

# The Church and the Challenging Road Ahead

## by Bill Aumack

So I've got a joke to start us off today. Good dad joke, you're ready? Why did the man fall into the well? He couldn't see that well. That's that's like a grenade, it takes a minute, you got to kind of lob out there and wait. That's a pretty good joke, right? Pretty good joke, remember that joke? We're gonna come back to that joke in the sermon. Okay, we chose that joke for a reason.

Today, we're wrapping up our series, Passing the Baton. And we're talking about the church and the challenging road ahead. And we've been looking back at the first century church, and what were some of the good practices they had in the early Adventist church, and what were some of the good practices they had, and trying to think about how we can bring those things forward. And, you know, we could have spent a long time on that months and months and months. But, you know, like most things in life, there's, there's positives and negatives, right? If you've been around children or raised children, you know, that there's positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement, right? When the kids do good, they get little praise, little positive reinforcement. When they misbehave, they get a little negative reinforcement, right. And maybe our spiritual life is kind of the same that way

And pastor has done a good job of trying to summarize 1000s of years of history of the church in just three short weeks. And you know, we could have spent a lot longer on this, but you have to kind of have a balance, right? And it's hard to know what the right balance is. Because the worst thing you want to do is have somebody come in and go is Paster still talking about that. It's been 20 weeks, is he ever going to be done? So we don't want that to happen. So we tried to find the balance, hopefully, sometimes we hit it, right. But pastor asked me to wrap this up, and look into the future. Great. Like, I'm some kind of Prophet that can prognosticate the future. I can't even pick the teams on my football league, let alone anything else. So I'm not doing so good there. But you know, I did come up with a few points that I think we need to address. And they're kind of going to talk about the past, the present and the future. Okay.

And I think this is important here. Because I don't think you can understand where you are going. If you don't know where you've been. Okay, I'm gonna say that again. You can't know where you're going. If you don't know where you've been. Okay, you might have been on a path headed this way, and then decided I don't like this path, I want to be on this path over here. Well, you can't just magically jump from here to here. You can make course corrections, but there's some journey to get you from over there to over here. And so by some means are some standards, our futures a little bit shaped by our past. Right? If you have a past where you were convicted of a felony, you can't go to the gun shop and buy a gun. Because your past affects your future. Okay. So there's, there's things that happen like this in our spiritual life, too. And we're going to talk about those.

And one more thing, these points we're gonna talk about today, not only apply to the church body, but they apply to us as individuals. Okay? Because if, if we're not doing them as individuals, we can't do them as a church body. Like, for example, if we say we wanted to be a loving church, but we weren't loving people individually. That would that work? No. Okay. And just like some of these other things, we can say, we want to do these things if we're not doing them personally. So hopefully, you've got your

sermon notes. And we'll maybe have a little fun today. And maybe we'll go a little past 12 We'll see. All right.

Number one, we need to be transparent and honest about our past. We need to be transparent and honest about our past. Just like the man that couldn't see the wells, you know, looking forward. Hindsight is what 20/20 We can see what happened behind us just fine. And we need to be transparent about that. And in some cases own that, right. There are people that have been hurt by the church. Okay. And we need to be transparent on that. Because sometimes we say things like, you know, you're supposed to keep your eyes on Jesus, not the people don't you know? And what are you telling somebody when you tell them that it's your fault? You did it wrong. All right, that's not helpful. Or sometimes we say, yeah, there's imperfect people in the world. So sometimes things happen, you know, church has imperfect people, and we're all sinners. Well, that's not helpful, because all you're doing is saying, wow, you know, that's gonna happen. Put on your big boy pants and deal with it. And sometimes we say things like, well, that only happens at those other churches, you know, stay away from those guys. Here in our little world of perfect that never happens. And that's probably just a flat out lie. Right? We have to be honest and transparent about our past, and we have to own it.

