

MINISTRY UPDATE | FIRST QUARTER 2015

SECRETS UNSEALED



TOSC GROUP #1 REVIEWS THE

**THIRD
OPTION**

**NO
ORDINATION**

**YES
ORDINATION**



IN THE CONTINUING DEBATE ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION



Dear *friend* of Secrets Unsealed,

WELL, ANOTHER YEAR HAS COME AND GONE and we are still here, longing for the soon coming of Jesus. Oh, how the Blessed Hope should burn within our hearts!

As probably many of you know, when the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) of the General Conference ended its deliberations, three positions surfaced. Group #1 was in favor of women in ministry but opposed to women's ordination. Group #2 was decidedly in favor of women's ordination denying that there is any leadership role in the church that God has assigned exclusively to men.

In the last session of the Committee, a third group suddenly and unexpectedly appeared. This group, that came to be known as the Third Option, recognized that male leadership in the home and in the church is God's ideal, but it affirmed that God allows the church to stray from His ideal in the interest of unity and mission. In this newsletter you will find a document that is posted on the official website of TOSC. The document represents the official position of Group #1 and points out the lurking dangers of the Third Option in a simple, clear and kind tone. Far from being an acceptable marriage between positions #1 and #2, it is actually a most dangerous compromise. I encourage you to prayerfully read this excellent document and share it far and wide.

The main contributor of the document and I both had the privilege of serving on TOSC. Upon reading the final product to which others contributed, I was deeply impressed by its clarity and simplicity and clear articulation of the implications of the various positions. I trust that this document will prove a blessing to you.

Wishing you God's Richest Blessings,

Pastor Stephen Bohr
President and Speaker
Secrets Unsealed

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TOSC GROUP #1 REVIEWS THE

THIRD OPTION

NO
ORDINATION

YES
ORDINATION

IN THE CONTINUING DEBATE ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION

The General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) studied the research and viewpoints of the two traditional views on women's ordination, represented by two different groups on the committee. Group 1 affirms women in ministry but believes that the Bible limits ordination to the office of the elder/pastor to men. Group 2 emphasizes the equality of male and female in the home and in the church and encourages ordination to the gospel ministry regardless of gender. At the fourth and final meeting of TOSC, however, a new "third option" was introduced, combining elements of Group 1's theology with Group 2's conclusion.

The third option agrees with Group 1 that male leadership in the home and church presents the biblical ideal, especially in light of critical passages in 1 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Corinthians. However, it argues that practical concerns (as prompted by diverse local situations) and a desire for unity may allow for women's ordination. Because it was not evaluated prior to its introduction, we will now undertake to review this proposal. Among other things, the third option claims that:

1 Male leadership, while being the divine pattern¹ and preferred option,² is not a moral absolute³ and is therefore open to adaptation⁴ and exceptions.⁵

2 If we refuse to adapt the biblical pattern of male leadership, we could "hinder the mission of God's Church."⁶

3 By considering the ordination of women to be an exception to the biblical pattern of male leadership, we will "leave our hermeneutics and theology uncompromised."⁷

4 The "gender qualification of elder" is "one characteristic among many"⁸ and should not therefore be held in a more absolute sense than the other qualifications.

5 The current role of the local elder is equivalent to the biblical role of deacon.

6 Based on "biblical principles of religious liberty," every region of the church should be allowed to make its own decision regarding the ordination of women.

7 Its recommendation, built on a "distinction between eternal commands or truths and ecclesiological ideals,"¹⁰ can preserve the unity of the church.

The third option's concluding recommendation is that local organizational units and regions of the world church should be allowed to determine for themselves whether or not to ordain women as gospel ministers.¹¹ We will now evaluate the aforementioned claims that serve as the basis for this recommendation.

1 "Position Summary #3," pp. 8, 17, 19; online: www.adventistarchives.org/june-2014-papers-presented-at-tosc; accessed 10 July 2014. Also *General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, June 2014), pp. 103, 112, 114; page numbers to this printed version will appear in brackets. This paper was presented in draft form to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee by Dr. Nicholas Miller on June 2, 2014.

2 Ibid., p. 5 [100], refers to the "preferred role for a male in the office of elder," and p. 7 [102] to the "gender preference."

3 For references to moral absolutes and commands, see *ibid.*, pp. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18 [100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 112, 113].

4 For references to adaptation, see *ibid.*, pp. 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 [102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114].

5 For references to exceptions, see *ibid.*, pp. 11, 12, 13, 19 [106, 107, 108, 114].

6 Ibid., p. 18 [113].

7 Ibid., p. 19 [114].

8 Ibid., p. 5 [100].

9 Ibid., p. 19 [114].

10 Ibid., p. 7 [102].

11 Ibid., p. 19 [114].

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #1:

Male leadership, while being the divine pattern and preferred option, is not a moral absolute and is therefore open to adaptation and exceptions.

The third option is correct in viewing some biblical commands as having greater weight than others. Jesus told the Pharisees that despite being scrupulous about tithing, they had neglected “the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matthew 23:23).¹² However, we must remember that He followed this by saying, “*These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*” Just because a biblical command is not as foundational as others does not give us authority to disregard it.

The third option gives various biblical examples in an attempt to support the idea of adapting “divine ideals.”¹³ The first was that of Israel’s requesting and being given a king even though it was not God’s ideal. This example fails for the following significant reasons: (1) civil leaders, such as judges and kings, are not the same as religious leaders, such as priests, apostles, and elders/ministers; (2) the Israelites

would later admit, “*we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves*” (1 Samuel 12:19)—hardly a model to emulate; and (3) the results were disastrous—a permanent division in Israel, the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and the loss of ten tribes, widespread apostasy, etc.

The lessons that the third option attempts to draw from this story are lost in a sea of confusion over why anyone, in light of this example, would ever recommend going contrary to God’s ideal—even if He did allow it! Though God gave a king to Israel, He did not protect them from the inevitable tragic results. Their request was certainly not a model for the church to follow. If anything, this example teaches us that instead of looking for permission to modify God’s will, we should *seek His blessing* by being careful to obey it.

Furthermore, while God allowed ancient Israel to have a king contrary to His will, this does not give license to the present-day church to establish practices contrary to the teachings of Scripture. If the third option’s logic were consistently applied, the allowance of polygamy and divorce in Old Testament times (Deuteronomy 21:15-17; 24:1) would give permission to the church to deviate from even God’s moral law! The mistake in this reasoning is avoided, however, when we recognize that Israel did not receive a king until *God Himself* allowed it in response to the prayer of Samuel

the prophet (1 Samuel 8:7-9). God did not leave it up to the people. If in His wisdom, God allows a variation from His revealed will to teach the folly of such a course, this is His prerogative; it does not give permission to the church to make future variations to biblical instruction.

The third option states that because we have no modern-day Urim and Thummim¹⁴ or direct communication from God, we must rely instead on collective prayer and study to know if He would allow a variation from His “organizational ideals.”¹⁵ We should remember, however, that the reason they studied and prayed at the Jerusalem Council, and that we as Seventh-day Adventists did so at historic “Bible conferences,”¹⁶ was to *discover* the will of God as revealed in the Bible, not to seek permission to vary from it.

Furthermore, if from our study of Scripture we discover that God’s “preferred” will does not agree with a proposed change in practice, we are duty-bound to disallow it unless God gives us prophetic guidance to do otherwise. To move ahead with a practice for which there is no Scriptural basis, merely because God Himself has chosen in rare instances to allow variations from His will, would be for the church to take a prerogative that belongs only to God. In the end, such a decision

would sadly resemble the system of the medieval church in which ecclesiastical councils have authority over Scripture, even the authority to modify divine instruction (see Daniel 7:25).

While the third option’s other biblical examples of “adaptation” could also be debated,¹⁷ the overarching problem in each case is the conclusion that the church may adapt or disregard biblical instruction without clear direction from God through the Bible or prophetic inspiration. The Scripture gives no such permission, but instead warns, “*Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it*” (Deuteronomy 12:32).

The third option states that what makes the male office of elder/minister adaptable is that the specification of gender is merely a “functional, ecclesiastical norm meant to further church order, discipline, and mission.”¹⁸ However, it offers no real basis for this assertion. Given Paul’s emphatic language in 1 Timothy 2 and 3 (“*I do not permit*” and “*A bishop then must be*”), not to mention the biblical pattern of exclusively male priests, apostles, and elders, how do third option proponents conclude that the gender requirement for an elder or minister is nothing more than an ecclesiastical “norm”? Can they be sure that “to further church order, discipline, and mission”



¹² All Bible quotations are from the New King James Version (Thomas Nelson, 1982).

¹³ “Position Summary #3,” pp. 14, 17 [109, 112].

¹⁴ For reference to Urim and Thummim, see *ibid.*, p. 18 [113].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19 [103, 104, 108, 110, 111, 113, 114].

