

“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THIS ARTICLE PROPOSED “TEN FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME,¹ AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WILL UNPACK THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL. BELOW IS THE FIRST OF THESE ARTICLES:

ONCE A MONTH

Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand ...

“There was a man in a church who was a deacon. He was one of those deacons who didn’t “deac.” Every church has deacons that don’t ‘deac,’ and this was one of them. The pastor approached this guy and said, ‘You know, you don’t do anything around here. Could you at least drive the van that takes the youth group to the old folks’ home when they put on a worship service once a month?’ The guy agrees, and the first week helps and stands in the back while the kids are leading out up front. An old man in a wheel chair, obviously senile, grabs the deacon’s hand and holds it. All during the service he holds it. The same situation repeats itself the following month when they go—and the month after that, and the month after that. And then one time they go back, and the guy is not there. The deacon asks for him. They say, ‘Oh, he’s dying, he’s not going to live out the week, probably not the night.’ He’s four doors down the hall. The deacon goes down and there are tubes and electronic things all over this guy lying there with his mouth open, obviously unconscious. He grabs the old guy’s hand and prays that the Lord will deliver him to everlasting life in heaven. When he finishes the prayer, the seemingly unconscious man squeezes the deacon’s hand very tightly, and he knows that the prayer was heard. The deacon is so moved by this that tears well up in his eyes, and as he’s stumbling out of the room, he bumps into a middle-aged woman who says, ‘I’m his daughter. He’s been waiting for you.’ The deacon said, ‘For me?’ She said, ‘For you. He said he didn’t want to die until he had the chance to hold the hand of Jesus one more time. I kept on telling him that in the next life he would have a chance to hold the hand of Jesus.’ He said, ‘Oh no, in this life he got to hold the hand of Jesus. Once a month Jesus comes and holds my hand. And I don’t want to die until I have a chance to hold the hand of Jesus one more time.’”

When Tony Campolo told the above story he said, “I don’t know what you think Christianity is about. But it is ultimately about this—that you become Jesus for somebody.”²

Those who become Jesus for somebody need the heart and hands of Jesus. And they can be more effective

when they use His ministry method.

This current article will elaborate on the first “Farming Commandment”:

1. *Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method and pray for:*

- A spirit of revival, of love, and caring for the people in your community – resulting in more workers (“Pray ye therefore. . .” Matt 9:38, KJV);
- The workers as they work in the harvest field;
- **The Rain – the Holy Spirit** – throughout the growing season. *No Rain – no crop and harvest!*

Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method . . .

What was Jesus’ ministry method? When He gave His inaugural address in Nazareth, He outlined His ministry and the way He would carry it out. Luke 4:18-19 quotes Isaiah 61:1, 2—the Messianic job description: “The Spirit³ of the Sovereign Lord is upon Me, because He has:

- Anointed Me to preach good news to the poor;
- Sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners;
- Provided recovery of sight to the blind;
- Released the oppressed;
- Proclaimed the year of the Lord’s favor (Jubilee terminology);⁴
- Comforted all who mourn.

As we read the Gospels we see that Jesus lived up to His Messianic job description. Matthew summarizes His ministry method in Matthew 9:35-38: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

This passage, along with Isaiah 58 and others, are parallel to the well-known explanation of Jesus’ ministry method found in *Ministry of Healing* (MH), p. 143:3: “Christ’s method *alone* will give *true* success in reaching

the people. The Saviour *mingled* with [people] as one who desired their good. He showed His *sympathy* for them, *ministered* to their needs, and won their *confidence*. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (emphasis supplied).

A friend of mine organized MH 143:3 into a formula and two different models—"The Dichotomous Model" and "The Holistic Model."⁵ Here's the formula:

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. SOCIALIZE: | "The Saviour mingled with [people]" | [Open networks] | } CONFIDENCE |
| 2. SYMPATHIZE: | "He showed His sympathy for them" | } 1+2+3=
[Attachments] | |
| 3. SERVE: | He "ministered to their needs" | | |
| 4. SALVATION: | "Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" | [Conversion] | |

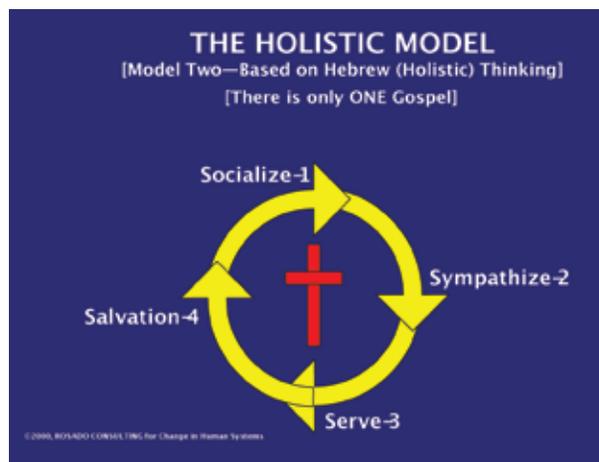
I have noticed that sometimes church leaders might skip or de-emphasize steps 1-3 and go straight to #4 (which of course is also very important). However, Jesus placed great importance in *all* four steps, and, after he did steps one to three, "then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" We can never go wrong in doing things as Jesus did!

Now to the first of the models: It's easy to say that we are **not** dualists on the subject of the nature of man, and it's just as easy to **be** dualists when it comes to ministry. "The Dichotomous Model (below)," based on Greek Dualistic thinking, presents the steps in MH 143 as two competing Gospels: The "Social Gospel" and the "Evangelical Gospel." A mathematician would call this graph between the secular and the spiritual "inversely proportional." This means that the closer you get to the evangelical-spiritual end—the further you get from the social end, and vice versa. Have you ever seen an actual ministry model that reflects this situation? I admit that I have.