And mistakes get made in the church all kinds of different ways. Sometimes, if mistakes are made by people who meant well, right? They were trying to do their best. You've been in situations like this, where you had a situation, and you were trying to do your best, you were getting advice, you were praying about it. You're trying to make a good decision, you're trying to do the right thing. And it still turns out horrible. Right? And the amens on that, yeah, we've all been there. And that happens in church, too. People tried, but it just didn't come out the way they wanted. Sometimes Mistakes happen, because we're lazy. I don't want to do that. I want to work that's gonna be it man. Don't you know my favorite show is dropping this tonight on Netflix, I got to binge watch that. I don't have time for this. I don't want to upset brother so and so or sister so and so you know, just smooth waters. Hey, being a Christian is tough. You got to make tough decisions. You got to do hard things. And sometimes if we're honest with ourselves, there have been people that have used their position in the church for their own benefit. And they did things supposedly in God's name that I don't think God wanted anything to do with. And people have been hurt. And we have to own that we even if you weren't personally involved. Even if somebody's talking about something that happened in a different church, in a different denomination, before you were born. We have to own that. We have to own that we have to say, I'm sorry that that happened to you. Right? Do I have permission maybe, to keep talking to you about God?

Open your Bibles with me to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. We're gonna go to a couple different verses today. Romans 12, verse 18. This is probably a verse you'll recognize when we get there. Give me an amen when you're there. Romans 12:18 If it is possible, and as far as it depends on you do what? live at peace with who? Everyone? Everyone. Not not just my friends. Not just the people that are easy to be at peace with not just the people that vote like me, or look like me or act like me or believe like me, but everybody including people that are far from God, because they say the church has damaged them in some way. This is something we're supposed to do. We've got to ask for forgiveness, and permission to talk to them again about God and to try again. And this is tough. And I don't have any formula do this, this, because every situation is different. But we have to be gentle, we have to be loving, we have to be kind, we have to own it.

Alright. Number two, we need to be intentional in the present, about what we teach and how we teach it. We need to be intentional in the present, about what we teach, and how we teach it. Okay, the guy with the well that fell into the well, right? Don't be so busy looking behind it 20/20 That you don't see the well in front of you. And you fall into it. We have to be intentional. And when we talk about our Christian walk, I hear a lot of people say something like, Well, you know, I don't like to talk to people. But I live a good example. Boloney, let's just call it what it is baloney.

Right. Now, I know people that live wonderful lives, they are good people, they pay their taxes. They do everything they're supposed to do. They raise wonderful families with children that are well behaved and good kids, and they get good grades, and they donate money to charity, and they are far from God. So how will your life look any different than theirs? When you say I'm living a good life, and I'm setting an example with my life, that's an excuse. And we need to call it what it is. I'm stepping on toes. And I'm sorry. But we need to call that what that is. It's just an excuse. Now I'm all for living a good life and doing the right things. I'm not saying go out there and be some wild, crazy person. Live a good life. That's not how you draw people to Jesus. That's not how you draw people to Jesus.

Hopefully you're still in Romans. Let's go to Romans chapter 10. Verses 13 to 15. Romans 10, verses 13 to 15. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Who can do this? Everybody? Do we need to go through the list again, not just people that look like me, act like me, think like me, vote like me, everybody. Verse 14, how then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One who may have not heard? And how can they hear without somebody preaching to them? And how can anyone preach to them unless they are sent? As it is written? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news?

You have to use words. living a good life is nice. Maybe that opens the door. But you have to use words. We have to be intentional about what we are trying to get across. Do you think that the devil is not being intentional about trying to snare Christians away from the truth? He's being very intentional.

We can't just go through life and say, oh, you know, we went to church every week. Hopefully my kids got it. That's not enough. That's not enough. We have to be intentional. And we have to talk about the how and the why. And just because I said, so. Get up and go to church. Why? Because I said, so. That doesn't work. Or it only works until they're old enough to say, Well, you can't tell me that anymore. Right? Why are we doing these things? Why are they important? Why do we why do we do these things? We've got to talk about this. Now there is a 168 hours in a week. And our children are exposed to all kinds of media and programming and those 168 hours and one hour in church is not enough to undo the other 167 hours. It's just not. So we need to be intentional about what we're doing.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 6. Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Bible. Deuteronomy chapter 6. Give me an amen when you're there.

All right, Deuteronomy 6:6-9. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts, impress them on your children, talk about them when you sit at home. And when you walk along the road, when you lie down. And when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads and write them on the doorframes of your houses in your gates. What is this passage trying to tell us? Talk about the stuff all day long. When you get up when you go to bed, when you're walking along the road when you're doing life, talk about these things and why it's important. All the time. Not just one hour during church, not just five minutes during, you know, family devotion time, at

the end of the day. That's great. But talk about it all the time. Make sense? If it's important when you talk about it. When your team wins? Do you talk about it? When it's important, we're going to talk about it.