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18 [113].

¹⁷ None of the examples given by the third option directly or indirectly involves the biblical office of the elder/minister. See appendix for a treatment of the third option’s specific examples.

¹⁸ “Position Summary #3,” p. 5 [100].



fully explains God's purpose for this requirement? And even if these claims could be proven, upon what grounds would this make the gender requirement open to adaptation? The third option offers no real answers to these questions from the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White, leaving us to conclude that they are merely *assumptions*.

The third option fails to evaluate carefully the many examples of those who *assumed* that a "non-moral"¹⁹ command of God was flexible when it was not. Adam and Eve were punished for eating a piece of fruit (Genesis 3)—an act that certainly isn't wrong in every circumstance. Cain's offering was rejected due to a slight modification (Genesis 4:1-7), and Uzzah was punished merely for steadying the ark (2 Samuel 6:1-7)—both transgressions of ritual commands. The sons of Aaron were punished for offering a different fire from that which they were instructed to use in the sanctuary (Leviticus 10:1-3)—again only a ritual command not found in God's moral law. Miriam challenged Moses' place of leadership and was punished by the Lord (Numbers 12).

Perhaps the most relevant example, however, left unmentioned in the third option proposal, is that of Korah,

Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16). These men, along with two hundred fifty leaders of Israel, asked Moses for a higher place in the organizational ranks of Israel. Nearly the entire congregation was on Korah's side and felt that he and his company should be allowed to serve as priests. Everything seemed to be going as planned until the earth opened up and swallowed the chief conspirators alive. God refused to make an adaptation to the "functional, ecclesiastical norm" of the Aaronic priesthood, even though the people strongly believed it should be that way.

The proponents of the third option attempt to distinguish the examples of Uzzah and the sons of Aaron from their own adaptation of Scripture by attributing these failed examples to "individual decisions made haphazardly and based on personal preference."²⁰ But in the case of Korah, he and his company were by all appearances meeting the third option's conditions for an allowable adaptation of an "organizational and ecclesiastical ideal,"²¹ basing it as they were on a group decision and a sense of conviction, equality, and the furthering of the mission (see Numbers 16:3, 12-14). With the vast majority of the people siding with Korah, some may also have argued that it was necessary to adapt this ritual, organizational ideal to maintain unity in the congregation. Still, their adaptation was unacceptable to God.

The guidance given by the third

option for when and how to adapt biblical instruction is both deficient and dangerous. Do church councils really have the authority to stray from God's "preferred" will? Would this not institute a practice of placing tradition above Scripture? Further, how safe is the distinction between moral commands and organizational ideals? Contrary to third option assertions, biblical commands do not fit so neatly into these categories. What about tithing? The ordinances? Lifestyle teachings? Would third option proponents consider these moral and unchangeable, or open to adaptation? Do we have the right to permit baptism by sprinkling, the use of leavened bread in communion, or the drinking of alcohol in moderation? Presuming to take upon ourselves the responsibility of calling biblical instruction flexible, when inspiration has given no such indication, is unwarranted and positively dangerous.²² We are to live "*by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4).

Regarding the specific case of women's ordination, the third option asserts that male leadership is God's "prefer-

ence," implying flexibility, but it can point to no Scriptural indication that a departure from this supposed preference would ever be necessary. While recognizing the consistent pattern of male priests, apostles, and elders in the Bible, it fails to consider seriously that throughout all of salvation history no circumstance ever arose that would merit an exception to this pattern. No exceptions were made to the maleness of the priests. Not one of Jesus' disciples was an exception. Not a single clear example of a female apostle or elder can be found in the New Testament. Why would we assume that God would have us forsake this clear biblical teaching now, in the remnant church, just when Jesus is preparing a people for His coming? Would not the church want to come closer to God's pattern rather than drift farther from it?

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #2:

If we refuse to adapt the biblical pattern of male leadership, we could "hinder the mission of God's Church."

²² Some instruction in the Bible and in Ellen White's writings is given with a measure of flexibility. For instance, while Paul gave counsel to stay single, he also stated that if a man marries, he does not sin (1 Cor 7:26-28). Regarding health, Ellen White taught, "Let the diet reform be progressive" (*Counsels on Health* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1923], p. 478). She plainly identified which articles of diet may be taken moderately, as we continue to grow, and which items were to be immediately discarded (see *Selected Messages*, book 3 [Review and Herald, 1980], p. 287). From these examples, we see that any flexibility with divine instruction is clearly conveyed in the language of the instruction itself. Notice also that within the same category of instruction (e.g., diet), some aspects may be flexible, while others are clearly mandatory. It would be wrong, then, to *assume* that every aspect of an entire category of instruction should be treated the same way (e.g., while eggs and pork are both in the category of instruction on diet, and total abstinence from eggs is not mandatory, this does not mean we can assume that total abstinence from pork must not be mandatory either). This is precisely what the third option does when it: (1) lumps the office of the elder/minister into a loosely defined category of biblical instruction that allegedly includes all non-moral, ritual, ceremonial, organizational, and legal practices, precepts, and ideals, and then (2) concludes that this entire category of instruction is flexible even though much of the instruction, including the gender requirement of the elder/minister that Paul gave to Timothy and Titus, indicates *no flexibility at all*.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18 [113].

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 19 [114].



Referring to the class of biblical commands it terms “organizational ideals,” the third option states, “They should not be lightly or cavalierly disregarded. But neither should they be allowed to hinder the mission of God’s Church.”²³ This oft-repeated statement, which is at the heart of the debate over women’s ordination, is in need of examination. In exactly what way will choosing not to ordain women “hinder the mission of God’s Church”? No evidence is offered to support this suggestion. The truth is that nothing hinders women from working for God. They may preach, teach, evangelize, and be involved in continually-expanding opportunities for ministry. The Bible only prohibits women from serving in the role of the ordained elder/minister.

Herein lies one of the most critical points in the entire women’s ordination discussion. The unfortunate, albeit unintentional, implication of the view promoted by both the pro-ordination and third option groups is that only when one is ordained can he or she *truly* advance the mission of the church; that a lack of ordination will “hinder the mission.” Despite their claim to the

noble cause of equality, those in favor of women’s ordination may unwittingly be creating an elitist perception of the ordained ministry. By no means should we give such a message in this critical hour, when the church should be empowering the unordained laity as never before.

The proponents of the third option should read carefully Ellen White’s criticism of Brother Tay, a missionary to Pitcairn who, because he was not ordained, refused to baptize those who accepted the Adventist message.²⁴ She explained that because no ordained minister was available and it was not clear when one could get to the island to baptize the new believers, Brother Tay should have performed the baptisms himself. This example is referenced in the third option position summary²⁵ to help build its case for the adaptation of divine commands. But the third option fails to note that Ellen White did not advise that Brother Tay be *ordained* so that more work could be done. Rather, in such an extreme circumstance, she indicated that the work could and should go forward *without ordination*. Not ordaining women will

not impede God’s work, because ordination is not necessary for someone to work for God.

The third option contends, “The fact that nearly everyone agrees that women *can* carry a primary role of spiritual leadership *under certain circumstances* (e.g. as currently is happening in China) is significant.”²⁶ However, there is an important distinction to be made here that the third option fails to recognize. When a father is absent from the home and the wife and mother must assume the primary position of spiritual leadership,²⁷ this does not make her the father and priest of the home. Likewise, while it is true that certain circumstances may require women to carry “a primary role of spiritual leadership” in the church, it does not follow that they must also be ordained into the biblical office of elder/minister.

The example of China is not comparable since this area is not currently an organized territory of the church and cannot therefore be governed by official church policy. However, there are today official areas of the world church where the circumstances are similar to those existing in China. In these areas, where there are often no qualified men, women serve admirably as unordained church “leaders” to provide management and leadership to local congregations.²⁸ Ordained ministers peri-

odically visit churches in these areas to officiate at baptisms and celebrations of the Lord’s Supper as well as to preside at business meetings in cases calling for church discipline. This arrangement adapts to local needs without sacrificing faithfulness to the biblical qualifications of the elder/minister. The third option, while rightly noting that circumstances may call for a woman to serve as a local church leader, fails to give any necessary reason for a woman to be ordained as an elder/minister. Its adaptation of Scripture, therefore, appears not to be based on a genuine need, but upon the very “personal preference”²⁹ that it warns against.

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #3:

By considering the ordination of women to be an exception to the biblical pattern of male leadership, we will “leave our hermeneutics and theology uncompromised.”

The third option suggests that by considering the ordination of women to be an exception to the biblical pattern of male leadership and an adaptation of an organizational ideal rather than an outright endorsement of women’s ordination, we will “leave our hermeneutics and theology uncompromised.”³⁰ But

23 “Position Summary #3,” p. 18 [113].

