



# ILLINOIS Focus



John Grys, Executive Secretary



## TOOL IN THE TOOLBELT?

**P**aul, writing to the church in Colossae, shifts from what is unknown to what has been now made known in Jesus. "To them [the Lord's people] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory," (Colossians 1.27). This identifies, at least in part, a portion of this mystery that had been revealed in Jesus. And this mystery was to continue to be unraveled by this Christ in us, the hope of glory.

All this suggests that when we consider words like "discipleship," we must understand that the journey of following Jesus is a way of life and not an event. In a culture and a society where events are the "main event," the danger of any congregation, of the church itself, will be to believe that following Jesus is just another event, just another program, just another contributing factor to the development of the community. The question it can easily raise in my mind is this, "Do we follow Jesus as a means or an end?" To what degree do I answer that question?

If this notion of following Jesus ("discipleship") intends that the fullness of all dimensions of my life are subject to His authority and leadership, I quickly discover there is no end of this. Subsequently, there can be no arrival point. Thus, words like, "transformation"

cannot capture the essence. I follow Jesus out of a rootedness that comes from the ongoing reality of His relentless nature to being faithful to me now. His faithfulness draws my faithfulness. His love captures my love. His hope, my hope. You get the picture.

When "discipleship" becomes another "tool in the toolbelt" of a person, congregation, or church, we are in danger of co-opting the power of the Spirit for a neat and tidy program. Neat and tidy programs, as well as they might be for contributing, can never

A while ago, popular New York Times columnist David Brooks outlined the distinction of lives geared toward "resume virtues" and "eulogy virtues." I ask this about our pursuit of following Jesus. Are we following to pad our spiritual "resume" or do we pursue a life in Him because the virtue itself has such an eternal, almost indiscernible, effect? Christ in us, the hope of glory is not a product we sell nor a program we package. It is a life we pursue, led by the Spirit, so that, as the writer of the epistle

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### ISSUE FOCUS

# DISCIPLESHIP & PRAYER

replace the real thing. Following Jesus is not a program. We do not pray to get...but to become. And here, in this space, I find where we may actually be taking on the pragmatic value of American society.

What does this mean? When prayer and discipleship become more about reporting God's "answers" then it does about what kind of people we are becoming, we have unknowingly participated in the kingdom of this society. It is a society valuing "getting" and not "becoming." And we are as susceptible as the next person in the grocery line to signing up for the purchase.

of John outlines, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure" (1 John 3.2,3).

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**& MORE**



# Next Gen Wealth

Pastor Matthew Lucio



The financial planning world was recently shaken by a study which revealed that 70% of wealthy families lose it in the second generation (and 90% by the third generation). How was it possible that these huge hoards of cash—which often took a lifetime to amass—could be squandered so easily? It turns out that 86% of millionaires are first-generation and they are often reluctant to include their children in their financial plans—allowing them to grow up in ignorance about how to use the money wisely.

You and I are not likely to be millionaires, but we do have the wealth of the Adventist faith. Will we succeed in passing it down to the next generation? Among the former Adventists I know, parents seem to have succeeded in passing down Adventist doctrine. They know about the Sabbath and that Jesus is returning soon.

What's more difficult for many of us is passing down Adventist spirituality. A relationship with God isn't an asset to be inherited, but it is something that can be modeled. Correct theology isn't enough. In fact, if correct theology doesn't lead you to know Jesus and place your trust in Him then it isn't worth much of anything. Ellen White warned us about a largely intellectual Adventism:

*Legal religion will not answer for this age. We may perform all the outward acts of service and yet be as destitute of the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit as the hills of Gilboa were destitute of dew and rain. We all need spiritual moisture, and we need also the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness to soften and subdue our hearts. (6T, 417)*

Ellen then turned to the class of Adventists most at risk of losing sight of God—church employees:

*"If you would have the rich treasures of heaven, you must hold secret communion with God. . . . When you hurry from one thing to another, when you have so much to do that you cannot take time to talk with God, how can you expect power in your work?" (Gospel Workers, 272).*

Guilty as charged. It's not enough for our kids to see us preaching, they also need to see us praying. This is exactly what Maverick City Music talks about in their song, "Talking to Jesus", when the singer's teenage son accidentally enters the room while he is praying:

*Then he walked in my room*

*While I was saying my prayers the other night*

*He said "I'll come back later. I can tell you got a lot on your mind."*

*I said "It's not an interruption  
You couldn't have picked a better time*

*Cause I was just talking to Jesus*

*Come over and give it a try."*

It's great to bring our kids to church, enroll them in pathfinders, offer a love of haystacks, and send them to Adventist schools. But we also ought to be intentional about sharing the greatest asset we have—a relationship with Jesus. There is no greater way to do this but through prayer. Let them witness our wrestling with God and get a sense of how thoroughly we depend upon him each day. Perhaps, by God's grace, we might live to see the second and third generations prospering in his care.



