
An Overview of Additional Chapters

Deuteronomy 6 functions as a foundation passage for religious educators. It includes the familiar Hebrew shema, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut 6:4-5 NKJV).

Just as the Jews practiced this so religiously that it became formalism to some and a forgotten practice to others, a new rendering of this passage might highlight more than phylacteries around the wrist and on one’s forehead. Read the same two verses from *The Message*, “Attention, Israel! God, our God! God the one and only! Love God, your God, with your whole heart: love him with all that’s in you, love him with all you’ve got!” Using this as a launching pad could springboard into a host of creative endeavors to develop and celebrate one’s love for God “with all you’ve got!” That seems far more intense than cheering at a football game or winning the lottery! This could be very special!

The instruction to the parents isn’t limited to intensity. Consistency happens by integrating instruction and adoring God as a lifestyle. Leaving it to chance or to others doesn’t seem to be one of the options in scripture. In the Valuegenesis 1 research (Dudley, 1992), most of the significant family effectiveness factors that correlated with a living faith in God and a loyal commitment to the Church related to the very things identified in Deuteronomy 6. These included family worship and parental communication with their children on religious topics. This happens in only a minority of homes. How miraculous that we still benefit so much in spite of our weak application of God’s instruction!

One of the papers towards the back of this book mentions Bull and Lockhart’s revolving door model (Bull & Lockhart, 2007). Swenson’s chapter focuses on the

third part of the revolving door—the transformers. I will address different elements of this model.

Bull & Lockhart present three stages in which Americans join, develop, and then leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sociology, economics, and education all play roles in this dynamic flow. Those who enter tend to be from the lower economic classes—blue-collar workers. These are the first generation Adventists. The Adventist lifestyle emphasizes personal health, responsible living, and financial ordering. The promotion of Adventist education reinforces this lifestyle. Converts become better off financially and exchange their socio-economic marginality for religious marginality, since Adventism isn’t considered a major religion in America.

The children of converts grow up in Adventism and experience full immersion, complete with Adventist education and full participation in the Adventist lifestyle and activities. They often become church employees, whether it’s pastoring a church or teaching at an Adventist school. Economically they are middle class. Socially, they have become the core of the Adventist subculture, although they may not interface much with those outside of Adventism. Educationally, they have probably completed college, and maybe even some graduate school. This generation isn’t entering the church (revolving door) like their parents; nor are they leaving the church (revolving door) like their children are apt to do. They are squarely in the church and maintain it. For Bull & Lockhart, these comprise the second generation.

But the grandchildren of the converts, the third generation, are the ones most apt to leave the church (revolving door). Growing up as middle class Americans with plenty of education, they often become physicians or attorneys or other types of educated professionals who find employment outside of the Adventist denomination. Economically, they move from middle class to upper

middle class. Socially, they live outside of the Adventist bubble more than they live inside of it. This contributes to their exit from the church. They may still consider themselves to be Adventist, but their practice might not be considered orthodox. They are no longer marginalized socially because of the religion they hardly practice, nor are they marginalized economically because they are middle to upper middle class. They are highly educated, thanks to their Adventist background. They have achieved the American dream, and the Adventist Church helped them get there.

Bull & Lockhart, as historians, provide a perspective that includes many contributing elements besides merely staying in church or dropping out. With our topic of second and third generations, their model deserves recognition and reason to pause.

In this section, we will continue these additional topics:

- * The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- * The Way We Never Were
- * Hand Me Down Religion
- * Moving In (Immigration)
- * What About the First Generation?

References

Bull, M & Lockhart, K. (2007). *Seeking a sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American dream*. (Rev. ed.). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Dudley, R. L. (1992). *Valuegenesis: Faith in the balance*. Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press.