There was a study done by the church called Value Genesis some years ago, and it studied young people as they move through education systems, and they were trying to deal with, you know, we hear stats about kids leaving the church, and that, you know, they grow up and they leave the church and what do we do about it? So that was kind of the theme, this multi year study was a huge, huge study. And the one part of this study that's always stuck with me, was one point, they did this thing where they talked to the parents, and they asked them to rate certain things that Adventists typically consider important. On a scale, you know, from that important to important and rate these things. And some of these things are big things. And some of these things were little things. For example, I don't remember exactly what all the things were, but like maybe Sabbath, the Sabbath is important, and they would rate it. Is wearing jewelry important? And they would rate that maybe not as important or is you know, salvation by faith that was important, or this other thing wasn't until they get this line of things that were important and not so important, right, you get this jaggy line. And then they ask the kids the exact same questions. And this part just astounds me, because the kid's line looked exactly like the adults line just lowered down. So if the adult said Sabbath is really important, the kid said, yeah, that's important, but they didn't go quite as high. And if this thing was not as important, well, then, you know, yeah, that's really not important. This was more important than this was less important. And those two lines just made almost a perfectly parallel line on the graph. And the kids didn't think things were as important as the adults do. And that doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that in about two generations, nothing would be important, it would just be a straight flat line on the bottom of the graph. And sometimes when we look at society, there's things that seem like they've bottomed out and things that we used to think are important, don't seem to be important anymore.

We have to be intentional. We can no longer just do things the way we used to do things because the world's not the way it used to be. We have to be intentional. That means you're gone have to speak words to your friends. They are not going to get it because you live some magic sweet fairy tale life. Not going to happen. Who in here, anybody in here can point to somebody that came to church because you live such a magically good life. No hands. Anybody in here can raise a hand but people that came to church because you talk to him. I can. Now there's some hands going up. What works? God put this (points to mouth) on your face for a reason. It's not to gossip. We have to be intentional about what we're doing. Okay.

Number three, we need to tackle the tough issues in society.

Our future is shaped by our past, remember. And we need to be watching for the wells that are in front of us to remember the guy that fell in the well. But we also need to be looking out a little bit on the horizon. We can't just have a plan for today, or even a plan for the next year. Where are we going to be in 10 years? And a lot of times we say, well, we don't want to have a ten year plan. Jesus is coming soon. Okay, well, if Jesus comes and my plan goes all to heck in a handbasket. Okay, I'm good with that. What if our church founders and said, We don't need a plan because Jesus is coming soon? They're all dead. Jesus didn't come that soon. We got to have a plan. We have to be able to do these things. Okay. What's our plan, our society has changed. And if you're, you know, more seasoned, like I am, been around the block a few extra times, world's really changed. I used to think that my grandparents, the people that

were born kind of in the late 1800s, and the early 1900s, they really saw massive changes in their lives. Right, they went from riding in a horse and buggy to riding in a car, to seeing jet airplanes, to seeing people on the moon. Phenomenal technical changes in their lifetime. I think our generation has seen dramatically more change than they have. Not necessarily in technology, but just in lifestyle and society. It has been crazy what we have seen. And we don't always know how to deal with it.

One silly example I was when I first started coming here with Linda 1984 or 1985, something like that. This is for some of you younger people. This is back when everybody wore a suit to church. So and we're talking color hadn't been invented yet. You know, this is way back. There was an old guy here at church, he was a good guy. And he always carried some hard candy in his pocket, a suit jacket that he gives to the kids after church. And the kids knew he had that candy. Guess who was popular after church? He was. He'd asked them, Were you good in church? Yea, I was good. All right, here's piece of candy. And I always said, Man, someday when I get old, I'm gonna do that. You can't do that anymore. If you're the old guy handing out candy to kids, you get in trouble for that. Stranger danger. Right? The society has changed. And we can't do things the way we used to do things.

Women pastors in the church, the Adventist church has been dealing with this the whole Christian church has been dealing with and different denominations have gone different ways. We've got to deal with this issue. And in my opinion, this is my opinion. So let's be clear, this is not pastor's opinion. It's not the church's opinion is my opinion. We have not done that well in the Adventist Church. Because the Adventist Church is a worldwide church. And we say we're going to vote as a worldwide body. And we're going to make a decision whether we're going to have women pastors or not. And the problem is that some parts of the world are ready for women pastors, and some parts of the world aren't. And the parts that aren't have more people than the parts that are, it's pretty simple math. Okay, so they lose. So then the parts that are ready for women to be pastors just say well, phooey on you. We're going to make women pastors anyway. And the church says, well, we're not going to recognize the women pastors and we say, that's okay. We don't care don't recognize them. We're still going to do it. That's broken. And we should not be doing that. Because what the church is saying is, I don't accept the authority of the people above me. But those folks want the people under them, us, to submit to their authority. And that's broken. And we've got to deal with it, We've got to handle it, no matter how we come down on the issue of, of women pastors, whether it's right, whether it's wrong, whether it's indifferent, wherever we show up, we've got to deal with it. We can't just stick our head in the sand and keep on going. Amen.

