

A GUIDE TO

Effective

**Pastoral
Ministry**

EDITORS

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Preface

Can you imagine over twenty individuals—ministers, church leaders, administrators, and financial specialists—who have pledged their lives to congregational ministry, writing chapters in a book focusing on the latest and best methods for ministry? We might call *A Guide to Effective Pastoral Ministry* a landmark publication that will inspire those who wish to make a significant difference in the lives of their parishioners as they function in the role of a pastor. This book, the most comprehensive book ever published in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination on pastoral ministry, covers a broad range of topics featuring various aspects of ministry that we believe will be exceptionally useful to our ministers around the world.

To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ certainly challenges those in pastoral ministry. Our leadership of congregations has, of necessity, changed both in scope and responsibility. The authors of this book recognize the variety of tasks that congregational ministers, in particular, face. And, as pastors endeavor to meet the needs of every ethnic group, all of whom have various experiences and backgrounds, the necessity for suggestions and inspiration increases. Therefore, the authors of this book have attempted to cover some of the challenges that pastors encounter in the different parts of the world. Glancing at the chapter titles, “The Pastor as a Person,” “The Pastor as a Shepherd,” “The Pastor as Worship

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Leader,” for instance, each reader will gain a quick concept of the expanse and value of each section.

As we revisit our history and see how this church has traversed the continents of the world from the smallest beginning, we recognize a specific need to be able to relate our mission to various segments of the world field in relevance and practicality. When we scan the biographies of the authors of the various chapters, we see a dynamic of experience as devoted ministers have allowed the Holy Spirit to experiment, to mentor, and to model the example of Christ in displaying full commitment and sacrifice.

This book does not merely record theoretical instruction, but declares that we’ve been there and attempted, through the Holy Spirit’s power, to reach individuals in every area of the world. To all those in Christ’s service around the world, I ask you to please read this book. Digest it. Pray for the Holy Spirit to imbue your mind as you comprehend the various topics discussed. We are living in an age of great complexity, and, therefore, we need all the help we can get. We consider the calling to the ministry as the most serious and profound calling, and we recognize the need for unity of purpose for pastors. Although this book will not fulfill a mechanical application to ministry, the Holy Spirit will use your absorption of these pages to speak to your heart as you apply this material to your various venues.

Written by individuals who have extensive ministry experience, as well as expertise in other kinds of ministry, this publication features several who have not had ministerial experience, but who have been working closely with ministers in the fulfillment of the gospel commission. Thus, these individuals not only write from what they have studied but also by what they have experienced in the areas in which they have gained recognition.

As I commend this book to our ministerial colleagues around the world, I know that they will not only be blessed but will have an opportunity to improve their ministerial skills. Also, I commend this book to students studying for ministry as they anticipate the privilege of serving as a Seventh-day Adventist minister and prepare for the challenges that

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will come their way. I thank the Lord Jesus Christ that He has called us to be the Seventh-day Adventist Church and that He has called us as ministers of this denomination.

Matthew A. Bediako, secretary
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Introduction

Bringing together, in book form, a number of distinguished pastors and denominational leaders from around the world to share their experiences and wisdom with the rest of the Seventh-day Adventist clergy was a concept conceived by the three editors. In consultation with Dr. James A. Cress, ministerial secretary of the world church, we selected authors from around the world who would contribute chapters in specific areas of ministry in which writers have distinguished themselves.

This was certainly not an easy assignment given the fact that many individuals in Seventh-day Adventist ministry could have been chosen. However, we are extremely pleased with the final group of writers who have given their input to this project.

In many ways, this book will serve as an incentive to those in ministry to pursue excellence. The chapter content holds the potential to further enhance one's ability to not only experience periodic success but to maintain a vibrant ministry and encourage others during difficult and seemingly fruitless days of service.

Because we interacted with fellow ministers from around the world, we now understand more of the common experiences we share, and also recognize that we see and sometimes experience the same things differently. This was a very enlightening and positive experience.

Abraham Jules wishes to thank his wife, Dominique, and daughter,

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Cheyenne, for their undying love and support. Steve Cassimy wishes to thank his wife, Marilyn, who has been a source of strength during this exercise, daughter Lavona, sister Sonia Rodney-Williams, and administrative assistant Prudence Chase for their technical help in preparing the document. Nikolaus Satelmajer thanks his wife, Ruth, who was doing extra duties at home, so that he could devote more time to the project. He also thanks Myrna Tetz for doing quality editing and Sheryl Beck, editorial specialist of *Ministry*, for coordinating the flow of the manuscript.