24 Ellen G. White, Ms. 75, 1896 (Nov. 12, 1896), pp. 1, 2. Because Pitcairn, a remote island in the South Pacific Ocean, is located 3,500 miles northeast of New Zealand, it was unknown when an ordained minister might be able to visit the island. In fact, it was not until four years later with the completion of the missionary boat Pitcairn that Adventists were able to return to the island, and two ordained ministers, Elders E. H. Gates and A. J. Read, “baptized and organized a church of 82 members and a Sabbath School of 114 members (Dec. 6, 1890)” (“Pitcairn Island,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. [Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1996]). Ellen White wrote in retrospect: “When men go out with the burden of the work and to bring souls into the truth, those men are ordained of God, [even] if [they] never have a touch of ceremony of ordination. To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong]. If there is a minister in reach, all right, then they should seek for the ordained minister to do the baptizing, but when the Lord works with a man to bring out a soul here and there, and they know not when the opportunity will come that these precious souls can be baptized, why he should not question about the matter, he should baptize these souls.”

25 For reference to Brother Tay, see “Position Summary #3,” p. 16 [111].

26 Ibid., p. 19 [114] (emphasis original).

27 For reference to wives assuming the role of spiritual leader of the home, see *ibid.*, p. 18 [113].

28 Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (18th ed.; Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2010), pp. 75-76.

29 “Position Summary #3,” p. 18 [113]. In this reference, the tragic results of the attempted adaptation of ritual commands performed by the sons of Aaron and by Uzzah were each attributed to the fact that they were haphazard decisions based on “personal preference.”

30 Ibid., p. 19 [114].

the adaptation of biblical instruction proposed by the third option would be a serious departure from the principles of interpretation currently used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While we may at times adapt practices to *harmonize* with the intended meaning of a biblical text,³¹ the third option argues that it is sometimes necessary to adapt a practice *in contradiction* to the text's meaning. Specifically, the third option recommends allowing women to be ordained as elders/ministers in contradiction to its own belief that 1 Timothy 2 and 3 teach that God's ideal, or "preferred" will, is to have "a male in the office of elder."³²

Some claim that because Paul forbids women to teach and we as a church allow it, we already adapt non-essential divine commands. But the Bible does not prohibit women from all teaching. On the contrary, it mentions women involved in both teaching (Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3-5) and prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:5; 14:3). Ellen White concurs, urging one gifted female speaker, "Address the crowd whenever you can."³³ Paul, therefore, could not have been giving an outright prohibition of teaching.

In saying, "*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man*" (1 Timothy 2:12), Paul links the

prohibited teaching with *authority over men*. A few verses later, he identifies the authority of which he speaks. He transitions naturally into the qualifications for elder, a church office that receives delegated authority in the church by election or appointment and is publicly recognized by ordination. Paul specifies that this office must be held by a man who is "*able to teach*" (1 Timothy 3:2; see also Titus 1:9). The prohibition given to women, then, was only that they could not assume the teaching authority that belongs to the elder/minister. We needn't think that we have been adapting biblical instruction when women are encouraged to teach or preach in various settings; they may do so as long as they do not usurp the authority that belongs to the ordained elder/minister. This humble, non-disruptive attitude toward church authority is described in the text as learning "*in quietness.*"

This example demonstrates that Adventists do not immediately accept the surface meaning of a text before first considering the internal and external context and all inspired evidence on the topic. Even so, this is not an adaptation of biblical commands as described by the third option. Rather, we use sound principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) to arrive

at the author's intended meaning, taking care not to draw a conclusion that would contradict the clear sense of the biblical text. Here is where the approach of the pro-ordination group (Group 2) fails. After applying their hermeneutical principles, they arrive at a meaning that is quite different from the plain reading of the Bible on the topic. In determining the Bible's meaning they sometimes seem to give greater weight to their historical reconstruction than to what the biblical text actually says.³⁴ The mistake of the third option's approach, however, is different. While they appear to arrive at a proper meaning of the text, they then give license to disregard it when it is not a moral command. This is equally dangerous. The reader simply does not have the authority to determine which biblical instruction to obey and which to set aside.

The assurance given by the third option that it will "leave our hermeneutic uncompromised" is simply not true. The kind of adaptation it proposes does not represent the current practice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe that the only safe course is to follow what the third option refers to

as God's "preferred" will, as revealed in the Bible, in *all* matters of faith *and* practice.³⁵

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #4:

The "gender qualification of elder" is "one characteristic among many" and should not therefore be held in a more absolute sense than the other qualifications.

The third option describes "maleness"³⁶ as just one of the many qualifications of an elder. Therefore, it concludes that we should not single out maleness as being necessary when the other qualifications are not always treated this way. This is untrue for at least three reasons: (1) being male is not technically a qualification, but an intrinsic attribute of an elder; (2) being male is absolute; it is not measured in degrees as are the listed qualifications of an elder; and (3) being male is necessary not only to meet the qualifications but also to harmonize with the prohibition against women having authority over men given in the previous chapter, 1 Timothy 2. We will now take a closer look at each of these three reasons.

31 E.g., in countries not governed by a monarchy, we may adapt the counsel of 1 Peter 2:17, which says, "Honor the king," by honoring the applicable government authorities in that country (see also Romans 13:1). Similarly, the instruction to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom 16:16) reflects the customary mode of communicating a warm greeting and "lifting up holy hands" (1 Tim 2:8) represents the mode of prayer in that culture. We may appropriately adapt such practices to current modes that still reflect the clear intent of the biblical instruction.

32 "Position Summary #3," p. 5 [100].

33 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), p. 473.

34 Based on a highly questionable reconstruction of the historical context, and disregarding the Apostle's own timeless basis for his instruction ("For Adam was formed first, then Eve"), the pro-ordination group determines that the instruction on gender in 1 Timothy 2:12-14 is addressing only a local issue in Ephesus. Instead of seeking to understand in what way Paul intended that women should not have authority over men, their historical reconstruction takes away any present day meaning from the text and concludes that women can in fact hold any and every position of authority over men in the church.

35 In *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), p. 249, Ellen G. White wrote that the "grand principle" of the Protestant Reformers "was the infallible authority of the Holy Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice. They denied the right of popes, councils, Fathers, and kings, to control the conscience in matters of religion. The Bible was their authority, and by its teaching they tested all doctrines and all claims" (emphasis supplied).

36 "Position Summary #3," p. 7 [102].



In 1 Timothy 3, maleness is not technically a qualification but an assumption. Being the *“husband of one wife”* is a qualification. Being *“one who rules his own house well”* is a qualification. But being a man is assumed in the text. It is a prerequisite to the qualification. A woman would not likely say, “I want a husband who is kind, loving, and male,” because maleness is assumed of a husband. So it is with Paul’s assumption of a male elder. To be *“the husband of one wife,”* you must be male. To be the one who *“rules”* his own house well, you must hold the responsibility of ruling the house given to the priest and spiritual leader of the home. Therefore, being male is not so much a qualification of an elder but a preliminary requirement even to be eligible for consideration.

It is true that we live in a less than ideal world. This causes us to elect elders who may not meet every ideal of the biblical qualifications. Some are less “temperate” than others, some are more or less “gentle,” some more or less “hospitable,” etc. These qualifications are measured in degrees; and where degrees are involved, it is not safe for us to draw arbitrary lines. This is not so, however, with the gender requirement. Men are not more or less male. Gender is not measured in degrees. It is a clear, unambiguous condition of serving as an elder/minister that gives us no room for misunderstanding. Where prohibitions are measured in degrees, we must give room for the individual conscience. Where the prohibition is unambiguous, however, we must draw

the line in the same place that Scripture does. To do otherwise would be to disobey a clear command of God.

The third reason that maleness cannot be considered just one of many qualifications is that the elder’s qualifications were presented within a larger context. They are listed only a few verses after the Apostle Paul’s prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12, where he states, *“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.”* The elder is the very one who must be *“able to teach”* (1 Timothy 3:2) with the authority given by church appointment or election and publicly recognized by ordination. Therefore, the male nature of the elder in chapter 3 (*“husband of one wife”* and *“one who rules his own house well”*) is not just one of many flexible qualifications. Rather, the gender-specific language of chapter 3 is necessary in order to be in harmony with the prohibition of the Apostle Paul in chapter 2, that women are not to teach from the position of official church authority occupied by the elder/minister. Paul’s language does not communicate flexibility, such as *“I do not suggest,”* but rather, *“I do not permit.”* And he bases this command not on culture or merely local circumstances but on the creation order and subsequent fall of Adam and Eve (see 1 Timothy 2:13, 14).

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #5:

The current role of the local elder is equivalent to the biblical role of deacon.

