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Family-Based Youth Ministry for Adventist Public High School Students in the Idaho Conference

John F. Bryson
Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

FAMILY-BASED YOUTH MINISTRY FOR ADVENTIST PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE IDAHO CONFERENCE

by

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Problem

Research has indicated that there are three factors essential to the retention of young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Adventist education, the local church, and the home (Dudley, 2000, p. 79). However, a majority of high school youth from the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists family units are not receiving the spiritual nurture of Adventist education because they are attending public schools. While local churches offer curricula for spiritual education, there is no provision for compensatory family-based curricula for these students.
Method

As a means of addressing this problem, materials for family-based spiritual nurture of Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference were selected and distributed to selected families for one school year. During that time, communication was maintained with the families through newsletters. At the end of the school year, the students and their parents were surveyed regarding their perception of the value of the supplied materials toward improving spiritual nurture.

The responses from the surveys were analyzed and recommendations were made to the Idaho Conference Board of Directors on how better to spiritually nurture the Adventist youth who are attending public high schools in the conference. Recommendations were also made to the publishing houses and materials distribution organizations and the North Pacific Union Conference and the North American Division on how they could support family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school youth. Finally, recommendations were made for further research.

Results

While 83 parents and public high school students originally agreed to take part in this project, only 10 surveys were returned from six parents and four students at the end of the study. Although this is a small portion of those accepting the materials, the survey results were informative.
Before asking them about the specific materials distributed, I asked about their perception of other spiritual nurturing programs and activities in being helpful for the spiritual nurture of the teenagers. The survey respondents viewed the church worship service, youth Sabbath school, family worship, and personal devotions as more helpful than unhelpful. Although, the students viewed family worship and personal devotions as slightly more helpful than the parents did.

Four types of books were distributed to the families: devotional, doctrinal, practical, and an informational book on teen development. The respondents viewed the doctrinal book as being the most helpful and the developmental book as being most unhelpful for the spiritual nurture of Adventist public high school students.

Conclusions

Three observations were demonstrated by the project: (a) there is a felt need for family-based youth ministry participation in the Idaho Conference, (b) families have difficulty in following-through with family-based youth ministry programs, and (c) mid-adolescents see value in family-based youth ministry. These observations substantiate the value of family-based youth ministry and should encourage pastors, youth leaders, and parents to continue seeking ways for it to be successful.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

FAMILY-BASED YOUTH MINISTRY FOR ADVENTIST PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE IDAHO CONFERENCE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
John F. Bryson
2010
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

A majority of high school youth from the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists family units are not receiving the spiritual nurture of Adventist education because they are attending public schools. While local churches offer curricula for spiritual education, there is no provision for compensatory family-based curricula for these students.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to evaluate the effects of providing resources for parents within the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to spiritually nurture their children who attend public high school.

Justification for the Project

Research has indicated that there are three factors essential to the retention of young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Adventist education, the local church, and the home (Dudley, 2000, p. 79). Recent statistics show that the majority of youth in the Idaho Conference Adventist homes attend public school. Attempts to address the lack of spiritual nurture available to these public school students have been limited to two approaches: (a) encouraging public school students to transfer
to Adventist academies, and (b) offering youth Sabbath School classes.

Recent research has demonstrated that parents have the largest influence upon their children of any other groupings of individuals. Therefore, family-based spiritual nurture may serve as a viable compensatory factor for high school students who are not receiving the benefits of Adventist education.

A tentative hypothesis to be investigated is that if resources are provided to the families of public high school students, there will be a noticeable improvement in spiritual nurture.

**Definition of Terms**

*Pre-adolescence* in this study refers to those from birth to the onset of puberty, which would be around 10 or 11 years of age.

*Early-adolescence* refers to the time from the onset of puberty until a young person enters high school.

*Mid-adolescence* refers to the age when young people are in high school.

*Late-adolescence* refers to the time period from high school graduation until the young person is fully established as a self-sustaining adult. This could happen as early as age 20 or as late as 28.

*Family-Based Youth Ministry* refers to youth ministry that is centered in and works with the families of mid-adolescent young people.

**Limitations of the Project**

There were a number of limitations of this project as follows:

1. The time given to analyze the positive effects of family-based spiritual
nurture was limited to one school year. That limited the development of new family habits regarding family-based spiritual study and nurture.

2. Because the Idaho Conference is a small conference, the numbers of families participating and completing the study was fairly small. Therefore, the conclusions reached cannot be determinative for other families within the Idaho Conference or for larger conferences in other regions.

3. This study was focused on mid-adolescent young people. There is some evidence demonstrating that a better time for long-term spiritual nurture is for preadolescent children from birth to age eight (Barna, 2003, p. 18).

**Methodology**

The methodology for this project proceeded as follows:

1. Theological reflection, focusing on the spiritual education of children being the responsibility of families in general, and parents specifically was conducted.

2. Current literature was reviewed on the subject of family-based youth ministry, parental spiritual influence, and the role of the church in supporting parents in this task.

3. Data of the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was collected to determine the church activity status of high school youth along with the type of school they are attending. Evaluation of the data was used to identify the families who have children in public high schools. These families were invited to be part of a study to evaluate materials for compensatory family-based spiritual nurture materials for public high school students.
4. Materials for family-based spiritual nurture of high school students were compiled and distributed for use in the study at the beginning of the school year in August 2008. At the end of the school year in May 2009, the students and their parents were surveyed regarding their perception of the value of the supplied materials toward improving spiritual nurture.

5. The responses from the surveys were analyzed and recommendations were made to the Idaho Conference Board of Directors on how better to spiritually nurture the Adventist youth who are attending public high schools in the conference. Recommendations were also made to the publishing houses and materials distribution organizations and the North Pacific Union Conference and the North American Division on how they could support family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school youth. Finally, recommendations were made for further research.
CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGY OF FAMILY-BASED YOUTH MINISTRY

Biblical Basis for Family-Based Youth Ministry

The home school movement and popular Christian leaders and writers, such as Bill Gothard, James Dobson, and Mark DeVries have given emphasis to the parental role on the transmission of religious values (Dunn & Senter, 1997, p. 197). Indeed, the Scripture does place the responsibility of spiritual nurture of children on the parents in the family setting. The key biblical passage dealing with the education of young people is found in Deut 6:4-9 (NIV):

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

This passage appears in the context of Moses’ second address to the Israelites found in Deuteronomy. In the previous chapter, Moses reiterated the Ten Commandments. Deut 6:4-9 is part of Moses’ appeal to the Israelites to educate their descendents to follow these commandments.

The spiritual education of children is the responsibility of families in general, and parents specifically. “Impress” (Deut 6:7, NIV) comes from the word šānan,

1All Bible references are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.
which means “to whet,” or “to sharpen” (Nichol, 1953-57, 1:974). The teachings were to be specific and clear. The phrase, “impress them on your children” has the meaning of repeated instruction over and over again (Clark, 2004, 1:755). The parents were “responsible to teach them diligently to [their] children (v. 7; cf. 4:9). The commandments were to be the focus of constant discussion inside and outside the home. In short, they were to permeate every sphere of human life” (Christensen, 1991, p. 144).