And that's the easy issue. We haven't talked about the hard ones yet, like what's happening in our society with gender and fluid genders, and multiple genders and transgenders, and, LBGQT and all the letters that they add, and how are we going to deal with that? We can't just say, let me just kind of ignore that. And it'll go away, because it won't. And we thought we saw the big sexual revelation in the 60s, when it was free love, and it feels good, do it. And that was tame compared to what's happening now. Right. And we've got to talk about these things, and have a way to deal with them. And again, whether we come down on the side of yes, no, or indifferent. We're not going to cover that today. We just don't have enough time, we'd be here till three o'clock or longer. But we've got to deal with it. We can't ignore it. Because society's not ignoring it. And now they want to teach kindergarteners about it. Are we okay with that? What are we going to do about that? Are we're gonna have a voice in that discussion? We should, we should.

So, you know, these are things we need to deal with. And it's hard. And regardless of where you come down on these issues, because we can talk about these issues, and I can guarantee that some of us are going to come down on this side of the fence, and some of us are going to come down on that side of the fence. It doesn't matter what the issue is. That's going to happen. We've got to figure out how to deal with that. How do I go to church with somebody who I think is doing something that's morally wrong? How do I do that?

Let's pick a real easy example. Let's say that we found some rare verse in the Bible we didn't know was in there before, was translated weird. And now we've learned that wearing blue shirts to church is a sin. Just picking something silly. Okay. And I'm wearing a blue shirt. A couple other guys are going Oh, no. I'm in deep trouble because my closet is heavily blue. Okay. But wearing a blue shirt to church is a sin. How are you going to deal with people that openly wear blue shirts to church? Because it's a sin. How are you going to deal with that? That's not easy. Because they read the same Bible you said and they said, I don't think that says blue shirts that says red shirts. Right? They came to a different conclusion when they read the same text you did. And how are we going to deal with that?

And I just have one answer. And you guys are gonna get tired of me saying this. It's God's job to judge. It's Jesus's job to save. It's the Holy Spirit's job to convict. I can't do those things. And in fact, the Bible tells me not to. It's my job to love. And the Bible tells me time and time and time again to love. Love my neighbor, love my enemy. Love those who do harm against you. Use the same measure against people that you would have them use that you want to be used for you. Right? We have to have love. And we have to do that. And there's going to be some people in the world that are going to be difficult to do that with, and that doesn't give us an excuse to not do it. I will pick on my wonderful friend Erlinda because Erlinda is easy to love. Amen. So if Erlinda was tough to love, oh, no. Here she is again. She just won't quit. No, that's doesn't work. Right but doesn't work. We've got to figure that out of how we're going to be loving all the time to everyone. Whether they're easy to love or not. And that means some of you have to work on loving me, if we're honest. Right.

Jesus tackled the tough issues. The Bible tackles the tough issues. We have to tackle the tough issues.

All right, reflection. Are you being intentional enough with your Christian walk that others will know you're a Christian? You ever had somebody come up say, you know, you're talking at work or whatever? I didn't know you were Christian. Oh, no. Are you being intentional enough that people know you're a Christian?

And our challenge this week is Be intentional use words. I know it's tough. But use words and talk about Jesus with someone this week. We've got family members, we've got neighbors, talk to somebody about Jesus. It's important. It is the single most important thing. Amen.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, looking to the future is always hard. And most of the time, it's pretty unclear about what we're supposed to do. But we do know Lord that we're supposed to love. Help us to be loving. Help us to find a way to reach our friends and our neighbors in a loving way that will draw them to you and they will understand what a great and awesome God you are. We ask that you be with us this week and the to guide us and that you prompt us just the right time to say just the right thing that will maybe nudge somebody along to be just a little bit closer to you. Be with us now and bring us back again, in Jesus name. And everybody said amen.