The Bible does not give two separate qualification lists for the ordained minister and the local elder. It has only one list for the office of elder/bishop/overseer (both Peter and John, for example, refer to themselves as elders in 1 Peter 5:1 and 2 John 1; 3 John 1). Therefore, the biblical requirement that an elder must be male applies to both the ordained minister and the local elder. However, while acknowledging that God’s preferred will is for the ordained minister to be male, the third option surprisingly assumes that the case of the local elder is different.

The third option introduces the topic of the local elder by stating that if the church were to go back to reserving this office for men, it “would be extremely destructive to the Church and its unity.”³⁷ But how can its proponents be so sure? The truth is that if Scripture teaches that we should reserve the role of the local elder for men, then it “would be extremely destructive to the Church and its unity” *not* to obey the Bible. In fact, many would say that the current disunity existing in the church has only been intensified by the 1984 decision to allow women to be ordained as local elders. Nevertheless, the third option claims that the biblical pattern of male elders refers only to ordained ministers and not to local elders. To sustain this claim, it states that the position of elder “as it is currently carried out in most local

Seventh-day Adventist congregations, is in practice more akin to the biblical office of deacon.”³⁸ Since we recognize female deacons, or deaconesses, the third option concludes that local elders may also be women.

This logic, however, is flawed for the following important reasons: (1) if the local elder is equivalent to a deacon, then the deacon serves no biblically-designated purpose; (2) local elders, unlike deacons, often fulfill the role of pastor for their local congregation, whether due to the pastor’s being called to another field or due to his being responsible for many churches; and (3) rather than being satisfied with pastors who “hover over” the churches³⁹ and a diminished role for local elders, we should return to the biblical duties of the minister, elder, and deacon.

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #6:

Based on “biblical principles of religious liberty,” every region of the church should be allowed to make its own decision regarding the ordination of women.

Based on “biblical principles of religious liberty,”⁴⁰ the third option proposes that any region of the church that conscientiously decides to ordain women should be allowed to do so. This, however, is a misapplication of the concept of religious liberty. Seventh-day Adventists have long been

37 Ibid., p. 20 [115].

38 Ibid.

39 White, *Evangelism*, p. 382.

40 “Position Summary #3,” p. 19 [114].



champions of the cause of religious freedom. We believe that all are free to worship according to their own consciences. People can be Seventh-day Adventists or choose not to be, to stay in the church or leave it at any time. But the church's loyalty must be to God and His Word, not to the varying individual convictions of its members.

Many biblical examples illustrate the danger of adopting changes in church practice based solely on the desires and convictions of church members. Despite the whole congregation's crying out for a change in leadership, Aaron's effort to honor their wishes with a golden calf was met with punishment (Exodus 32). Despite the people's pleading with Saul to set aside animals for sacrifices from the flock of the Amalekites, his acceptance of the plan caused him to be rejected by God (1 Samuel 15). Despite the whole congregation's asking for a change in organizational structure, Korah and those with him were denied their convictions (Numbers 16).

Perhaps a more important biblical example, however, is the positive process and outcome of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The decision made at this Council is repeatedly used by both the pro-ordination and third option viewpoints to justify allowing each division or region of the church to choose for itself whether or not to ordain women. Referring to the final

outcome on church issues such as women's ordination, the third option suggests, "The decision, though taken collectively, may not require uniformity of action on the part of all, as the Jerusalem council allowed Jews and Gentiles to approach circumcision and ritual differently."⁴¹ This argument is categorically untrue. The Council's decision *did in fact require uniformity of action on the part of all*.

The key to understanding this is first to remember that the issue in Acts 15 was never whether or not Jews or Gentiles *could* be circumcised, but whether or not it was a *necessary requirement* for salvation (Acts 15:1, 5). And though many strongly believed that circumcision must be required of the believing Gentiles, the Jerusalem Council refused to honor their convictions.⁴² Furthermore, this decision applied to *every* believer *everywhere* and in *every* case. Absolutely no religious liberty, as defined by the third option, was given to those who wanted to require circumcision or teach that it was necessary for salvation. They were not permitted to do so, but were bound by the decision of the Jerusalem Council. Contrary to the third option's assertion, there actually was "uniformity of action on the part of all" the churches. Even though, as Paul indicates, some Jewish believers continued to undermine the Council's decision, the question was never brought back to the apostles and elders

in "General Conference" again.

Whether or not individual Jews or Gentiles could privately choose to be circumcised is a separate matter entirely and one that never was in question. Thus Titus, in reaching out to Gentiles, was not circumcised (Galatians 2:3), whereas Timothy was circumcised in order to facilitate outreach to Jews (Acts 16:3). The question of whether or not to ordain women as elders or ministers is not the same as the personal choice of whether or not to be circumcised; it is not a matter of individual conviction or even of furthering the mission. Since ordination is a recognition of God's selection of a person for a particular church office, the key question to be answered is whether ordaining women to the work of elders and ministers is biblical—whether it is *God's will*. As even the third option recognizes, there is no Scriptural basis for this practice. The biblical pattern and qualifications express God's will in the matter, and it is the church's responsibility to teach and practice it.

Many of our own members, whose convictions differ from the long-held beliefs of the church, are watching closely the current debate concerning women's ordination. Using freedom of conscience to shape the church's beliefs and practices could open the way to the promotion of same-sex marriage, academic freedom for teachers of evolution in our schools, and other causes that may arise in the future. For many, these things are just as much a mat-

ter of conscience as is the ordination of women. But even if civil authorities began requiring ordination on the grounds of equality, it would still not be right for the church to acquiesce. The issue of homosexuality is already starting to bring similar pressures and demands, and we must not be afraid to take a stand for Bible truth, whether now or in the future.

THIRD OPTION CLAIM #7:

Its recommendation, built on a "distinction between eternal commands or truths and ecclesiological ideals," can preserve the unity of the church.

Here is just one of multiple statements highlighting the unity of the church as the overriding concern of the third option: "This distinction between eternal commands or truths and ecclesiological ideals can provide, we believe, a key insight that can help the Church move forward in unity, if not uniformity, on this question."⁴³ The third option appears to be an attempt, for the sake of unity, at providing an acceptable trade-off between two opposing positions. It states, "We believe that the central concerns within the various positions in the ordination discussion can be affirmed without sacrificing principle, while still maintaining the unity of the body of Christ."⁴⁴

Though the third option expresses

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 15 [110].

⁴² The Jerusalem Council's decision was not based on personal testimony but on the Bible and prophetic inspiration. Note the following: (1) God's prophetic revelation given to Peter (Acts 15:7-11, 14); (2) the Scriptural confirmation of Peter's revelation when he "remembered the word of the Lord" (Acts 11:16); and (3) Bible prophecy's foretelling of the incorporation of the Gentiles into Israel on equal terms (Acts 15:15-18).

⁴³ "Position Summary #3," p. 7 [102].

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 3 [98].

a concern for faithfulness to the Bible, one cannot escape the fact that its driving purpose is to preserve unity in the church. This, however, is a fundamental flaw. When unity is our primary concern, biblical faithfulness always suffers. The third option appears to suggest that the current issue is not significant enough to brave the perceived consequences of choosing to follow God's "preferred" will. But just as we encourage new believers to obey the Sabbath or return an honest tithe regardless of feared consequences, following the example of the three Hebrew worthies (Daniel 3), so we too must exercise faith in God and obey the Bible. Our only hope for genuine unity⁴⁵ in the church is first to discover the meaning of Scripture, and then follow it, trusting the consequences with God.

Another fundamental flaw in the third option is its attempt to preserve or maintain unity where unity does not exist. The fact that we all operate within the same church organization does not make us united. It is not unity that led us to conduct such an expensive, comprehensive study on the topic of ordination. The purpose of this study was to settle biblically what has been to the church an undeniable source of *disunity*. With this goal in view, the third option leaves us worse off than when we started. Rather than recommending a decision based upon the authority of Scripture, it attempts to eliminate the disunity by concluding that we are not bound to follow what the Scrip-

tures teach on this particular issue.

Adopting the third option's recommendation would set a dangerous precedent. Instead of preserving unity, it would in effect institutionalize disunity and seriously weaken the confidence of our people in the Bible. Furthermore, it would threaten our identity as a truly worldwide church organization because it would move us toward a more congregational system of church governance, one in which each division, union, conference, and local church is free to do what is right in its own eyes (see Judges 17:6; 21:25).

Already there have been Seventh-day Adventist unions that have ordained women as ministers in direct opposition to voted church policy. Did these unions have a special or extreme circumstance that would necessitate the ordination of women? The third option mentions none, and yet these unions were willing to force on an entire region of the church a practice that is in clear opposition to the decisions of the worldwide church made at General Conference sessions. How does accommodating those who have fostered disunity preserve unity? The third option fails to answer this question. We can only assume that its proponents fear the consequences they imagine would result from requiring unions such as these to follow the "preferred" will of God. The problem with taking this position, however, is that the consequences of *not* following the Bible would be even worse. The history given us in Scripture

is "*written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*" (1 Corinthians 10:11). We ignore it at our peril. If we allow for variance from the biblical pattern in this instance, then what matter of faith or practice will we next feel obliged to concede?