We extend a thank you to all our contributors for their time and effort in making this project a reality. We believe that this book will be a treasure of wisdom and encouragement for all who are engaged in the proclamation of the gospel in these tumultuous times in which we live.

Steve D. Cassimy
Abraham J. Jules
Nikolaus Satelmajer

Chapter 1

The Pastor as a Person

Chek Yat Phoon and Sally Lam-Phoon

Flashing on the screen were video shots of highly successful pastors and Christian leaders standing tall amid thunderous applause as hundreds upon hundreds, sometimes even thousands of sinners came to repentance, the result of their work. Yet, we could not quite figure out the glee and delight of all that were gathered as each report was given, as hundreds responded to Pastor Mack's call. Yes, he had been riding on success upon success, having stayed on the road for months away from family doing God's work. Pastor Khoo stood proudly by the large group of candidates he had prepared for baptism—obviously on an emotional high. You could see how the young people adored him as he taught them, played with them, and tended to their needs.

Lucifer was chuckling to himself, pleased at the results of his most successful tactic—one that his evil mind had personally designed—and what we call “Operation Outside In” (in contrast with the gospel that flows from the inside out). Lucifer aims this technique at gifted and earnest individuals who are willing and happy to be involved in the service of God. Lucifer knew that instead of going counter to what Christian leadership stood for, a much more effective strategy was to encourage them to do so much good and savor so much success that it became the driving force for their ministry. His idea was to get them so hooked to *doing* that they forgot about their *being*.

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You see, while Pastor Mack was enjoying his ministry, his wife was suffering from depression as she struggled to attend to two young children and an ailing mother while attempting to work part time. Because she was a pastor's wife, she kept her disillusionment close to herself; no one saw her tears while she tried to appear cheerful in front of her mother.

Mrs. Khoo had been worried for the health of her pastor-husband for years now. While there was no doubt as to how successful Pastor Khoo had been in the last few years, it had taken a toll on his health, for he was physically drained. The black rings around his eyes bore testimony to inadequate rest and sleep. The Khoos had experienced many disagreements over his working, eating, and sleeping habits. This had inevitably strained their relationship to a point that Mrs. Khoo was seriously contemplating leaving her husband but had hesitated time and time again because of his vocation. Her unhappiness was quite obvious to the parishioners, and many had been critical of her apparent control over her much-loved husband whom they thoroughly enjoyed.

Besides the pastor's health problems, their eleven-year-old son, Ming, was slipping into bad company and experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Even though he had very little time for his own children, no amount of pleading changed the inordinate amount of energy that Pastor Khoo used in his ministry, always tending to some need among his members.

The tug-of-war that takes place in the lives of pastors between their personal and public lives often creates dilemmas that eat into the very soul. These slips and falls in the lives of ministers call our attention to pastors as persons, fallible human beings just like the parishioners they serve. While they have been called by God to serve His people, pastors should always remember that they are not angels nor are they God. As sin-prone individuals, they have to walk a tightrope and maintain balance in a number of areas in their personal lives, such as personal growth and sanctification, balancing the being and the doing, and prioritizing family in relationship with work.

1. Personal growth and sanctification. Pastors should recognize that they are first Christians before they are ministers. As Christians, they need to fully depend upon God, daily seeking His will and drawing

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strength from His Word. Thus, they must seek Christian growth on a daily basis, understanding sanctification as the work of a lifetime.

While one cannot overemphasize the importance of the personal Christian growth of ministers, this growth cannot be achieved by the accumulation of theology degrees or by the constant search for more knowledge. How often we have watched those highly qualified individuals feel that they know so much more than those whom they serve that they do not need to study the Scriptures anymore.

Henry and Richard Blackaby put it this way: “Leaders in full-time Christian ministry . . . are busy people. . . . The danger for them to neglect their time with God is more subtle, because their Bibles are open so often for sermon preparation, counseling, and other religious work. If they aren’t careful, they’ll view their Bibles as a textbook rather than as the living Word of God. They’ll begin substituting their public prayer life for their personal conversations with God.”¹

Growth does not come by hard work either, but rather, as the result of an imperceptible transformation of lives through grace as pastors daily learn to be still with the open Word of God, allowing God to teach them, to reprove and rebuke them. The Spirit will show them where they need to change and improve; He will point out their secret sins and motivate them to ask forgiveness and strength to overcome. As they learn to tune their ears to His Word and His voice, one-on-one He will prompt them as to where He works so they can join Him in the harvest of souls.