Pastor Luis Rivas

**E**n la biblia encontramos diferentes tipos de oraciones hechas por grandes hombres y mujeres de fe. A continuación, compartiré algunas oraciones que cambiaron la vida de estos hombres y mujeres, estoy seguro que si hacemos lo mismo que ellos nuestras vidas serán bendecidas.

#### **Jacob una oración de alabanza y liberación:**

Jacob en su angustia y temor antes de encontrarse con su hermano Esaú oró a Dios dándole alabanza y gracias por las bendiciones que había recibido hasta ese momento.

*“Dios mío, tú eres el Dios de mi abuelo Abraham y de mi padre Isaac. Tú me ordenaste regresar a mi tierra, con mis parientes, y me prometiste tu ayuda. Siempre me tratas con mucha bondad, aunque no lo merezco, pues soy yo quien debe servirte. Cuando crucé el río Jordán, sólo tenía un palo para defenderme, pero ahora tengo gente y ganado para formar dos grupos. Tú me prometiste que me iría bien, y que mis descendientes llegarían a ser como la arena*

# ORACIONES DE FE

*del mar, que no se puede contar. ¡Líbrame ahora de mi hermano Esaú! Tengo miedo de que venga y nos ataque a todos. Génesis 32:9-12*

Esta oración hecha por Jacob en momentos de angustia, trajo una respuesta de parte de Dios, que produjo una reconciliación y amor entre estos dos hermanos, cambiando sus vidas para siempre.

#### **Ana una oración de fe por un milagro:**

Ana había experimentado dolor, sufrimiento, tristeza y aun la burla de sus compañeras y el pueblo porque no podía tener hijos a causa de su esterilidad. Humanamente no había nada que hacer, pero ella confió en el Dios de los cielos que tiene el poder para obrar milagros. Llegó al templo y abrió su corazón pidiendo el favor de Dios en su vida.

*“Dios Todopoderoso, yo soy tu humilde servidora. Mira lo triste que estoy. Date cuenta de lo mucho que sufro; no te olvides de mí. Si me das un hijo, yo te lo entregaré para que te sirva sólo a ti todos los días de su vida. Como prueba de que te pertenece, nunca se cortará el cabello.” 1 Samuel 1:11*

Contrario a lo que la gente, su esposo y aun el sacerdote pensaban de Ana, Dios entendía su necesidad. Sin esperar, Dios atendió su ruego y respondió su petición dándole un hijo al que más tarde lo llamaría Samuel.

#### **Jabes una oración por protección y éxito:**

Jabes no fue un hombre muy popular, ni se habla mucho de él en la Biblia. Posiblemente fue descendiente de la tribu de Judá, no lo sabemos con exactitud, pero lo que sí sabemos es que tuvo un encuentro con Dios, le abrió su corazón y expuso su petición.

*“E invocó Jabes al Dios de Israel diciendo: ¡Oh si me dieras bendición, y ensancharas mi territorio, y si tu mano estuviera conmigo, y me librarás del mal, para que no me dañe! Y le otorgó Dios lo que pidió.” 1 Crónicas 4:10*

En su oración Jabes le pide a Dios cuatro cosas:

**1. Si me dieras bendición:** Jabes reconoce que el Dios de Israel es la fuente de toda bendición, y le pide a Dios Su gracia. (Génesis 22:17).

**2. Ensancha mi territorio:** El territorio de influencia puede ser en el área espiritual, profesional, familiar o laboral. Sólo cuando entregamos las riendas de todo cuanto poseemos Dios nos bendecirá.

*Continuación en la página 6*



# A NEW AVENUE OF PRAYER



Pastor David Quilatan

**B**ooks on discipleship models derived from the life of Jesus fill libraries. You can go into a seminary library and immediately submerge yourself in books with data and models about how to encourage discipleship at your church. Many will aim at the goal of church growth or the theology of discipleship. Models range from small groups, life groups, mentorship programs, Bible studies, and the list goes on. However, which model is *right*? Which model or method should we go with to implement discipleship at our church?

Jesus taught His disciples many things in His Gospel ministry while here on earth. However, there is one specific activity that Jesus made sure to emphasize. *"Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us how to pray...'"* (Luke 11:1) Jesus then goes on to speak the prayer that we still memorize today: The Lord's Prayer. In this prayer model, the first couple lines speak volumes about what it means to be a faithful follower of God: true and complete dependence on God.

A disciple first and foremost is an individual who is wholly submitted to God's will in heaven and is dedicated to ushering that will here on earth.