Biblical Israel was an agrarian society. Even those who lived in cities had farmland, flocks, and herds to care for. Children, at a young age worked with their parents in family business endeavors. Parents were therefore in an opportune position to teach their children spiritual realities on a consistent basis.

Reference to the parents serving as the primary educators of children appears later in the biblical record. As the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to enter Canaan, the Lord gave Joshua the following command:

Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight. (Josh 4:2-3)

We see later that the purpose of this activity was educative:

And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God. (Josh 4:20-24)
When the children would ask about these stones, the parents would be able to tell the ancient stories of God’s deliverance and power.

As in the case of Deut 4, the spiritual education was given in the context of the family. The fathers would be the ones explaining the stories of God’s miraculous activities on behalf of Israel. As Isaiah states, “Fathers tell their children about your faithfulness” (Isa 38:19). The fathers are the ones who teach their children about the Lord.

Throughout Proverbs, there is repeated appeal for sons to listen to the words of counsel. “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov 1:8). “My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart” (Prov 3:1). “Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding” (Prov 4:1). In the metaphorical phraseology of Proverbs, the actual father is not the one usually speaking. Rather, it is often this concept called “Wisdom” (Prov 1:20). However, the student is constantly referred to as “my son,” showing that the teaching is taking place in a familial situation where Wisdom speaks in the place of a parent.

A result of parents not following God’s command to teach their children God’s laws is found in Judg 10:15:

After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress.
Gross apostasy took place because the parents were not sharing the stories of God’s faithfulness and the Israelites responsibility to follow him.

The story of Judges can be repeated over and over again as parents refuse to make the effort of educating and nurturing their children in spiritual values. A common phrase among Christian circles is this: “The church is one generation from extinction.” The story of Judges illustrates the veracity of this statement. It should encourage Christian parents to fulfill their responsibility of educating their children to follow the Lord.

The New Testament carries on the assumption that the spiritual education of children will be given within families: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). While the actual educational method is not specified by the words in this text, it is still clear that the father was to lead the children to a relationship with the Lord (Selter, 1979, 1:569).

The Bible does give reference to non-parental teachers. Levites were teachers in Israel (2 Chr 17:9). In another place, the king of Assyria ordered an exiled priest to be sent back to Samaria to teach the people how to worship the Lord (2 Kgs 17:27-28). The book of Acts speaks of Paul and Barnabas teaching the people (Acts 15:35). However, these passages do not deal specifically with the education of children.

There is one reference to a non-parental teacher educating children when the future glory of Zion and God’s people is delineated. “All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children’s peace” (Isa 54:13). While the theme of
God being our father is prolific in the New Testament, there are only adumbrated or obscure references to God as father in the Old Testament (Moule, 1962, 2:432). Isa 54:13 may be an illustration of this with God being the parental teacher of the children.

**The Role of Parents in Incarnational Youth Ministry**

The incarnation refers to the theological belief that the second person of the Godhead came down from heaven, taking on human form as Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout His ministry, He interacted with human beings, feeling their hunger, their tiredness, their joys, and their pains. Through the incarnation, Jesus was able to reveal the Father to his followers. Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 16:9). Jesus also told his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). As God the father sent Jesus to reveal Himself, so is Jesus sending His followers to reveal Himself. Paul reminds us: “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20). We are to represent Jesus in our contexts as he did in his.

In discussing incarnational youth ministry, Ward and Borgman (2000) uses the term “Relational Outreach” (p. 54). He says there are five stages for the relational model: contact, extended contact, proclamation, nurture, and church (pp. 55-76). While he is writing to youth workers, the principles are also applicable to Christian parents. Who else has as much contact, nurture, and influence leading to church fellowship as parents? What he says to youth workers also applies to parents, “The important thing, however, is that these extended contact activities always build into the life of the nucleus group and do not develop a life of their own”
(p. 78). Parents should not stay close to their children only for the purpose of staying close. Rather, they stay in close contact with their children so that their children will grow up to be followers of God who are obedient to his ways.

The last verses of the Old Testament are significant in this discussion. Mal 4:5-6 states,

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

It is imperative that fathers and children come to unity and cohesion. In the New Testament, when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to announce the impending birth of John the Baptist, he said,

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:17)

It is intriguing that Gabriel only quotes Malachi’s words partially. Instead of mentioning turning “the hearts of the fathers to their children” and “the hearts of the children to their fathers,” he only refers to “the hearts of the fathers.” It could well be that Gabriel leaves the part of “the hearts of the children” unsaid because it is rarely the case that the children are drawn to the fathers unless the fathers are first drawn to their children. Just as God took the initiative to seek Adam and Eve out when they sinned (Gen 3:8-9), so parents are to take the initiative to seek their children out. As parents demonstrate heart connection with their children, their children are enabled to respond with heart connection with them and with God.

The demonstration of Christian parents’ dependence on God also becomes an opportunity for the children to see Jesus, the son of God. As Jesus prayed,
My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)

**Absent Fathers**

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for a father to be unable or unwilling to fulfill his task of spiritually educating his children. Some of the common reasons for this are death, divorce, abandonment, apathy, or a lack of faith. In these situations, the mother and/or a mentor can fill the role of leading children to an understanding of and faith in God.

While fathers are specifically mentioned to be being the spiritual educators of children, mothers are also cast into a similar role. The fifth commandment says “Honor your father and your mother.” Ex 20:12. Both the father and mother are to be in the honored position in the family. In Prov 23:22 we have these informative words, “Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.” In the genre of ancient proverbs, this text insinuates that both the mother and father should be listened to; and both the mother and father should not be despised. Therefore, both the mother and the father are to serve in a teaching role.

Timothy, the young protégé of the Apostle Paul is an example of one who came to faith without the spiritual influence of a father. Paul “came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek” Acts 16:1. Here was a young man in a spiritually split family where the mother was Jewish Christian and yet his father is described as a Greek insinuating that he was an unbeliever. Timothy had come to be a believer due to the spiritual influence of those other than his father. In a letter addressed to him, Paul states,
“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” 2 Tim 1:5. Timothy become a believer through the influence of both his mother and grandmother as opposed to his father.

It is also possible for children to receive compensatory spiritual nurture in the absence of a father through mentors. There are two examples that illustrate this: Elijah/Elisha and Paul/Timothy.

After God instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha to serve as his successor, Elijah began to serve as a mentor to the younger man. Later, as Elijah was being taken up to heaven in the whirlwind, Elisha cries out, “My father, my father!” 2 Kgs 2:12. This title reveals Elisha’s observation of Elijah as serving as a father-teacher-mentor.

In referencing Timothy, the Apostle Paul states to the Corinthian church,

For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. 1 Cor 4:17.

And to Timothy he states, “Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight” 1 Tim 1:18. Thus, Paul was clearly serving in a father-teacher-mentor role as he taught Timothy the important aspects of church leadership.