The second model, "The Holistic Model," is based on Hebrew Holistic⁶ thinking. In this model, there is only ONE Gospel. Ministries of compassion are portrayed as impor-

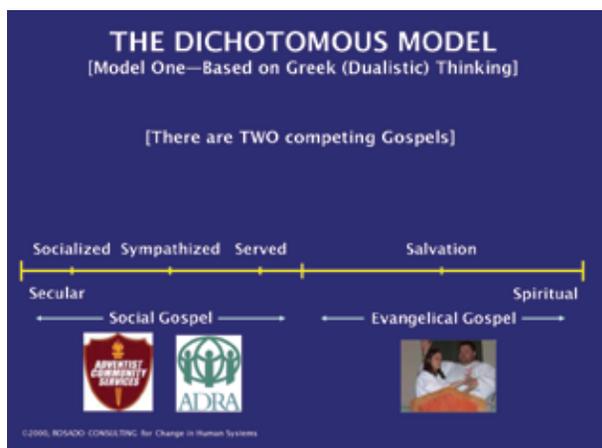
tant as traditional forms of evangelism. They flow together and there is a synergy among them. Speaking of an urban church movement in Lima, Peru, Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz said, "The church's urban interests have forged a healthy *balance* between the dynamic, verbal proclamation of the gospel message, and the proclamation of that same message through the loving, caring deeds of a social ministry program""⁷ Does this describe your church?

The next paragraph after MH 143:3 advises that "There is need of coming close to the people by *personal effort*. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, *this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.*"⁸



If your church has not achieved this balance, this "ONE Gospel" model, it would be good to head in that direction, don't you think? You will be in very good company, for that's how Jesus did it! The apostle John advises that "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did"(1 John 2:6). Who better can we follow as our ministry model?

In 362 AD, Emperor Julian launched a campaign to revive paganism. The Christians, whom the pagans thought were going to fizzle out, were growing and getting the upper hand, and the pagan leaders were very worried. Julian's advice to a prominent pagan priest expresses his concern: "I think that when the poor happened to be neglected and overlooked by the priests, the impious Galileans [Christians] observed this and devoted themselves to benevolence.... [They] support not only their poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us."⁹ Christianity taking over an empire in less than 300 years stemmed from the help and compassion from Christians. Even now, that way "*will not, cannot, be without fruit.*"¹⁰



... and pray for ...

- A spirit of revival, of love, and caring for the people in your community;
- The workers as they work in the harvest field;
- The Rain – the Holy Spirit – throughout the growing season. No Rain – no crop and harvest!

Matthew 9:38 hints at “the cruciality of prayer: Pray ye therefore The prayer is not to be a substitute for the labor; the disciples were to be reapers¹¹ as well as praying men. But the work will not be done without prayer.”¹² “Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among us, was often in prayer. Prayer went before and sanctified every act of His ministry”¹³ Bathe your community outreach in prayer. Rally your church’s prayer warriors, your prayer partners. Have a prayer corner in your church bulletin, a prayer box at church. Do prayer walks and pray for the people in your community, by name when possible.

In these end times, when the Seventh-day Adventist Church is highlighting revival and reformation, there is a renewed call to prayer that goes before every act of our ministry. Where there is earnest prayer in the church, and where there is personal labor for souls, as modeled by Jesus, these “are God’s appointed opportunities for giving the early and the latter rain.”¹⁴ Are you ready to prayerfully take on Tony Campolo’s challenge to do what it takes to become Jesus for somebody in your community? **ED**

¹ The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method and pray for. . . ; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT); (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the cho-

sen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn “Social Capital”; (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate. . . . AND an 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to Reap where thou hast farmed and keep what thou doest reap (disciple –preserve the harvest)!

² Adapted from a story told by Tony Campolo on a DVD entitled *The Least of These*, produced by Old Fashioned Pictures, 2004. Used by permission. To order a DVD of *The Least of These* go to www.oldfashionedpictures.com.

³ Having the Spirit of the Lord on us, in answer to prayer, is an important first step, as reflected in the First Farming Commandment.

⁴ Jubilee was an equalizer of society—to give everyone an opportunity to begin anew. Debts were forgiven; property that was sold was restored to the original owner; prisoners and slaves were set free. It was about taking one’s gains and redistributing them to equalize society.

⁵ Formula/construct and graphics from Caleb Rosado, adapted from Ellen White. Used by permission.

⁶ Sometimes spelled “Wholistic.”

⁷ Harvie M. Conn & Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001, p. 204. This is a comment about a Christian and Missionary Alliance church movement in Lima, Peru. (Emphasis supplied by author.)

⁸ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143:4.

⁹ Ayerst, David, and A. S. T. Fisher. *Records of Christianity*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell, 1971, pp. 179-181, quoted by Rodney Starks, *Cities of God*.

¹⁰ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143:4.

¹¹ Remember, they [and we] must also do the other parts of farming before they [we] reap.

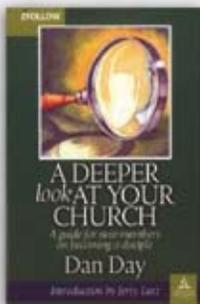
¹² *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7, p. 362.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1902.

¹⁴ See *Review & Herald*, March 2, 1897, paragraph 6.

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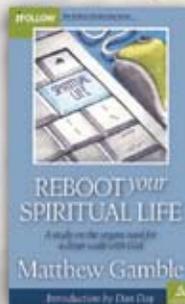
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