Peter wrote, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18, NIV). Ellen White says that grace “was sent in search of us”² and God abundantly provides this grace that “we may accomplish everything that [He] requires.”³ Philippians 1:6 emphasizes, “I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns” (TLB).

Hence, this growth process will never be completed until Jesus comes. No wonder Ellen White says that Christian growth or sanctification is the work of a lifetime.⁴ As long as Satan reigns, we will have self to subdue,

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sins to overcome, with no possibility of anyone saying, “I have finally arrived at maturity.”

For their part, pastors must, on a daily basis, connect with the Word of God, study it, and use it as a guide in deciding on their highest goals and which of those are deemed best for God’s kingdom and for His glory.

2. *Balancing between being and doing.* The work of the gospel must flow from the inside out in contrast to Satan’s “Operation Outside In.” Their motivation for doing has to come from a quiet sense of being engrafted to the Vine so that what they do stays God-focused. This comes not from anything external, such as good results often termed success or self-fulfillment, but rather by doing God’s will, even when they don’t receive the applause of men or a pat on the back.

However, this does not mean that when ministry does not draw individuals closer to Christ, pastors have the perfect excuse. God has promised that all who are engrafted to the Vine will bear fruit and enjoy an abundant harvest. He has also promised prosperity and blessings to those who obey Him and follow His bidding.

A state of being in Christ will provide the motivation to witness and then create a sense of urgency to share the gospel to a dying world. Unless pastors consciously recognize the fine balance between being and doing, they may fall into the traps of overdoing or underdoing.

In the case of overdoing, pastors often run into the common pitfall of burnout. When this happens, they may wonder why the passion for ministry has disappeared and begin to doubt if they have been truly called.

In his book *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry*, Roy M. Oswald quotes Robert Sabath: “Burnout holds the potential for making us either cynics or saints. In the midst of burnout, we have a choice. We can swing from the heights of all our unmet expectations to the detached withdrawal of no expectations at all. Or we can learn to grow in faith and transfer our misplaced expectations to the proper focus in God alone.”⁵

Burnout results in spiritual battles because pastors become too involved in *doing* and neglect the *being* aspect. However, burnout can have

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a positive side when this experience points them to rely on the grace of God and realize their own human limitations. It can lead pastors to “greater wholeness” and a call to “a commitment to a healthier balance in ministry.”⁶

One cannot overemphasize the fact that pastors as persons should be consciously protective of their emotional and physical health. Following the laws of good health in eating right, exercising regularly, getting enough rest, drinking enough water, enjoying the sunshine and fresh air, and demonstrating temperance and an implicit trust in God are essential to physical wholeness. In addition, pastors also need to find emotional support in a confidante, a fellow traveler who can act as a sounding board and counselor in times when the going gets rough.

While on one hand, many pastors overwork and suffer burnout, some are guilty of ministerial laziness. Adolph Bedsole said, “The pastor has a better opportunity to be lazy for a longer period of time without his laziness being discovered than any other person in the community. A lazy pastor is like a porcupine; he may have a lot of fine points, but he will ultimately come to want for company. We preachers bring many of our heartaches upon ourselves by unadulterated laziness.”⁷

Finding the fine balance between being and doing requires wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Yes, it is true that when pastors are engrafted to the Vine, they can rest assured that God will accomplish what He wills through them without striving through human effort alone. But this does not mean that they won’t have to exert any effort, for it calls for due diligence on their part as well. In the book *Education* is found this beautiful verse:

“The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.”⁸

A final aspect of being can be found in introspection and self-evaluation. At evaluations by mentors and leaders, pastors need to reflect on how

they could improve. In cases where an absence of evaluation exists, perhaps the pastor could be proactive in requesting an evaluation from their supervisors.

In the busy life of a pastor, seeking first to be healthy spiritually, physically, and emotionally is the key to wholeness. This state of health will enable pastors to look at themselves candidly, without the element of selfish pride, to admit their weaknesses and rejoice in their strengths that grace has accorded them. Then, a willingness to adjust where adjustments are called for is paramount to the growth process.

3. *Prioritizing family in relationship to work.* During a pre-ordination interview, a candidate was asked how he would rank in order the following with regards to priority of service: God, church, and family. The answer came loud and clear for *God*. Then he hesitated, “Church and family, which should be next?” After a couple of moments, the candidate said, “Family should be second, then church.” Why the hesitation? Having the right answer is not as important as living life with priorities that often reflects on the value system we hold dear.