The Role of the Church in Family-Based Youth Ministry

If spiritual nurturing of mid-adolescent young people is the primary responsibility of parents, what is the role of the church in this process? It will be demonstrated that the church’s role is that of support and encouragement to the families.
When Israel forsook the Lord in Judges, God allowed them to be overwhelmed by the surrounding nations. But when they called to the Lord, He would send them judges.

Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. (Judg 2:18)

However, “when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them” (Judg 2:19). Their spiritual faithfulness was dependent upon living spiritual leaders.

Later, throughout the Old Testament history of Israel, God would send kings and prophets, along with disasters to lead the people back to the worship of the true God. Their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to God was continually based upon the presence of spiritual or unspiritual leaders.

In the New Testament, the need for spiritual leaders continues to be emphasized. A key passage is found in Eph 4:11-12,

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

These spiritual leaders would be needed “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). As people follow these God-ordained leaders, they enjoy this result:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and
held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph 4:14-16)

The strength of the people is directly correlated to the leaders God has given to the church.

We use the term “ministers” to refer to those who are in leadership positions in the church. There are many titles given to the various ministers of the church,

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

But, they can all be referred as “ministers.”

While “ministers” are those who lead the church to be faithful to God’s commands, the “ministry” is the activity done by either the leaders or the regular members of the church. According to Eph 4:11-13 above, the “works of service” God’s people are prepared to accomplish is the “ministry” of the church. It is appropriate to list various ministries of the church, such as: Sabbath school ministry, which is a teaching ministry; evangelistic ministry, which is an activity that reaches out inviting others to join the church; and youth ministry, which is an activity of nurturing and enabling young people to become disciples of Jesus.

Ministers serve as pastoral nurturers, helping others experience the love and care of God through them. They also serve as teachers, reminding the people of their responsibilities based upon God’s commandments. While the Bible clearly teaches that the primary location for faith development ministry of youth in our current earth-bound environment takes place within families, ministers have the
opportunity of assisting and encouraging parents with their most important job of educating their children to follow God.

**Practical Theology of Family-Based Youth Ministry**

Dean defines practical theology as “theological reflection on Christian action” (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001, p. 31). In practice, theological reflection affects Christian action. Having determined the biblical teaching regarding family-based youth ministry, we now must ask how that knowledge will affect the way we minister to youth. If youth ministry is primarily to be based in the family, with the parents as the primary teachers, what impact does this have on the church’s youth programs and the church’s educational institutions?

Dudley (2000, p. 79) notes three factors leading to the retention of youth in the church. These are similar to a three-legged stool. All three are needed: parents, Adventist education, and church. While the parent leg is the most important and influential, the other legs are also important. The concept of family-based youth ministry is a reminder that Adventist education and churches need to partner with parents in the common goal of leading youth toward Christian maturity.

DeVries (2004, p. 178-179) applied this understanding by totally revamping the youth ministry in his church. He developed such things as a parent/youth Sunday school class, parent/youth retreats, and parent-equipping classes. Burns and DeVries (2003) have given specific suggestions for implementing family-based youth ministry programs, while reminding us that “partnering with parents is a mind-set, not a program” (p. 14).
While it is a concept that needs to be implemented for the good of the church, not every application of family-based youth ministry found in the literature is appropriate for every situation. DeVries cautions, “The key is to create only what can be executed well, evaluated, and revised” (Dunn & Senter, 1997, p. 498). Families and church leaders should use what works for their given situation.

While practical resources for family-based youth ministry may be difficult to find, each youth group, church, and conference must apply the principles of family-based youth ministry to their own context. However, there are some general applications that seem to be requisites:

**Acknowledge Parental Influence**

The influence parents have upon the youth must be acknowledged and accepted. Far too many parents blame teachers and youth leaders for the wayward behavior of their children. And far too many teachers and youth leaders take the credit for the positive choices of the teenagers under their care. Parents are the most influential figures in the spiritual development of youth. Acknowledging this reality sets the stage for proactive adjustments in youth ministry. While youth ministry must reach the youth, youth ministry must also realize that youth are best reached through their parents.

While it is important for church youth ministries to keep the lines of communication open with the parents, parents should also be part of the planning process. They should have a say in the times, locations, and activities of youth events. Their counsel should be sought as problems are addressed and avoided. This
does not take away from youth ministry programming, but it taps into a resource that is needed if success is to be achieved. Burns and DeVries (2003) noted,

You will still have camps, mission experiences, Bible studies, outreach events, prayer times and all the other things you normally have; however, you will do each program with the overarching knowledge that your students are deeply connected with and affected by their family system. (p. 41)

Acknowledging parental influence improves the regular programming for the church’s youth ministry. Family-based youth ministry moves away from the “child-care” model of youth ministry to a more integrated model, where youth are seen as members of family groups and those same family groups are seen as resources to best serve the youth.

**Youth Ministry Is Family Ministry**

Successful youth ministry must work with entire family systems. It is a priority that youth workers get acquainted with entire families if they are to successfully minister to the teenagers under their care. As Burns and DeVries (2003) stated, “Part of the responsibility of a youth worker is to reach students by strengthening families to *impress* the Word of God into their hearts and minds” (p. 15). This can better be done through families than without.

An activity done within families that increase spiritual maturity in their young people is the practice of family worships. Lee, Rice and Gillespie (1997) share some of the positive benefits of family worship:

Social Cognitive Learning Theory (Bandura 1986) suggests that youth learn through modeling behaviors. During family worship, parents may model prayer and witnessing, and through storytelling or narratives of their own religious experience symbolically model behavior consistent with their religious belief. Bandura suggests
that actual or symbolically modeled behavior is more likely to be learned when it is repeated, when modeled by multiple sources (e.g., both parents), when attention is high, and when the target of the modeling (in this case, the youth) engages in reproductions of the modeled behavior. Thus, if both parents are involved in frequent family worship, if a youth is actively involved in the worship process, themselves reading devotional material, praying, and talking about their own faith, then we might expect that their attention would be more engaged and that they would reproduce at least some behavior modeled by their parents.

Lee, Rice & Gillespie (1997) go on to share that results from the Valuegenesis Project in 1989 in which 16,614 Seventh-day Adventist youth in grades six to twelve were surveyed confirms their expectations. “The data show that worship patterns in which worship occurs frequently and in which youth are actively involved in worship are associated with positive youth outcomes.” Therefore, the church should make a point in encouraging and teaching families the practice of having worship in the family setting.

Even marriage strengthening is important for the spiritual growth of teenagers. Dudley (2000) says,

Having parents who are still together is the best insurance that a young person will not drop out of the church. When this is combined with family worship, we can see that strong Christian families are key to retention of our youth. (p. 91)

If youth workers want to strengthen the spiritual relationship their mid-adolescents have with God, they should do what they can to improve the marriages of the mid-adolescents’ parents.