While forecasting disunity if we choose to follow God's will, the third option fails to forecast the terrible impact of its own recommendation.

church would be sacrificed—all for the sake of protecting an imaginary unity. To make matters worse, the third option suggests that those who would continue to express open dissent to this departure from the Bible would risk "opposing God,"⁴⁶ a suggestion that appears to place the authority of the church above the authority of Scripture. In the end, an acceptance of the third option's recommendation would



IF WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE ELDER/MINISTER SHOULD BE MALE, THEN WHY DO WE ORDAIN WOMEN?

Since it teaches that God's pattern and preference is to have male elders and ministers, dedicated church members may legitimately ask, "If we believe the Bible teaches that the elder/minister should be male, then why do we ordain women?" Pastors and church leaders would be faced with the impossible task of explaining that with certain biblical instructions, if the duly authorized majority feels differently, we do not have to follow the Bible. Then, in our evangelistic outreach, appeals to follow the Bible rather than the precepts of men would be made hollow as we try to explain why, in certain cases, we as a church have chosen a different path from God's preferred will.

Ultimately, the persuasive power of our message and the mission of the

further strengthen the very thing it hoped to avoid. It is not unity, but disunity, that would be the sure result.

CONCLUSION

We have great respect and appreciation for those who have endeavored to provide a third option in the current debate over the ordination of women. Still, other than minor nuances, their proposal does not present any unique insights on the biblical passages related to women's ordination. Instead, it attempts to provide a biblical rationale for flexibility on this and other "non-moral organizational ideals"⁴⁷ as a way of dealing with our differences. The argument that this approach is biblical, however, is not convincing for the following reasons: (1) it is based on infer-

45 According to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:17-21, biblical unity is only accomplished when as a church we are sanctified, or set apart from the world, by following the truth of His Word.

46 "Position Summary #3," p. 17 [112].

47 Ibid., p. 18 [113].

ences drawn from descriptive examples rather than prescribed instruction; (2) it looks for isolated exceptions allowed by God in ancient times and under extreme circumstances to justify the broad scale allowance of a non-biblical practice in His last day church under what amounts to any circumstance; (3) it confuses what God allows in His mercy with what He endorses with His blessing; (4) it draws unwarranted conclusions from Bible stories and then applies them to the current issue of women's ordination; (5) it does not address key biblical examples that would contradict its conclusions; (6) it fails to see the disastrous results of applying its logic in every case; (7) it places church councils in a position of authority over God's Word; and (8) it presumes to regard biblical instruction as flexible when inspiration has given us no such indication.

When reading the third option's position summary, one may easily be influenced by the continual references to some biblical teachings as being *organizational* or *ecclesiastical*. These words have the effect of lessening the weight of the instruction, giving it a mere human quality and making it easier to view as flexible. We must remember, however, that the gender requirement of the office of the elder/minister is more than just an organizational guideline or ecclesiastical norm; it is a biblical requirement. This is not the *Church Manual* or working policy that we are dealing with here, but the Bible. We simply do not

have the authority to adapt or disregard inspired instructions.

By labeling their proposal as the "moderate"⁴⁸ position, third option proponents unfortunately imply that to recommend that the worldwide church obey God's preferred will would be an extreme position. The truth, however, is that we will do the church a great injustice if we *do not* follow the biblical instruction regarding who is qualified for ordination to the vital office of the elder/minister. It is not only contradictory, but potentially fatal to our mission, to say that though the Bible teaches one thing, the church has the authority to establish different practices in areas where the majority so decides. We must remember that the decision of the Jerusalem Council, which applied to every church, was not settled merely by group discussion, careful reasoning, or inspiring testimonies. All these were important, but no solution to the debate could be accepted until it was shown that "*the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written*" (Acts 15:15).

In the same way, the issue of whether or not to ordain women cannot rightly be settled by ecclesiastical councils alone, however careful and prayerful they may be. The "preference" of God, and not man, must prevail. "God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical

councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support."⁴⁹

While the third option differs greatly from the pro-ordination view in many respects, there is one key similarity that should give pause to every Bible-believing Seventh-day Adventist. In order to conclude that the church may ordain women as ministers, both groups have had to introduce methods of interpreting Scripture (hermeneutics) that are new to the Adventist Church. The pro-ordination view, in order to explain its conclusion, was compelled in the North American Division's *Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report* to introduce a new hermeneutic called Principle-Based Historical-Cultural.⁵⁰ Now, the third option has introduced a new method of interpretation in which entire categories of biblical instruction are considered flexible, whether indicated as such by inspiration or not. Both of these new methods were necessary to avoid the conclusion, gained by a straightforward reading of the applicable Bible passages, that the office of the elder/minister is reserved for men. Therefore, if we accept the

view of either of these groups, we must also be ready to accept that: (1) we are adopting an approach to the interpretation and application of Scripture that is foreign to the Adventist Church; and (2) in so doing, we are opening a door to aberrant interpretations of the Bible that will be nearly impossible to close.

We have great sympathy for the third option's desire to hold together a church that is currently divided on the issue of women's ordination. However, its noble intent will never be realized by the plan it recommends. While it aims to preserve unity, it rewards and institutionalizes disunity. While it claims to leave our hermeneutics uncompromised, it introduces a foreign method of adapting biblical instruction that would be disastrous to our mission and even our credibility as a Bible-based church. While it seeks to protect gender distinction, it actually lessens it by calling the gender-specific language of the elder "only one among a number of qualifications." While it claims to prevent the mission of the church from being hindered, it in fact hinders the mission itself by implying to the unordained laity that ordination is necessary for *truly* advancing the work. And in an effort to protect religious liberty, it ends up marginalizing those whose consciences are bound to the clear teaching of Scripture.

48 Ibid., p. 3 [98], note 1.

49 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), p. 595.

50 "Report Summary," *North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report* (November 2013), see the chart on p. 8 and the further explanation of this new method of interpretation in Kyoshin Ahn, "Hermeneutics and the Ordination of Women," pp. 25-26 of the same volume. The traditional method of interpretation used by Adventists, Historical-Grammatical, is clearly presented in the majority of this report as being different in some key respects from the one used by pro-ordination proponents. See also in this volume Edwin Reynolds and Clinton Wahlen, "Minority Report," 195-197.

51 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1958), p. 360.

While exceptional circumstances will merit the involvement of women in greater spiritual leadership roles, we see no safety in opening the doors of ordination to women in direct contradiction to biblical requirements. *"Let no one deceive himself with the belief that a part of God's commandments are nonessential, or that He will accept a substitute for that which He has required. ... God has placed in His word no command which men may obey or disobey at will and not suffer the conse-*

*quences."*⁵¹ The church has experienced a growing polarization in many areas of faith and practice over the past few decades. The issue before us is not the only one in which we will face conflicting opinions. We must not set a precedent of leaving disputed areas of Scripture to every division, union, conference, or local church to decide. We are a world church, and we must remain united on biblical truth no matter how strong the pressure might be to do otherwise.

WE ARE A WORLD CHURCH, AND WE MUST REMAIN UNITED ON BIBLICAL TRUTH NO MATTER HOW STRONG THE PRESSURE MIGHT BE TO DO OTHERWISE.

Rather than confining our interest in

*reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their work is needed.*⁵² As a church, we should also be making far greater efforts to affirm, support, and assist the work of Christian mothers. And as for women employed in ministry, they should be compensated in harmony with the vital importance of their work and the time they dedicate to it. These worthwhile initiatives should be started without delay. However, to make allowance for acting contrary to God's Word would only bring injury to the cause of truth and the church we love. May God help us to remain faithful to His Word while reaffirming and further enhancing the roles of women in ministry.

⁵² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), vol. 9, p. 128.