In no uncertain terms, Ellen G. White declares, “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached. Such a family gives evidence that the parents have been successful in following God’s directions, and that their children will serve Him in the church....”

“The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart.”⁹

One area of the pastor’s personal life that can remain well hidden for a long time or may never be discovered by their church, centers around family relationships. We know of a pastor who was not only a spiritual leader but a well-published author and speaker, apparently casting a positive influence far and wide, while his own marriage was in shambles. His patient and supportive wife, although bleeding inside from years of emotional abuse and neglect, kept her sorrow all to herself until their children were grown, before seeking healing for herself in another country.

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In the book *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas*,¹⁰ James Peterson likens living to juggling five different balls—work, family, friends, health, and integrity. Work, as the first ball and often the entire focus for many, is made of rubber. If you drop the ball on work, it will bounce right back. However, the other four balls are made of fragile glass. Once dropped, they will never be the same again.

With such an overemphasis on “carrying the rubber ball” (doing the Lord’s work), pastors often don’t even think twice when they drop the family ball again and again.

Henry and Richard Blackaby cited the following incident about Theodore Roosevelt in his role as president of the United States and as a father to his daughter, Alice. When asked by a friend why he was unable to take an active role in supervising his free-spirited daughter, Alice, he replied, “I can be president of the United States, or I can attend to Alice. I can’t do both.”¹¹ To President Roosevelt, his priority was his country. Although he might be able to get away with a statement like this, pastors cannot afford to set their family aside in preference to work.

The Bible gives us this clear injunction regarding bishops and poses a powerful rhetorical question. “The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for *if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?*” (1 Timothy 3:1–5, NRSV; italics supplied).

Not just one of the aspects of the personhood of a pastor, a strong pastoral family lies at the very core of ministry. Salvation has to begin with the pastor’s own family, with their influence moving from the inside out. Perhaps the greatest challenge lies in pastoring the home flock because at home pastors often hang loose, take off their masks, and are able to be their real selves. Home often becomes an environment where tempers flare and words cut as the tensions gathered from the pastor’s work among unreasonable and demanding people are released. Pastors

may not even think twice about showing their ugly side because they are away from the public eye. Hence, pastors need to be reminded that one of the greatest contributions they can make to God's kingdom is to nurture their own families as a testimony to the power of God in loving relationships.

After all, what is the point if pastors can win the world for Jesus but their family members end up being lost? How will pastors answer God at His coming when He asks, "Where is your flock—the family flock that I have entrusted you with?"

Gary Chapman¹² shares five indicators of a loving family that may be couched in the following questions for pastors, in order to assess the status of their relationship with family:

1. Do family members exhibit an attitude of service?
2. Is there intimacy between the pastor and his or her spouse?
3. Do the parents teach and train the children?
4. Do children obey and honor the parents?
5. Are pastors loving spouses as well as loving leaders in the home?

Although the ministry is a calling, it should never control us and our plans for marriage and family enrichment. Pastors should live what they preach; they should be models of the spiritual and moral values first in the home and then in the church.

Grace works from the inside out, first to save pastors and then to grow pastors. So long as they submit to a daily relationship with God through His Word and constant communion with Him through prayer, He will keep them on this inside-out track as His Spirit works in them. When they neglect this connection, they go down the slippery slope and find themselves operating from the outside in, where the love for people's applause and the subtle draw of affirmation and recognition become the driving force as they work towards self-glory.

In *Ministry* magazine, E. E. Cleveland penned these words:

The Pastor as a Person

The Minister

I am a minister—the face of the church—the voice for God.

Men see in me the gospel preached—and lived,

The path the Master trod—the law fulfilled.

And if somehow I fail to stand the test,

Then in men's eyes God, too, has failed.

The guilt on all the ministry doth rest,

And to His cross our Lord again is nailed.¹³

1. Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 250.

2. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1942), 161.

3. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1941), 301.

4. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1911), 560.

5. Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991), 75.

6. *Ibid.*, 74, 75.

7. Adolph Bedsole, *The Pastor in Profile* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958), 71.

8. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1903), 296.

9. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), 32.

10. James Peterson, *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas* (Great Britain: Headline Book Publishing, 2001), 24.

11. Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 252.

12. Gary Chapman, *Five Signs of a Loving Family* (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1999), contents page.

13. E. E. Cleveland, "The Minister," *The Ministry*, September 1969, 38.