That which strengthens the family strengthens the church. As Freudenbug & Lawrence (1998) state,

The church must be ready to train and support parents and the home to be the primary nurturers of kids’ faith. It needs to be less concerned about building good churches and more concerned about empowering parents to build good families. (p. 74)
As parents are empowered to build good families, the church’s long-term strength is assured.

**Personal Journey**

My journey toward an acceptance of family-based youth ministry as a primary model of youth ministry is based on my experience of ministering to smaller and medium-sized churches for 14 years of my ministry. The first three churches had starting memberships of 70, 250, and 350. These churches were not large enough to support a paid youth minister and the youth groups were not large enough to promote age exclusivity. What could be done was mostly done with the entire families of the youth: parents, older and younger siblings as well as other church members. I gained an appreciation for the assistance parents could have on a successful youth program.

Even as I have served in larger churches as associate pastor with primary responsibilities for youth and children ministries for another 14 years, I have again seen the practical value of involving families with youth ministry. For instance, often parents will attend our Sabbath School class for high school youth. Their participation improves the successful sharing of biblical truths and the fellowship of the class members.

For the past 14 years, I have been working in a smaller conference with a membership of around 6,000. While the total high school population in the conference is around 450, many of these youth live in remote areas; others come from families that are not active with their churches. On any given Sabbath morning, individual churches in our conference will have no more than 15 or 20 youth.
attending. Most times, the numbers are below five or 10. I have noticed that the churches in my conference with successful youth programs integrate the parents.

As a parent who has also been a pastor, I have had the opportunity to participate with my sons as they have gone through their teen years. I have been their Sabbath school teacher, Pathfinder counselor, and mission trip coordinator. These shared experiences have helped bond us emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Rather than depreciating the value of their church-sponsored events, my participation has helped these events to have a greater positive influence upon my sons’ lives. Therefore, I can understand first-hand the influence parents have in the church’s ministry to their teenagers.

I have come to see that family-based youth ministry is more than a program. It is a mandate for the church to encourage and implement.

**Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has examined my theological basis of family-based youth ministry. Family-based youth ministry is a relatively new method of youth ministry in today’s Christian churches. However, anciently, religious education was to take place within families with the parents serving as the teachers. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, current research supports the continuing veracity of such an approach.

I have offered two applications to guide youth leaders, churches, and conferences as they seek to implement family-based youth ministry: (a) acknowledge parental influence; and, (b) youth ministry is family ministry. I have
also shared how my experience in youth ministry over the past thirty years has led me to promote the benefits of family-based youth ministry.

Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Earlier, Jesus had commanded,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matt 28:18-20)

The youth in our churches are certainly part of the “ends of the earth” and “all nations” we are to reach for the Lord. The church has a mandate to bring the youth into a faith relationship with God through all possible means, including the family-based model of youth ministry.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE CONTRIBUTING TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF

FAMILY-BASED YOUTH MINISTRY

Family-Based Youth Ministry

The term “family-based youth ministry” was popularized by Mark DeVries with his 1994 book, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*. Having grown weary of “traditional” youth ministry, in which the youth are segregated from the adults, and youth programs are planned without any attempts to correlate their faith development with their families, DeVries came up with what he believed to be a better plan. He integrated the teenagers’ families into his youth ministry. As he states, “Youth ministries that hope to have a lasting impact with young people can no longer afford to ignore the incomparable power of the family in faith formation” (Dunn & Senter, 1997, p. 488). Family-based youth ministry, as DeVries envisions it, is built on families and works through their families. (Dunn & Senter, 1997, p. 480).

A distinction has been made between “family ministry” and “youth ministry,” with a question of where “family-based youth ministry” fits into it. DeVries sees “family ministry” as a desire to empower families. Whereas, he sees “youth ministry” as “a desire to see young people grow to maturity in Christ” (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001, pp. 150-151). He goes on to state, “In the family ministry model, the focus is on supporting parents and families with classes, counseling, and support; while in the youth ministry model, the priority shifts to building an
intergenerational faith-nurturing community for the teenagers” (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001, p. 151). He acknowledges that his family-based youth ministry model leans more toward the youth ministry model, although it is very close to the family ministry model (151). While family-based youth ministry is youth ministry, it is youth ministry with a family component.

Other authors have acknowledged the family-based youth ministry model. Mark Senter lists various models of youth ministry, of which the family-based model is one of nine (Dunn & Senter, 1997, pp. 163-214). Burns & DeVries (2002) state, After our combined 40-plus years of youth ministry experience we must admit that many of the students who were the strongest and most vibrant in their faith were nurtured and mentored not by the youth ministry, but by their families. (pp. 73-74)

While family-based youth ministry is one of many options, it is an important option for youth ministry to be successful.

There are many recommendations on how to make family-based youth ministry work (DeVries, 1994; Burns & DeVries, 2003), however, it is not apparent in the literature that many are whole-heartedly accepting the family-based youth ministry model as their primary model of youth ministry.

**Theories of Mid-Adolescent Development**

There have been several works observing the development of children in general and mid-adolescence in particular. One of the first was Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget who studied cognitive development (Dudley, 2007, p. 35). Up to the age of about 10 years of age, he believed children “remained in the state of heteronomous morality, or the ‘morality of constraint’” (Dudley, 2007, p. 37). The thinking at this stage is very rule-based and everything is either right or wrong.
After the age of around 11 years of age, he believed children entered “the stage of autonomous morality, or ‘reciprocity’” (Dudley, 2007, p. 39). Children begin to analyze the reasons for rules and see there are behaviors which may not simply be right or wrong. Rather than simply accepting their parents’ views of morality, they begin to develop their own views at this stage.

Lawrence Kohlberg, expanding on Piaget’s work, proposed three levels of moral development:

A *preconventional level*, in which control of conduct is external both as to the standards themselves and as to the motivation for obeying them; a *conventional level*, in which control of conduct is external as to the standards set by others, but motivation is largely internal, as children or youth police themselves in the same way as parents or significant others would; and a *postconventional level*, in which the control of conduct is internal, for the standards flow from an enlightened conscience, and the motivation to acts is based upon as inner process of thought and judgment. (Dudley, 2007, p. 43)

According to Kohlberg’s theories, most teenagers and adults reside in the conventional level. Of significance to parents relating to mid-adolescents is that no longer are the children living by strict obedience to their parents’ standards, but they are beginning to police themselves.

James Fowler has expanded on Piaget’s and Kohleberg’s works and has proposed six stages of faith development (Fowler, 1981). His stages 3 and 4 relate particularly to mid-adolescence. In stage 3, “Adolescents begin to internalize the ideas and expectations of others and use them to construct their own value systems” (Dudley, 2007, p. 52). As they begin to transition to stage 4, “Adolescents begin to notice contradictions and inconsistencies in the actions and ideas of the important people in their lives” (Dudley, 2007, p. 53). In Fowler’s stage 4, that typically comprises later mid-adolescence and early late-adolescence, “young people not
only have learned how to evaluate the various influences on their lives, but take responsibility for their own commitments” (Dudley, 2007, p. 53). Thus, mid-adolescents are questioning their parents’ values and developing their own standards of beliefs and standards of behaviors.