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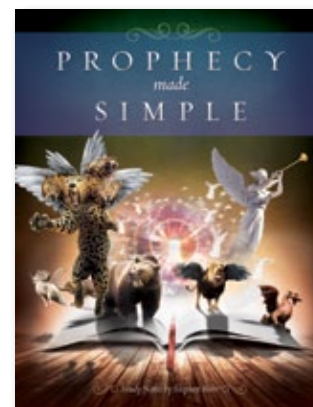
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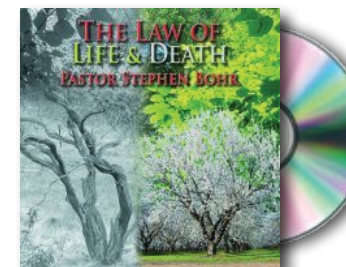
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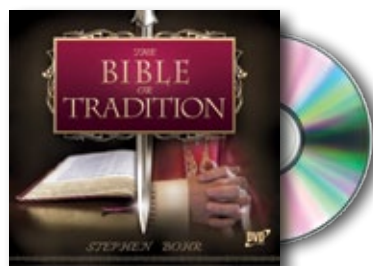
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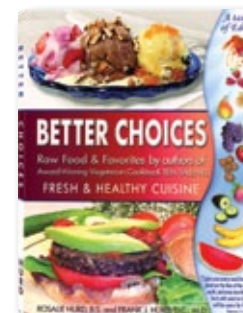
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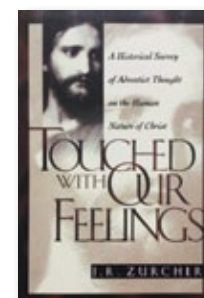
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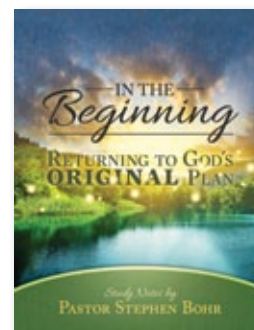


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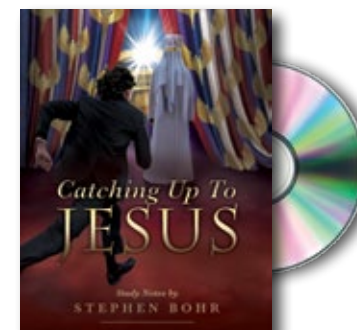
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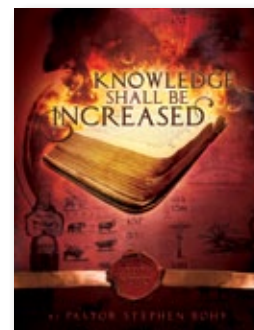


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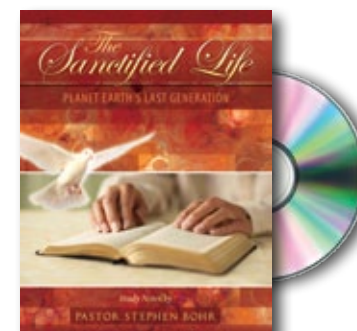


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SUPERBUG

CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE: The Deadly Superbug Diarrhea

by Milton Teske, MD

This year 700,000 people will die from superbug infections.

Superbugs are **bacteria** that have become **resistant to most antibiotics**. There are many of them and they are getting stronger. By the year 2050 they estimate 10 million deaths per year! That makes them one of the major health threats — moving ahead of cancer and many other diseases. Last year in the USA, MRSA (a superbug that causes skin infections) killed more people than AIDS.

Did you know there are more microbial cells in your body than there are human cells — of course they are much smaller than human cells — but as far as numbers go, our cells are vastly outnumbered by the microbes living in and on us. Generally they are friendly and beneficial organisms that perform essential life functions for us. It would be very difficult for us to live without their constant services. (But that is a story for another time.)

One of these superbugs, *Clostridium difficile* (frequently called C diff by medical personnel), can cause a deadly diarrhea. These bacteria if ingested can spread and become established in the colon among all of the normal bacteria.

Now if we have a few C diff living in our colon along with all of the other billions of bacteria, it will not create much of a problem because all of the good bacteria will keep this bad superbug under control so it cannot spread or cause much of a problem for us. But suppose we take a course of antibiotics for some infection — maybe the doctor prescribed some Cipro for bronchitis or pneumonia. As the antibiotic pills dissolve and pass through our intestines, they also are killing all of the good bacteria living there. Now C diff's super powers come into play — it is resistant to Cipro (and most other common antibiotics) so it is not killed. But since all the good bacteria that were keeping it under control are now dead, it can multiply without restraint. Doctors will frequently refer to a C diff infection as antibiotic related diarrhea because it always seems to follow a course of antibiotics.

C diff is not only a superbug, it is also a bad bug. It is related to *Clostridium tetani*, a common bacterium found in the soil that makes a strychnine like toxin that produces deadly muscle spasms. You have probably had a tetanus vaccination to protect you against this bad bug. C diff is also related to *Clostridium botulinum* that makes a deadly toxin responsible for botulism poisoning that causes a fatal paralysis. Like its cousins, C diff also produces several toxins and if it is spreading uncontrollably in your colon these toxins can be deadly.

Toxic Megacolon

These toxins cause a high fever, severe abdominal pain and a bad diarrhea with

a distinctive foul odor. If you looked inside the colon you would see thick yellow plaques composed of inflammatory debris and white blood cells covering much of the mucosal surface.

Pseudomembranous Colitis



We call this condition **pseudomembranous colitis**. These patients are quite sick and are hospitalized on IV fluids to try and keep them alive while we try to control the infection.

If not controlled, the toxins can cause further damage to the colon resulting in a condition called **toxic megacolon**. The colon becomes badly dilated, and the wall is severely inflamed. These patients can be in septic shock. Sometimes they will surgically remove the colon trying to save their life.

Years ago we used to consider C diff to be a hospital acquired disease, but not anymore. Now it is commonly occurring outside the hospital and is considered a community acquired disease.

Where do the super bugs come from?

The superbugs come from the over use of antibiotics — particularly in large-scale animal farming. Many cows or

poultry are crowded into small places with less than ideal sanitation, and they are all placed on multiple antibiotics to try to keep them well and alive until they can be slaughtered for market. So as the common bacteria that are susceptible to these antibiotics die off, some bacteria can develop immunity or resistance to various antibiotics and survive. These resistant bacteria are frequently resistant to multiple antibiotics and have thus become superbugs. And these superbugs can multiply and thrive in the crowded antibiotic treated conditions on these large animal farms.

C diff is found in calves, cows, chickens, turkeys and pigs. Meat has been tested from supermarkets, and toxigenic C diff was found in 42% of the samples. The highest risk was from turkey meat. It was also very high in chicken.

But isn't the meat safe if we cook it?

Cooking kills most bugs, but C diff isn't like most bugs; it's a superbug with super powers and is not killed by cooking. Meat thermometers are marked at 165°F, and cooking the center of the meat at this internal temperature is considered the safe recommended

standard for cooking meat. You could grill a chicken for two hours with the core at this temp and not phase the C diff. Cooking does not kill it. It just turns into spores that grow back into C diff as soon as they are inside you.

Hand Sanitizer?

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers that kill 99.99% of all germs are in common use by many as a way to prevent getting or spreading various infections. Once again, this superbug's super powers triumph. Hand sanitizers cannot kill it. (That's why they can't advertise as 100% effective!) And studies show the spores can be spread even by a handshake. In the hospital, extensive isolation procedures are followed to try to prevent the spread of this superbug. But what about in the community? What is your risk at a restaurant? Or the supermarket? Or around others who may have touched contaminated meat?

What can be done about this superbug?

It is not invincible. Like Ebola it can be killed by incineration and by bleach. In the hospital we currently give patients two strong antibiotics that it is not yet resistant to, Flagyl and Vancomycin. This can help us to get it under control, although it does not usually completely eradicate it, relapses are common. Taking probiotics to build up the good bacteria in the colon can be very helpful.

A new very effective treatment is the **stool transplant**. They fill the colon of the infected patient full of stool from a healthy person using an enema. These healthy bacteria then do their job and

the C diff is put back in its place and the symptoms subside.

Avoiding unnecessary antibiotics in the future will play a key part in our warfare against these superbugs. While antibiotics can be lifesaving in certain situations they are not without their risks. For minor infections, drink lots of water, eat fresh fruit liberally, avoid any form of refined sugar, get plenty of sleep, high dose vitamin C can be helpful, and trust God as you use his simple natural remedies.

And of course — the simple vegan lifestyle given to us by God at the time of our creation is the best policy for us as a nation and individually if we truly want to survive in our war against the superbugs.



MILTON TESKE, MD

IN LOVING MEMORY OF...



Jim Hanrey from Priscilla McNeily

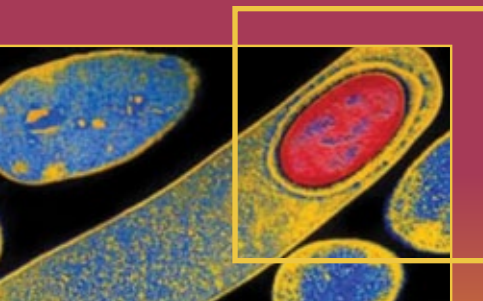
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Clostridium Difficile spore

DATING, MATING, & RELATING

YOUNG & GODLY

by Pastor Justin Torossian

PICTURE PERFECT

Love is in the air. The couple seems perfect for each other...everyone seems to agree. But unexpectedly, something happens. They break up. The days and months spent investing in what they thought would be “*happily ever after*” ends in sorrow and pain. When found in such a time, what does a young lady typically do with the pictures of her former love? If it was a bitter end to a sweet relationship, she’ll often shatter the frames and tear the pictures to shreds. Anything that reminds her of the joy that’s been lost must go.