It becomes clear that the first step in discipleship at our churches is not an excellent worship service or an engaging childrens and youth program. It isn't the Bible studies or the books we can ingest for the consumption of information. It is prayer. The goal might be to create intentional "spaces" for our church members to engage in prayer with God and for each other. What that looks like is where we can be creative. Here are two principles in creating that space:

## 1. Assume that no one knows how to pray

When the disciples asked, "Lord, teach us how to pray," Jesus understood this wasn't something they were used to doing. Statistics show that around 50% of Americans claim that they pray every day. Therefore it would be safe to assume that if your church is open to the community and consequently new believers, then at least half of the room has never prayed before. Making it relatable and ingestible to the non-believer is paramount, which leads me to the next point.

# True and complete

# DEPENDENCE.

## 2. Make your spaces safe

It is easy to forget that our methods need to reflect our mission. If our mission is to bring prayer into the lives of our members, we have to remember that expecting high standards of prayer will feel intimidating. Community members should be able to feel a space where they are not just invited to prayer, but where prayer is inviting.

Prayer brings us close and binds us together naturally. When prayer becomes an essential part of our lives and our spaces are filled with it, then discipleship will begin to flourish.

# WHY DO I STRUGGLE TO PRAY?



Pastor Jonathan Burnett

**M**y children do not love to pray. They do pray, when asked. Sometimes their prayers are even heartfelt and meaningful. Often they seem to just be reciting the patterns of prayer they have heard from others. My children complain that the prayers at church are too long and often boring. In this they agree with a dear older saint who regularly reminds of the counsel by Sister White not to make long public prayers. I must admit that their attitude towards prayer and the audible groans elicited at times when I suggest we pray troubles me.

However I mustn't be too hard on my girls. They come by their struggle honestly. Jesus reminds me that I felt similarly during my childhood. I have memories of being at church events or prayer meetings and dreading getting into a season of prayer because it would take too long. I remember the feeling of disappointment I felt at times when we would be called from whatever fun thing we were doing for family worship.

To be honest even to this day, of the three main spiritual disciplines, hearing from God in His word, speaking to God in prayer and sharing God with others, prayer is the one that I struggle with the most. I often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of people and issues I could and should be praying for. Everything happening in my family. All the issues in the church not to mention what is happening in the world. Sometimes I pray brief general 'God bless all those in need' prayers because I feel that if I were to really spend the time required genuinely praying for and addressing all the issues and situations I am aware of I would never do anything else!

Perhaps this is why Paul admonishes us to pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says "Pray without ceasing." Ephesians 6:18 encourages us to be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

“Jesus presents them...  
**AS HIS OWN.**”

Certainly, I am not suggesting that Paul was suggesting that we spend all day every day on our knees in prayer (although we would all benefit from spending more time that way) but rather that we come to maintain a constant prayerful connection with God all the time.

Paul gives us this advice because he recognizes the true nature of our struggle. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Whatever your struggle with spiritual things may be, do not be too hard on yourself, we are all caught up in a spiritual battle and our enemy does not rest looking for ways to keep us from Jesus. We are all victims of his attacks and schemes. The good news is Jesus has overcome.

### Oraciones de fe

Continuación de la página 3

**3. Que tu mano este conmigo:** La mano de Dios es un término bíblico que expresa el poder y la presencia real y verdadera de Dios en nuestra vida.

**4. Que me libres del mal para que no me dañe:** Jabes entiende el peligro de caer en pecado ya que todo lo ganado se puede perder. Cuando se experimentan bendición y grandeza, es cuando más se debe sentir la necesidad de Dios.

#### Qué aprendemos?:

Jacob nos enseñó a través de su oración que podemos expresar a Dios nuestras emociones libremente y que Él no nos juzga, sino que nos entiende y nos escucha.

Ana nos enseñó que el Dios al que servimos entiende nuestro dolor y aflicción y que responde al instante.

Jabes finalmente nos enseñó que debemos ser sinceros y claros con Dios cuando presentamos nuestras peticiones.

A través de estos ejemplos de oraciones que encontramos en la Biblia, vemos que Dios está muy cerca de su pueblo y de toda criatura que lo busca de corazón. La oración no tiene límites. Elena G. White en el libro *Consejos para la Iglesia* dice: *“Si pudiésemos apreciar el plan de Dios cuando nos envía sus bendiciones, veríamos claramente que él sabe lo que es mejor para nosotros, y que nuestras oraciones obtienen respuesta.”* (CI Pág. 627)

### Why Do I Struggle to Pray?

Continued from page 5

Ellen White is quoted in the devotional *“Our Father Cares,”* page 246, as saying “Satan cannot endure to have his powerful rival appealed to, for he fears and trembles before His strength and majesty. At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan’s whole host trembles.” What a powerful promise! Satan cannot stand to hear our prayers. They terrify him. No wonder he works so hard to keep us from praying. This promise should also put your mind at rest if you are worried that by praying out loud Satan will listen and then work to counteract your requests. When we pray the enemy has to flee!