Bailey Gillespie has suggested seven situations for faith development (Gillespie, 1998):

1. Borrowed Faith: Early Childhood
2. Reflected Faith: Middle Childhood
3. Personalized Faith: Early Adolescence
4. Established Faith: Later Youth
5. Reordered Faith: Young Adulthood
6. Reflective Faith: Middle Adulthood
7. Resolute Faith: Older Adulthood

His personalized faith situation relates most specifically to the mid-adolescent period. “Adolescents have begun to discover that they are finally their own person. At last, they can decide their fate and future” (Gillespie, 1998, p. 126). In this situation,

Youth will begin to make their faith personal. It involves reflection, critical evaluation, and perhaps rejection of some aspects of childhood faith. Building upon the new ability to abstract, investigate, and place one’s self in the viewpoints of others, independent thinking develops, something that emotionally involved adults may regard as rebellion. (Dudley, 2007, p. 55)

The view that mid-adolescents are expressing rebellion is probably a typical opinion of many parents. Because their mid-adolescent children no longer accept whole-heartedly the beliefs and practices of their parents, many parents believe
they no longer have any significant influence upon their children. However, what parents of mid-adolescents would do well to realize is that while their children are experimenting with and developing their own spiritual value system, the parents continue to have a significant influence upon them. This will be demonstrated from studies delineated in the next section.

**Parental Influence**

When compared to church, school, media or peers, it evident that parents have the greatest influence on their children regarding religious views and practices. Gane (2004) found that “children for the most part adopt the beliefs and values of their parents” (p. 26). Jones’ research of parental impact upon youth ministry has led her to the following opinion: “Regardless of popular opinion, parents remain the single most influential person in the lives of teenagers” (Strommen, Jones, & Rahn, 2001, p. 217). Similar observations are expressed in other sources:

Dudley (2000), in his research of 1,500 Seventh-day Adventist youth over a ten-year period believes the three most important factors in the retention of youth for the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the home, Adventist education, and the church (p. 79). He also observed from other research that “parental religiosity significantly predicted the religiosity of the youth” (p. 119).

Smith & Denton (2005), in reporting on the National Study of Youth and Religion, state:

For better or worse, most parents in fact still do profoundly influence their adolescents—often more than do their peers—their children’s apparent resistance and lack of appreciation notwithstanding. This influence often also includes parental
influence in adolescents’ religious and spiritual lives. Simply by living and interacting with their children, most parents establish expectations, define normalcy, model life practices, set boundaries, and make demands—all of which cannot help but influence teenagers, for good or ill. Most teenagers and their parents may not realize it, but a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggest that the most important social influence in shaping young people’s religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents. (p. 56)

They have also discovered a correlation between the religiosity of the parents and the religiosity of the mid-adolescents:

Parents for whom religious faith is quite important are thus likely to be raising teenagers for whom faith is quite important, while parents whose faith is not important are likely to be raising teenagers for whom faith is also not important. (p. 57)

Thus, researchers demonstrate that parental influence is enormous for the transference of spiritual values and practices in the lives of their children. In fact, parental influence is by far greater than any other influence.

In a similar vein, authors who have written on this subject from the perspective not of research but of their own pastoral observation insist on the value of parental influence upon spiritual formation.

Freudenberg & Lawrence (1998) state,

Parents are the primary Christian educators in the church, and the family is the God-ordained institution for faith-building in children and youth and for the passing of faith from one generation to the next. (p. 21)

Holmen (2007) states,

I can tell you that no matter how good a Sunday School or youth program is, if children don’t see godly living modeled and hear issues of values and faith discussed in the home, any faith they gain at church probably will not stick when they grow older. (p. 24)

This observation was also noted by White (1913), who wrote about family-based education:
In His wisdom the Lord has decreed that the family shall be the greatest of all educational agencies. It is in the home that the education of the child is to begin. Here is his first school. Here, with his parents as instructors, he is to learn the lessons that are to guide him throughout life—lessons of respect, obedience, reverence, self-control. The educational influences of the home are a decided power for good or for evil. They are in many respects silent and gradual, but if exerted on the right side, they become a far-reaching power for truth and righteousness. (p. 107)

The above was first published when many American families lived in an agrarian society, although not to the extent as in biblical times. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had an established educational system from elementary through the college level. White was writing to Seventh-day Adventists parents who were sending their children to school during the day. So, while the parents would not be with their children 100% of their time as in Bible times, their influence upon them was still considered formative. In discussing the cooperation between the school and the home, White (1903) states:

In the formation of character, no other influences count so much as the influence of the home. The teacher’s work should supplement that of the parents, but is not to take its place. In all that concerns the well-being of the child, it should be the effort of parents and teachers to co-operate. (p. 283)

Modern researchers are studying youth with little agrarian influence, whose parents often both work outside the home and where the teenagers are involved with school, sporting events, and work. The parents continue to have the greatest influence upon the lives of their children, far more than their teachers, coaches, and other adults outside the home (Burns & DeVries, p. 16). The Bible’s teaching of parents educating their children to obey the Lord continues to be the most effective method even in our modern society. While many models of youth ministry may be followed, the value of family-based youth ministry must never be forgotten.
While many parents expect spiritual training to come from Adventist education or from the church’s youth programs, these avenues compete poorly with the spiritual influence of the parents. If positive spiritual influence is lacking in the parents, it is rare for adolescents to pick lifestyles different than demonstrated to them in their families. Parents should be educated regarding the unusually strong cause and affect their spiritual attitudes and practices have upon their children.

**The Role of the Church in Assisting Parents**

Because of this demonstrated influence parents have upon their children, the church should assist parents in this task. The end result of parents helping mid-adolescents grow up committed to the Christian faith and remaining active in their churches is defined by Barna (2007) as “spiritual champions”. He says,

Parents who raised spiritual champions certainly placed a high premium on the spiritual development of their children. But the fascinating distinctive is that they saw themselves as the primary spiritual developers of their young ones. The role of the church to which they belonged—whether it was a conventional congregation, a house church, or some other alternative community of faith—was to reinforce what was happening in the household. (Barna, 2007, p. 56)

A church’s youth ministry can choose to counteract the influences of the families of origin with meager positive results, or it can choose to work with the families of origin. This can be done by supporting what is positive while working with the parents to change what needs to be improved.