When Satan was cast out of Heaven, his bitter hatred had separated him from the Creator. Anything that reminded him of the heavenly joy that he had lost, he attempted to destroy. There are two gifts that God especially created to be pictures of Heaven on earth—the seventh day Sabbath, and marriage. The devil has done his best to break these pictures. Not only do they remind him of the heavenly relationships he has lost, but they also give humanity a true picture of our loving God. For most of us, the picture of God in marriage has become so damaged that we’re confused. What are God’s ideals for dating and courtship?

What guidelines does He provide to assure success on the path to marriage?

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Timing is often everything. Timing can make the difference between a three-pointer and a blocked shot, an accident or a close call ... *hooking up with Prince Charming or getting stuck with Captain Creepy*. God tells us about the importance of timing in Ecclesiastes 3, summarizing with the promise, “*He has made everything beautiful in His time*” (Eccl. 3:11). Waiting until the right time to be in a relationship is one of the most important factors in allowing God to match you up with someone for a happy life. But we all have the tendency to feel like we’re ready before we actually are.

Some of the Bible’s greatest wisdom about marriage preparation is found in Proverbs 24:27: “*Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house.*” One of the most crucial requirements before considering marriage is making sure you have a job and can support a family. (*This applies in part to girls as well* — Proverbs 31:16). And just like rides at theme parks have a minimum height, there is

also a minimum age before which the vast majority of young people should not consider marriage—20 years old. “*A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person, as young as himself, to be his companion for life.*”¹ Before you consider these words written 130 years ago to be outdated, consider the following stats. “*Those who marry as teenagers have a divorce rate about double those who marry in their 20’s ... Just picking age as a factor, those who marry in the mid-to late-twenties, or early thirties, seem to have the most enduring marriages.*”² So if you don’t have an income on which you can support a family or are under 20 years old, inspiration says, “*Wait!*”

PREPARATION

This may come as a surprise, but the best preparation for a happy relationship that leads to a solid marriage is actually in your own home. This is the perfect place for preparation to have a happy home of your own. “*It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial, and manifest kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy.*”³ As you dream about your future, know that the way you carry yourself in your home *now* will determine what your home will be like *then*. In challenges and chores, frustrations and happy times, you are charting your own future. Take comfort knowing that if you allow Him to, Jesus Himself will lead you.

The most important preparation possible is found in the story of Adam and Eve. God could have created them together, but He didn’t. After breathing into Adam’s lifeless form the breath of life, the first person that he saw was the face of God. The Bible also says that

after God made Eve, “*He brought her to the man*” (Genesis 2:22). So, like Adam, the first face that Eve ever looked upon was that of her Creator—Jesus. *Here’s the point*. We often hear people say things like “you complete me” to their boyfriends, girlfriends, or fiancés ... but the true Christian is only completed by Christ. We discover our identity in seeing the face of God. And *only* when we find our identity and completeness in Him can we be ready to have our life happily united with another. Hands down, *this* is the most paramount preparation for a healthy courtship and marriage.

Be sure not to miss part two next time where we’ll learn about “The Second Most Successful Matchmaker in History,” discuss “The Flip of Physical Intimacy,” and discover “What to do When The Time *is* Right.”

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- *Letters to Young Lovers* book by Ellen White
- *They Lived Happily Ever After* sermon series by Pastor Bohr www.secretsunsealed.org
- CROSS — *Christian Resources on Spouse Selection* a powerful workbook mybiblefirst.org
- *Happily Ever After: Finding True Love God’s Way*, audio sermon series by Alan and Nicole Parker www.audioverse.org
- *Keys for a Happy Marriage* free Bible study www.amazingfacts.org

1 *Solemn Appeal*, p. 52

2 Michael McManus, *American Family Association Journal*, 2003

3 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 176

The Ungrateful Debtor



LESSON 18 | Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:3-4 Christ's Object Lessons (COL), pp. 243-251

This story is commonly known as the parable of the two debtors. As we study this lesson together we will find that the central theme of the parable is the stark contrast between the unlimited forgiveness of God and the unforgiving spirit of man.

The Parable's Occasion

1. What significant question did Peter ask Jesus? “Lord, how oft shall my brother _____ against me, and I _____ him? Till _____ times?” (Matthew 18:21)

2. Why did Peter suggest the number seven? “The _____ limited the exercise of forgiveness to _____ offenses. Peter, carrying out, as he supposed, the teaching of Christ, thought to extend it to seven, the number signifying _____” (COL 243).

3. What did Jesus reply to Peter’s “generous” willingness to forgive? “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy _____ seven” (Matthew 18:22).

4. What did Jesus mean by the figure of seventy times seven? “Christ taught that we are _____ to become _____ of forgiving” (COL 243).

NOTE: Ellen White has stated in another place: “And we are not only to forgive seven times, but seventy times seven. Just as often as God forgives us, we are to forgive one another” (Review and Herald, April 8, 1902).

5. In which way did the spirit of Lamech contrast with the spirit of Christ? “If Cain shall be avenged _____, truly Lamech _____ and _____” (Genesis 4:24).

NOTE: Christ spoke of forgiving 70 times seven, but Lamech, who was of the wicked genealogy of Cain, talked about taking vengeance 70 times seven.

The Symbols of the Parable

1. Who is represented by the king who took account of his servants? _____ (Matthew 18:35)

NOTE: “Christ is represented by the king, who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant” (COL 244).

2. Who is symbolized by the servant who was brought in before the king? _____ (Matthew 18:35)

NOTE: “Man was under the condemnation of the broken law. He could not save himself, and for this reason Christ came to this world, clothed His divinity with humanity, and gave His life, the just for the unjust” (COL 244).

3. Who is represented by the fellow servant who owed one hundred pence? _____ (Matthew 18:35)

4. THOUGHT QUESTION: What do you suppose is represented by the unpayable debt of the first servant? _____

The King's Servant

1. What occupation did the servant have in the king's realm? *"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take _____ of his servants. And when he had begun to _____ ..." (Matthew 18:23-24).*

NOTE: The servant was not a slave. He was, rather, an employee. The words "take account" and "reckon" are financial terms (see Luke 16:2). This seems to indicate that the servant was an administrator of the king's monetary assets. Most scholars believe he must have been responsible for the revenue in one of the provinces belonging to the king's realm. The enormous debt he owed his lord indicates that he was one of the high officials in the king's government.

2. Did this servant come of his own accord? *"And when he had begun to reckon, one was _____ unto him [the king], which _____ him ten thousand talents" (Matthew 18:24).*

NOTE: The Greek terms used seem to indicate that this man was already under suspicion of embezzlement. The passive tense of the verb indicates that he did not come of his own accord but rather was brought by the king's guards.

3. How great a debt was incurred by the king's servant? *"One was brought unto him [the king] which owed him ten _____ talents" (Matthew 18:24).*

NOTE: The debt was enormous and utterly unpayable. Ten thousand talents is equivalent to 470,448 pounds of silver and ten thousand talents of silver are equal to 100 million denarii. The enormity of this amount can only be understood when we realize that a denarius was the daily wage for a common worker in the Roman Empire. Furthermore, as Joachim Jeremias has pointed out, the enormity of this debt can only be understood "if we realize that both muria [thousand] and talanta [talent] are the highest magnitudes in use (10,000 is the highest number used in reckoning, and the talent is the largest currency unit in the whole of the Near East" (Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 210).

We, like the king's servant, have broken God's holy law. We have forfeited our right to freedom. We deserve to perish. The enormity of our debt to God is impossible to pay.

4. When the king commanded that the servant, his wife, his children and all his possessions be sold, how did the servant react? *"The servant therefore _____ down, and _____ him saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (Matthew 18:26).*

NOTE: The servant deserved the sentence which was pronounced against him. He did not argue about his guilt or innocence. He repented, humbled himself, confessed his wrong, promised to make restitution and threw himself on the mercy of the court. Actually, he did not realize that his debt was so great that, no matter how good his intentions, he could never pay. Scholars have calculated that if this was a high government official it would have taken him at least 15,000 years to pay the debt!!

We cannot pay the debt we have incurred because of sin. We cannot argue our case before God. We cannot earn salvation by our own works. All we can do is repent of our sins, confess them and throw ourselves upon His mercy.

