (2003), the accessions increased to nearly 4200. The second year, accessions increased to more than 8100. The third year, more than 9300. To see the data from the Adventist Statistics website, click on the link at this footnote.³ The members started doing more outreach and evangelism themselves in the continued absence of the ministers. When the ministers returned to their churches full-time, the growth rate in percentage decreased and has never since been at the high level that was reached in their absence.

Simply put, the churches are healthier and more productive when they do not have a long term, salaried minister to focus on them instead of focusing on the salvation of the lost.

God's Plan Has Not Changed

God's plan for ministry in the days of the apostles, like the Sabbath, has never been changed by God. His plan, the same plan which the apostle Paul used, has been repeated and elaborated upon by the modern prophet Ellen White. No amount of adjustments to some other plan will ever equal God's perfect plan. No other plan will suffice to evangelize the world quickly and effectively. Other plans or methods simply delay Christ's return even longer.

[Malachi 3:6](#) “For I am the Lord, I change not . . .”

[Psalms 89:34](#) “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.”

[Hebrews 13:8](#) “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

There is no time any better for turning back to God's plan than today. Why delay any longer?

³ Western Kenya Field (Now known as the Great Rift Valley Conference) statistics
http://adventiststatistics.org/stats_y_stats.asp?FieldID=C10560&view=y_stats&StartYear=1980&EndYear=2012&submit=Build+Table.

Chapter 14

An Even Greater Cloud of Witnesses

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is referred to as the faith chapter in the Bible. It begins in [Hebrews 11:1](#) by saying, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The chapter tells of how notable persons lived their faith throughout history before the time of Christ. It traces the preservation of the knowledge of salvation in the lives of Abel, then Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel and then speaks of many other unnamed faithful servants of God. These faithful, Godly men and women, at times, were wandering vagabonds, slaves, and prisoners. They were tempted, suffered persecution, and put to death for doing nothing but good. They all lived in faith looking forward to the time when the Saviour would redeem sinners, yet they did not live to see the fulfillment of the promise. They saw it only through the eye of faith. [Chapter 11](#) concludes with these words:

[Hebrews 11:39–40](#)

³⁹And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

⁴⁰God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

In verse 40, Paul was speaking about those alive in his day. The Second Coming would be far into the future, but for each succeeding generation, the promise of salvation has been the same. As we read further, Hebrews 12 issues a stirring challenge for us today.

[Hebrews 12:1-2](#)

¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Paul, nearly 2,000 years ago, spoke of “so great a cloud of witnesses.” Today, however, we have an even greater “cloud of witnesses.” In addition to the witnesses found in the Old Testament which were known by Paul, we now have more witnesses from the New Testament plus the witnesses throughout Christian history until today. We have nearly 2000 more years of history of faithful witnesses—witnesses who were true to duty in following God’s instructions and faithful to the mission of Christ to save lost sinners. We have the example of Christ, His disciples, the apostles, and those who remained faithful through the long years of the dark ages; the Waldenses, the reformers, the Millerites, the early Adventist pioneers and more.

Additionally, we have the gift of a modern prophet, Ellen White. Her writings serve to draw our attention back to scripture where we find the correct methods of laboring for God—

methods given by Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles. Her writings bring clarity to these issues so that it can never be said that we have any excuse for not following God's specific instructions.

[Revelation 14:13](#) tells us, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” This verse speaks of those deceased, faithful workers who fought hard to establish the message of truth in unentered fields. Their works follow them through what they have written. Ellen White said in *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, page 28, “God has given me light regarding our periodicals. What is it?—He has said that the dead are to speak. How? —Their works shall follow them. We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work. They moved forward step by step under the influence of the Spirit of God. One by one these pioneers are passing away. The word given me is, Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced.”¹ Some of those words of the faithful, deceased warriors have been reproduced in this book. Their examples of how to work cannot be set aside. Their methods were Biblical.

We have true Biblical doctrines and know how to present them. We have the Biblical health message and know how to present it as well. We have all that and more to offer a dying planet. We have also been given specific instructions in the Bible, and Ellen White's writings regarding the heaven approved methods needed to hasten our Lord's return. We have been warned through the writings of Ellen White, that keeping the ministers at work for the existing churches will not hasten but delay the Second Coming of Christ. We have been told that keeping the ministers working for church members who know the truth will not strengthen but weaken the church and its members. [2 Chronicles 20:20](#) says, “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” The Bible warns us in [Ephesians 4:30](#), “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” The gift of prophecy is a spiritual gift given by the Spirit. The gift of prophecy was manifested in Ellen White, and her writings to the church are the result of that gift. Is it possible that we could even be grieving the Holy Spirit by failing to follow the counsels in her writings, which instruct us to return to the Biblical methods we must use in spreading the Three Angels' Messages?

In these final days of earth's history, I appeal to you today – let us all repent and go forward to offer salvation to a dying, lost world. Let's bring the Three Angels' Messages “unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”² Let there be no territory in any division, union, conference, field, or mission that remains unassigned year after year after year. To allow this situation to continue, would mean that we have no strategic plan to reach lost souls who live in the many unentered areas. That would be contrary to everything in the plan of salvation and would further delay the fulfillment of [Matthew 24:14](#), “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Let the lay members release the ministers so they will be free to serve as ministers of the gospel to those who are perishing in darkness. Let the administrators have faith in the Biblical definition of the minister's role and promote it because it is right. Let the ministers readily accept the change

¹ Ellen White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 25, 1905 page 17.

² [Revelation 14:6](#)

of their role and learn how to work in a much more productive way because it is God's chosen way. Let them trust the faithfulness of God to bless their ministry and their families. Let the elders and other leaders of the local churches rise and accept the responsibilities that the Holy Spirit has given to them in managing the affairs of existing churches. Let every lay member do all in his power to spread the glad tidings of the Three Angels Messages to all with whom he associates. Let us all place the mission of God as the highest priority of our lives. Then one day soon, and very soon, we can look up and say, "Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this *is* the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." [*Isaiah 25:9*](#).

In closing, I bring you the words of John the Revelator, a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos for serving God, whose works do follow him. He closes the last book of the Bible with these words in [*Revelation 22:20–21*](#), "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."