Parents should be apprised of the feelings of isolation and loneliness their mid-adolescents are experiencing, Clark & Clark (2007) note, “Even when they come from great families and homes where parents work hard to try to understand their children, today’s teenagers believe that life is hard, antagonistic, and dismissively
impersonal” (p. 35). Parents should be educated on how to instill faith and inner security in their teenagers,

However, many parents of mid-adolescents do not understand the loneliness their children are going through because they themselves going through major life adjustments. Strommen & Strommen (1985) have observed this in their research:

Both parent and adolescent are simultaneously in unique cycles of growth and change—children in adolescence, and the parents in what some psychologists call ‘middlescence,’ the years between thirty-five and fifty. Gail Sheehy writes that wives past the age of thirty-five often experience a movement toward more independence. During these same years, according to Eda LeShan, the husband may become more aware of unfulfilled aspirations, mistaken decisions and choices, things left undone. He may realize that there will be no ‘big time’ in his career. Hence this period of married life is ripe for anxiety, impatience, and misunderstanding. (p. 3)

The church, then should assist these parents to face and work through their own life changes, so that they will then be better able to assist their mid-adolescents.

The church should encourage parents to maintain positive relationships with their mid-adolescents as a means of providing spiritual nurture. There are three specific behaviors of parents that will make a difference: “(1) parents themselves are committed; (2) parents intentionally transmit their values to their children; and (3) parent-child relationships are positive” (Dudley, 2000, p. 22-23). Similarly, Smith & Denton (2005) state:

Teens who say that their parents love, accept, and understand them are also more likely to have faith be important in their daily lives and to be part of a religious youth group. And teens whose parents monitor their lives more closely are also more likely to score higher on service attendance and importance of faith. (p. 108)

These suggestions of positive parental interactions with the teenagers are really quite straight-forward and simple. As youth workers guide parents in better ways to relate to their mid-adolescent children, long-term positive results should be noticed.
It cannot be overemphasized that parents have the greatest spiritual influence upon their children of any program or other people. The research reported by Smith & Denton (2005) reveals this:

Parents of teenagers appear to play an important role in the character of their children’s religious lives. In the immediacy of parenting teenagers, parents may feel a loss of control and influence over their teens, but nationally representative statistics show that the religious practices and commitments of parents remain an important influence on the religious practices and commitments of their teenage children . . . Furthermore, the quality of relationships that parents build with their teenagers and their own choices about marriage relationships, education, and occupations—insofar as they have choices in these areas—also create family contexts that again form the outcome of their teenagers’ religious and spiritual lives. (pp. 115-116)

As the church supports and educates the parents regarding their influential role in the spiritual formation of their children, it is hoped that these parents will make adjustments in their own lives. These positive adjustments will then demonstrate to the mid-adolescents how they ought to live as they grow into spiritual maturity.

**How the Church Can Support Family-Based Youth Ministry**

There is a limited amount of literature giving recommendations on how the church can support family-based youth ministry (Burns & DeVries, 2001, pp. 72-84; Burns & DeVries, 2003; Cornforth, 1995; Dean, Clark & Rahn, 2001, pp. 141-154; DeVries, 1994; DeVries, 2004; Dunn & Senter, 1997, pp. 194-199; Fields, 1998, pp. 251-268). Of this, Fields (1998) says, “The youth ministry world has been quick to challenge us to change our focus from *youth ministry* to *ministry of youth and their families*, but it has been slow to show us the practical side of this new paradigm” (p. 251).
DeVries (2004) suggests that church youth ministries develop programming to encourage family-based youth ministry in two ways: (a) start completely new, family based events, such as parent/youth Sunday school class, parent/youth retreats, and parenting-equipping classes; and (b) operate what he calls “exfamized” events. This is “the process of taking a program already in place and infusing that program with an extended Christian family of adults” (p. 179). An illustration of this would include taking the regularly operated senior dinner and inviting the parents of the graduates to attend.

Burns & DeVries (2003) is an entire book on ideas of how parents and youth ministry leaders can partner together. Suggestions include: parent meetings, parent retreats, offering family devotional resources, and offering parent seminars. Earlier, the same authors (Burns & DeVries, 2001, pp. 77-84) offered three recommendations: (a) youth leaders should met with every family in their youth ministry on a regular basis, (b) teens should be taught to improve their attitude toward their parents and take some initiative in increasing parent/teen communication and interaction, and (c) youth leaders should make it a priority to be role models in how they live with their own families.

Cornforth (1995) gives 60 ideas of events and activities that churches can offer that foster cooperation and participation between families and the churches’ youth ministries. These ideas are more specific suggestions of events suggested by other authors.

Fields (1998, pp. 251-268) offers seven suggestions:
1. The church’s youth ministry should create a teamwork mentality. It would do this by developing relationships with parents, being sensitive to family priorities, and support parents in their own spiritual teaching of their youth people.

2. The church should keep communication clear with the parents.

3. The church should find and share family resources with the parents.

4. The church should facilitate events that will help families learn how to do better.

5. The church should design family programs.

6. The church should add parents to their volunteer youth ministry team.

7. The church should offer parents a spiritual life plan.

He says, “The primary purpose of a spiritual life plan is to determine how parents and ministry can work as a team to encourage the teenager’s spiritual life” (p. 267).

More materials and creative ideas are needed to assist the church in its task of promoting family-based youth ministries. The suggestions given by the above mentioned sources serve as a beginning for successful support of this ministry.

**Conclusion**

The literature on the subject of family-based youth ministry supports the parents’ responsibility and ability in sharing religious and spiritual practices in the lives of their mid-adolescents. While this responsibility largely falls upon the parents, the church can play a role in encouraging and assisting the parents in their task.

While the literature highlights the influence of the parents in the religious choices made by their children, little has been written regarding utilizing the family-
based youth ministry model as a compensation for the lack of Adventist education in the lives of most of the Adventist mid-adolescents in North America.
CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT DEVELOPED TO PROMOTE FAMILY-BASED
YOUTH MINISTRY FOR ADVENTIST PUBLIC HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE IDAHO
CONFERENCE

Introduction

This chapter will give a report on the project developed to promote a family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference. The background of the need for the study and how the idea to meet the need will be presented. The selection process of the participants and materials for the study will be explained. The survey process will be presented along with an analysis of the survey results.

Idea

In 2007, I heard that only one quarter of all Adventist high school students attend Adventist schools in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. I wondered if the Idaho Conference numbers were similar or different. After accessing the membership data, which includes both baptized and unbaptized members of the Adventist households in the conference; and after conducting a census of which schools those of high school age were attending, I found that 27% of Idaho Conference high school students were attending Adventist schools during the school year of 2006-2007. The total number of high school students at that time was 460, with 126 in Adventist schools in Idaho, Montana, and Washington. Because of
the findings of Dudley (2000, p. 79) indicating that a greater number of young adults stay in the Adventist church if they had experienced Adventist education in high school, I sought to develop a program to assist the 334 students who were not receiving an Adventist education.

In 1980, I took a missions class at the seminary in which there was a discussion of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church has adapted to the lack of Adventist education in countries where the Adventist educational system was nonexistent. In those places, the church often employs “compensatory education” as a means of educating its youth in spiritual values as well as keeping them in the church. They would utilize night classes at the church or in the members’ homes and strategically teach their young people about the Bible and the Seventh-day Adventist Church doctrine. Even though their children were not able to receive the benefits of Adventist education at their schools, they were still exposed to Adventist culture and doctrines.