God wants to hear our prayers; faltering, distracted, inconsistent, inelegant though they may be, to Him they are beautiful. Jesus takes them and presents them to the Father as His own, the Spirit intercedes along side Him and the Father, who Himself loves us, is pleased to give us all that we have requested that is in line with His will. So pray; pray tired, prayed bored, pray through your grief and confusion, pray when the words just tumble out and you can’t seem to stop, pray when all you can say is “Lord help me.” Pray angry, pray happy, pray afraid, pray full of faith, pour out your love, your doubt, your worries and your hopes to the Lord. He will never stop listening and acting on your behalf, so never stop praying.



# Discipleship through **RELATIONSHIP**

Pastor Rodney Balmes

**A**s a youth pastor with just 4 years under my belt I have a lot to learn. A LOT TO LEARN. This year, I have labeled my first year working in the Illinois conference as such: LISTEN & LEARN. My desire is to be willing to learn new skills even at the risk of being outside of my comfort zone. Hesitant but hopeful, I was looking forward to what the Lord had in store for me.

Sure enough, at the beginning of my ministry in my current church the Lord taught me one vital truth: **IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIP.** What- that's it? Yes! Connecting with others for the purpose of connecting to Him. How could I have missed this simple truth? Easy! I have focused my attention too much on filling the calendar with programs and events. Yes, it is true- programs are important! But I realized one huge problem. My calendar did not spell out the means to discipling my youth into a deeper relationship with Christ. OUCH. That hit me hard. **As a youth pastor I fell victim to program-making, not disciple-making!** With this newfound way of thinking, I reexamined my events and found that they were a silo to itself. The events had no intentional focus towards one singular goal. **I programmed events for the purpose of making events.** That is it! Yes laser tag is awesome! Minute to win it games brought enjoyment! Boba night attracts the youth! But with no intention to make, mature, and multiply disciples **I have effectively made my youth ministry a social club!**

So, relationship connect others for the purpose of connecting to Him is the goal. What do I do now with my programs- cancel them all? Please don't! Now you must ask the question for every program you plan, "Does this event have an intentional focus in helping mature them in the teachings of Jesus and also teach them how to win others?" If the answer is no, then you might have to actually cancel your movie night! Or your life-size hungry hippo event!

Now that we have reoriented our focus, how can we strike a balance? How can we emphasize the relationships while making sure programs continue? My senior pastor shared with me an article from Carey Nieuwhof titled, *Growing Churches In the Future Will Do These 5 Things*. Carey argues that we are drowning in a sea of information. He rightly states, "The challenge for leaders moving forward is not to produce more content. The challenge is to provide meaning... the key to providing meaning, isn't more, it's better. Carey goes on to say, **"Better is not nearly as easy as more. Better requires thought, reflection, digestion and ultimately resonance... Leaders who read widely, digest, think, and above all publish content that actually helps people find meaning will become THE leaders in their field."**

To Carey Nieuwhof, it's not about quantity. It is about quality. This brings an important point that all of us need to remind ourselves. Having more (programs, events) will only make you less relevant in a sea of endless content. This means that we don't produce programs for the sake of content; we produce programs for the intentional purpose of mission. That is how we strike a balance.

For me, this has revolutionized my view of youth ministry. I am more focused on soul winning than ever before. I look at a young person and I think to myself, "how can I go alongside this youth and share with them that they are infinitely loved by their Creator?" My planning for the year is laser focused. With one intention- one goal and one purpose. If I can help anybody out through this article it would be this: find your purpose and continually ask yourself, "how does this bring someone closer to God?" Our churches will benefit for the better when we reorient every program and all that we do to our process of creating disciples for Jesus.

# 34th Constituency Meeting



## WHEN IS THE CONSTITUENCY MEETING?

The 34th regular, Constituency meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2022.

## WHAT IS A CONSTITUENCY MEETING?

The Constituency Meeting of the Illinois Conference allows representatives of each local church that are chosen as delegates to vote on the business of the church at the conference level.

## WHO ATTENDS THE CONSTITUENCY MEETING?

Delegates are either chosen by each church within the Illinois Conference or are automatically included based on one's position. These delegates must be members of the church which they represent. Delegates must be present, in person to vote.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING A CONSTITUENCY MEETING?

The delegates at the Constituency Meeting vote to elect the officers, departmental directors, and Executive Committee members; adopt or modify the constitution; appoint members to serve on various committees; organize or dissolve churches; and transact other business as required.

## MORE INFO

Visit [www.ilcsda.org/constituency](http://www.ilcsda.org/constituency)  
or email [adminsecretary@ilcsda.org](mailto:adminsecretary@ilcsda.org)

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