5. What lesson can we learn from the servant's offer to pay his debt? *"He did not realize his _____. He hoped to deliver _____. ... So there are many who hope by their own _____ to merit God's _____. They do not realize their helplessness" (COL 245).*

6. What did the king do when he saw his servant's penitence? *"Then the lord of that servant was moved with _____, and _____ him, and _____ him the debt" (Matthew 18:27).*

NOTE: What an illustration of grace! The undeserving servant was relieved of his debt simply because the king had compassion upon him. Notice that the king did not make the servant work off his debt. This would have been impossible. The debt was completely forgiven simply because the man, in his dire need, cried out to the king for mercy! He was not forgiven because of his goodness but rather because of the goodness of the king.

The Measure of God's Forgiveness

The Bible uses several analogies to illustrate the magnanimous forgiveness of God.

1. According to Micah 7:19, how fully does God forgive our sins? *"Thou [God] wilt cast _____ their sins into the _____ of the sea."*

2. *"For thou hast cast all my _____ behind thy _____" (Isaiah 38:17).*

3. *"As far as the _____ is from the _____, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).*

4. “I have _____ out, as a thick _____, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 44:22).

5. “I, even I, am he that _____ out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not _____ thy sins.” (Isaiah 43:25).

6. “If we confess our _____, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to _____ us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The Unforgiving Servant

1. After the servant’s debt was forgiven by the king, what did he do with one of his fellow servants? “But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which _____ him an hundred pence: and he laid _____ on him, and took him by the _____, saying, Pay me that thou owest” (Matthew 18:28).

2. How did the fellow servant react when the servant took him by the throat? “And his fellow servant _____ down at his feet, and _____ him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay the debt” (Matthew 18:29).

NOTE: The servant not only pleaded with the king. He also worshiped him as the Greek word *proskuneo* in Matthew 18:26 indicates. But the fellow servant did not worship the servant. This would indicate that the king in this parable represents Christ who receives our penitential worship.

3. Did the servant manifest mercy for his fellow servant? “And he [the servant] would _____: but went and cast him into _____, till he should pay the debt” (Matthew 18:30).

4. What is represented by the servant’s unwillingness to forgive his fellow servant? “Their own _____ against God, compared with their brother’s sins against them, are as ten thousand talents to one hundred pence—nearly one _____ to one; yet they dare to be _____” (COL 247).

NOTE: The word “pence” used here is a reference to a denarius which was the

daily wage a common laborer was paid. Though 100 denarii was a considerable debt (100 days of labor), it could be paid in the course of time with a little effort. In contrast to 10,000 talents (100 million denarii), 100 denarii was “peanuts.”

5. What did the king do when he found out that the servant had been unwilling to forgive his fellow servant? “And his lord was _____, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should _____ all that was due unto him” (Matthew 18:34).

The Parable’s Central Lesson

1. According to Ellen White, what is the central lesson of this parable? “He who refuses to _____ is thereby casting away his own _____ of pardon” (COL 247).

2. Is Ellen White correct in her assessment? Notice the words of the king to his servant: “Shouldest not _____ also have had _____ on thy fellow servant, even as I had _____ on thee?” (Matthew 18:33)

3. When Jesus said, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” was He teaching that we do not have to pay our legitimate debts? “By this He did not mean that in order to be forgiven our sins we must not require our just dues from our debtors. If they cannot _____, even though this may be the result of unwise management, they are not to be cast in prison, oppressed, or even treated harshly; but the parable does not teach us to encourage _____” (COL 247).

4. If a brother or sister sins against us, what should we not do under any circumstances? “Our Lord teaches that matters of difficulty between _____ are to be settled within the _____. They should not be opened before those who do not _____ God. If a Christian is wronged by his brother, let him not _____ to unbelievers in a court of justice” (COL 248-249; see also 1 Cor. 6:1-3).

5. What wise counsel is given to us by the apostle Paul? “And be ye _____ one to another, tender hearted, _____ one another, even as God for _____ sake hath forgiven _____.” (Ephesians 4:32; see also Colossians 3:13).



6. What sobering truth did Jesus teach in the Sermon on the Mount? “For if ye _____ men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also _____ you. But if ye forgive _____ men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive _____ trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14-15).

7. Why will God not pardon us if we are unwilling to pardon others? “He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a _____ of God’s pardoning grace. In God’s forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows _____ the sinner’s soul, and _____ him to the souls of others.” (COL 251; see also Jn. 7:37-39. HINT: We cannot give what we have not received)

8. What is the great lesson of the parable? “But the great lesson of the parable lies in the _____ between God’s compassion and man’s _____; in the fact that God’s forgiving mercy is to be the measure of our _____” (COL 251).

9. THOUGHT QUESTION: What do you suppose Ellen White meant when she said the following words: “We are not forgiven because we forgive, but as we forgive.” (COL 251) _____



TestimonyTIME

We'd love to hear your testimonies! Please direct your email to info@secretsunsealed.org

Clarity on Women's Ord.

“I just want to thank you for the clear messages regarding Biblical teachings on women's ordination. I have studied for myself and now have the joy of asking God to fill me with His plan for my life as I have made the choice to step out of elder's position. I believe God will give me the grace to continue to care about friends and family who disagree. I pray earnestly for my church to follow all of God's words.”

JOYCE, EMAIL



Ordination Unsealed

“Thank you so much, Pastor Stephen Bohr, Secrets Unsealed team and ALL the speakers for the wonderful symposium on women's ordination! Believe me, you have REALLY unsealed many and important secrets on this subject! May God continue to bless you very abundantly!”

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“Thank you so much for the rich information you have provided regarding the 2,520 Prophecy. It has opened my eyes, may God richly bless your ministry especially as it stands for real Adventist faith in these troublesome times of confusing doctrines.”

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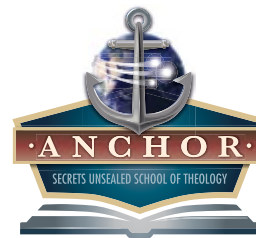
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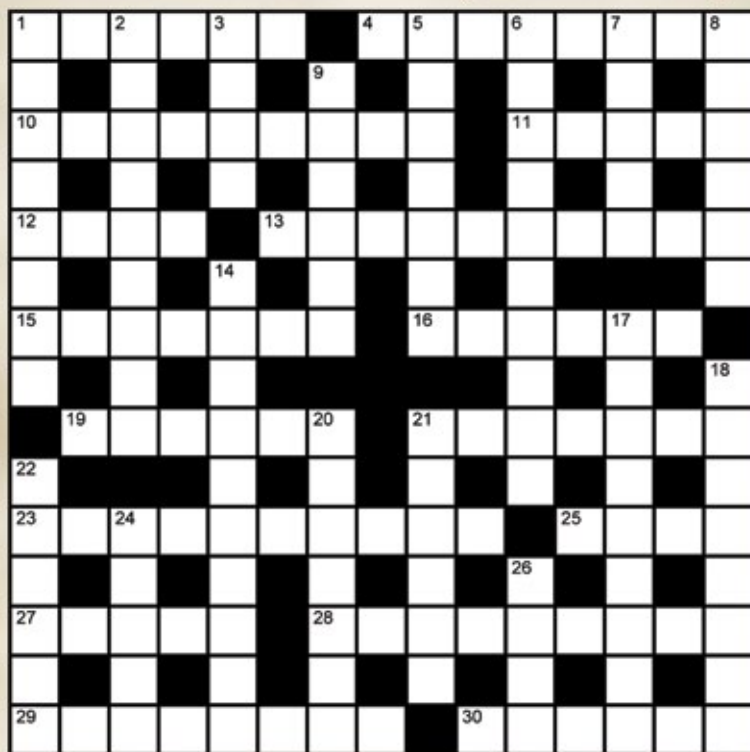
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Bible

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Across

1. An ancient weight
4. The angel Gabriel _____ to Daniel in a vision
10. New Testament book where the armor of God is found
11. The ark was measured by a _____
12. "...it is a _____ thing the king requireth" (Dan 2:11)
13. Dangerous if done with an empty mind
15. Abigail supplied David with 100 clusters of these
16. Prophet that rebuked King David
19. Concurred
21. Light sources in Bible times
23. Propitiations
25. The false god that Elijah condemned
27. Boaz allowed Ruth to _____ his fields
28. Abimelech was hit by this
29. Instructors
30. We may fall into sin if we act too _____

Down

1. These work with sheep
2. Besides reproving and rebuking, the Bible is also used for this
3. Jesus will come from the _____
5. Last scenes of Christ's life
6. Jeremiah said not to listen to these
7. Jewish leader
8. "He is proud, knowing nothing, but _____ about questions and stripes of words..." (1 Tim 6:4)
9. Bread makers
14. In this year of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan arrived in Jerusalem
17. Ancient city of Og, King of Bashan
18. Stringed instrument
20. Joseph was called a _____ by his brothers
21. Not even this amount has been removed from God's law
22. Jesus did this with authority
24. Jesus is the Alpha and the _____
26. Throughout almost all _____ Paul had turned away many from serving false gods