It is common in the Western United States for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to operate seminary buildings near public high schools. They have arranged for their students to have leave time during school hours to attend classes at the seminary regarding their church’s beliefs, practices, and history. In this way, they compensate for these things not being taught in the public high school curriculum.

Thus, was born the idea of providing materials to parents of Adventist public school students to see if we can compensate for their lack of Adventist education. Perhaps a greater number of Adventist young adults would remain active in the
church if their parents worked through a spiritual curriculum that they were missing because they were attending public school.

**Choosing the Materials**

In choosing the materials to distribute to the Adventist public school families, I decided to select recently published books. That way, the style of writing and the illustrations would be up-to-date and more likely to capture the interest of the students in the study. Second, I limited the number to four books so that the program would not be too overwhelming for families who were not used to studying religious books in the home setting. Also, since most high schools operate on the semester system which has four quarters in the school year, there would be a book to study for each quarter. I also decided it would be helpful to pick four different types of books. It would make it possible to compare which type of material would be more helpful for the purpose of spiritually nurturing high school students.

Following are the books that were chosen:

The first book was Dudley, R. (2007). *The Complex Religion of Teens*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald. This book was the result of a lifetime of experience and research on youth ministry issues by a recently retired professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. In it, the author explains the various theories of adolescent development and gives suggestions on how best to relate to mid-adolescents.

This book was chosen because of my belief that parents could do a better job of relating to mid-adolescents if they came to understand their culture and the developmental process. While this book would probably appeal mostly to parents,
there might be some older mid-adolescents who would be interested in and benefit from the material presented.

The second book was Pierce, S. J. (2007). *What We Believe for Teens*, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press. The author is a young pastor who has spent much of his ministry working and communicating with mid-adolescents. A doctrinal book, it goes through the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a way that is both entertaining and informative for teenagers.

Often, the study of Bible doctrines can be perceived as being boring and separated from the issues modern mid-adolescents are facing. However, this author has a way of explaining Adventist beliefs so that students will listen and appreciate them. Also, my perception is that many parents equate Bible study and spiritual nurture with the study of Bible doctrines. Therefore, I wanted to have them read this book to see if the parents and students viewed it as helpful or not.

The third book was Robbins, M., & Robbins, D. (2005). *Enjoy the Silence: A 30-Day Experiment in Listening to God*, El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties. Written by a husband and wife team that has spent over 30 years in youth ministry, it is a devotional book. It follows the ancient Bible study method of *lectio divina*, which is a Latin term literally meaning “divine reading” or “spiritual reading.” Each chapter gives a passage of scripture and the devotee (that is, the one going through the devotion) reads the passage several times and allows the words to sink into the mind. Then, a series of questions follow, guiding the devotee into applying the passage to his or her life while listening to the words of God.
As stated earlier, my perception is that many parents equate Bible study and spiritual nurture with the study of Bible doctrines. However, I believe that is just one of many ways to study the Bible. Therefore, I chose this book as a way of introducing the parents and students to a method of Bible study that directly asks the worshipper to apply spiritual truths and directives to his or her life. I wanted the parents and students to personally experience the truth of Heb 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

The last book was Tyner, S., & Gillespie, V. B. (1996). *Walking on the Edge: Thirteen Interactive Bible Studies for Adventist Students in Public High School*, Riverside, CA: Hancock Center Publications. This is a practical Bible study guide that deals with issues an Adventist mid-adolescent faces in public high school. It deals with such issues as Sabbath observance, witnessing for one’s faith, evolution, and other dominant lifestyle practices that are different than is promoted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While this book would most likely be of interest to the students, some parents may be interested in going through the exercises as well.

Although this book is nearly ten years older than the other materials, it seemed good to use it because it directly deals with issues faced by Adventist students in public high schools. I was also curious to see how this type of book would be perceived by current Adventist public high school students as compared to the other types of books.
Choosing the Participants for the Study

In August 2008, there was a total of 516 young people in the Idaho Conference data files who were born between January 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994. Their ages at that time were between 14 and 18 years of age, the most common ages of high school students. Not all of those at the younger edge of the spectrum were yet in high school, and not all of those in the older edge of the spectrum were still in high school. Therefore, I turned to the pastors to assist me in finding those families that were qualified to be part of the study. The 516 were in the data files of 42 of the 48 established churches in the conference.

I sent a letter to the 23 pastors and three lay leaders representing these 42 churches, along with printouts of the young people represented in their church records. I explained the program to be explored of providing materials to families of Adventist public high school students. I asked them to look over the lists and mark those names which fulfilled these two qualifications for participation in the project: (a) the student will be attending public school over the 2008-2009 school year, (b) the student and their parent(s) would be open—in the pastor’s opinion—to be part of the study project. Twenty pastors and lay leaders responded with recommendations for 82 public high school students.

On August 27, 2008, I sent 73 letters of invitation to the 123 parents of the 82 public high school students. Over the course of the next several weeks, I received 30 positive responses from 50 parents of 33 public high school students. However, over the course of the school year, I disqualified six students, along with eight parents from the study because five of the students began to attend Gem State Adventist
Academy and one student was found to be in the eighth grade. The final number of those remaining qualified for this study over the course of the school year was 27 students along with 40 parents.

The Distribution of the Materials

The participants of the study were widely scattered throughout the Idaho Conference: from Northeastern Oregon to Eastern Idaho. Therefore, one packet was mailed to each of the study households. Besides the four books, I also included the Project Abstract (Appendix A); a letter of introduction, along with some suggestions and instructions (Appendix B); and a business card, giving them my contact information in the event they desired to contact me.

Communication With the Participants During the Project Period

I was concerned that it might be difficult for many families stay on task over the course of the nine months between the distribution of the materials and the request for them to fill out the surveys. While I had originally planned on meeting with groups of families in various parts of the conference over the project period, the fact of a change in my ministerial duties from an associate pastor at a local church to the Bible teacher at Gem State Adventist Academy made it impossible. Therefore, communication was limited to four pairs of newsletters (Appendix C). The newsletters for the parents were slightly different than the newsletters I sent to the students. In the newsletters, I gave fuller introductions of the materials as well as encouragement to continue with the process. In the parent newsletters, I gave information and recommendations on how to relate to their mid-adolescent. In the
student newsletter, I gave information and recommendations on how to relate to their parents.

The Survey Process

On May 5, 2009, I sent out survey packets to each individual parent and teenager in the study. Each packet contained an Informed Consent Form specific to the parent or the student (Appendix D). Each packet also contained a Survey specific to the parent or the student (Appendix E). I had made it clear to the participants in the project that the surveys would be confidential. Therefore, I set up a process whereby I would not have access to who filled out which survey. However, I needed some method to determine who had sent surveys in so that we could send additional reminders to those who had not turned a survey in yet. Having established the process, I also sent each participant a statement of the procedures we would follow for this to take place (Appendix F). Each packet also included a stamped letter addressed to the Idaho Conference with the return address of the one taking the survey. In the cover letter that accompanied the surveys, I asked the participants to return the surveys by May 31, 2009.

Less than five surveys were returned before the May 31, 2009 deadline. So, on June 30, 2009, I sent out a second packet with the same materials as before with a different cover letter (Appendix G).

By July 30, 2009, only two more surveys had been returned. So, I phoned all the parents on the list who had not yet returned a survey. Of the 40 parents on the final list, I had received four returned surveys with one refusal to fill out the survey. The 35 remaining parents represented 21 households. Of the 21 households, I was
able to personally speak with six. I left phone messages with five others. Some had inaccurate phone numbers or did not have answering systems, but I sent one fax and eight e-mails. I was not able to contact four households in any way. Of the parents I spoke with, one told me that she was in the middle of preparing for a funeral for her parent and that her teenager had moved out of their home over the course of the study; another indicated that she was in the middle of a move; several indicated that they had not read all of the books, (later admitting that they had read only some of one book); however, four promised to send the surveys back “soon.” I encouraged each of them to return the surveys even if they had not read through all the material. If there were circumstances indicating why they were not able to get through the material, I asked that they make notation on the surveys indicating that.

By August 23, 2009, no additional surveys had been returned, so I sent out another packet as I had done before with another cover letter. In consultation with my advisor, I decided that no matter how many surveys were returned, I would proceed with the survey analysis on September 31, 2009.

Analyzing the Surveys

On October 1, 2009, there was a total of 10 surveys returned. Six were from parents, and four from students. All of the parents were mothers; with five of them married and one divorced. Of the students, three were males and one was female. One was 14 years old, two were 15, and one 16.

The surveys asked for responses on spiritual nurture factors and the supplied materials. The responses of the parents and students were tabulated for analysis (Appendix H). What follows is a report of the survey responses.
Spiritual Nurture Factors

Before asking them about the specific materials distributed, I asked about their perception of other spiritual nurturing programs and activities. These were: church worship service, youth Sabbath school; family worship, parent/teen discussions; personal devotions, and school. I asked them to rate the benefit on a scale of 1, being very helpful to 5, being very unhelpful. I also included NA, which stood for “does not apply,” so that they could indicate programs and activities they did not utilize.

Church Worship Service

The perceptions of the respondents toward the church worship service is found below in Table 1. Of the parents, the church worship service was perceived as being more helpful than unhelpful. Three parents indicated a 3, directly in the middle of very helpful and very unhelpful. One indicated a 1, one indicated a 2, and one indicated a 4. None indicated a 5, the strongest negative perception; and none indicated NA, which indicates they all attended church worship services.

Of the students, the church worship service was perceived as being more helpful than unhelpful. Two teens indicated a 3, directly in the middle of very helpful and very unhelpful. One indicated a 1, and one indicated a 2. None indicated a 4 or 5, the strongest negative perception; and none indicated NA, which indicated they all attended church worship services.

In comparing the parents’ attitudes regarding the church worship service with the students’ attitudes, the students viewed it as slightly more positive for their spiritual nurture than the parents. When adding the parents’ scores with the
students’ scores into a composite score, it would appear that together the church worship service is seen as more helpful than unhelpful, although half took a neutral position.

A parent who marked a 4, indicating the church worship service was unhelpful stated that the youth are not included, except “only on very rare occasions. Thus they feel they can leave the worship service and miss the experience.”

Table 1

*Perceptions of Church Worship Service*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth Sabbath School

The perceptions of the respondents toward the youth Sabbath school is found below in Table 2. Of the parents, youth Sabbath school was perceived as being more helpful than unhelpful. Four parents indicated a 2, viewing it as helpful; one indicated a 5, viewing it as very unhelpful; and one indicated NA, which shows that her child did not participate in that program.

Of the students, youth Sabbath school was perceived as being helpful. Two teens indicated a 1, viewing it as very helpful; one indicated a 2, viewing it as
helpful; and one indicated NA, which shows that the student did not participate in that program.

In combining the parents’ and students’ scores for youth Sabbath school, most viewed it as very helpful or helpful.

One student who marked a 1, viewing the youth Sabbath school as very helpful stated, “Sabbath school helps me understand Christ and religion better.” She goes on to state “We shape those opinions [about Christ] in Sabbath school and it seems like our outlook is best, but then the teachers share what they’ve experienced and what they think now and it changes our outlook.”

Table 2

**Perceptions of Youth Sabbath School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Worship

The perceptions of the respondents toward family worship is found below in Table 3. Of the parents, family worship did not have consensus of being helpful or unhelpful. One parent each marked 2, 3, 4, and 5; with two parents indicating NA, which shows that family worship was not practiced.
Of the students, family worship had a positive consensus on being helpful. Three teens marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; while one marked NA, which shows that family worship was not practiced.

In comparing the parents’ and students’ attitudes regarding family worship, the students viewed this practice as more helpful than the parents did. When combining the parents’ and students’ scores, more of those who participated in family worship view it as a helpful activity for assisting in the spiritual nurture of the students.

Table 3

*Perceptions of Family Worship*

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Parent/Teen Discussions

The perceptions of the respondents toward parent/teen discussions is found below in Table 4. Most of the parents view parent/teen discussions as helpful. Two parents marked a 1, viewing it as very helpful; two parents indicated a 2, viewing it as helpful; and one parent marked a 5, viewing it as very unhelpful.

Of the students, parent/teen discussions were viewed as slightly more helpful than unhelpful. One teen marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; two marked a 3,
viewing it as neither helpful nor unhelpful; and one teen marked NA, which shows that parent/teen discussions did not take place.

The composite scoring of the parents and the students perceptions demonstrates that parent/teen discussions are viewed as more helpful than unhelpful.

Table 4

Perceptions of Parent/Teen Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Personal Devotions

The perceptions of the respondents toward personal devotions is found below in Table 5. Of the parents, personal devotions are viewed as slightly more helpful than unhelpful. Three parents marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; one each marked a 3, 4, and 5, which indicates a neutral position, unhelpful, and very unhelpful.

Of the students, personal devotions were viewed as helpful. Two teens marked a 1, viewing it as very helpful; one marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; and one marked NA, which indicated that personal devotions were not taking place.

In comparing the attitudes of the parents and students toward personal devotions, the students considered it slightly more helpful than the parents.
However, when the parents’ and students’ attitudes are added together, it is viewed as helpful for spiritual nurture.

Table 5

_Perceptions of Personal Devotions_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Church-Based and Family-Based Programs

The survey also made it possible to compare the perceptions of the parents and students toward church-based programs, which would include church worship services and youth Sabbath school; with family-based programs, which would include family worship, parent/teen discussions, and personal devotions. Because the church-based area includes two programs, while the family-based area includes three programs, I chose to list the percentages of the two areas. This has been done by taking the number of scores for a given response, (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or NA) and dividing it by the total number of responses in the area, (i.e., church-based or family-based). These numbers have been calculated for the parents, students, and parents and students combined.

Table 6 shows the parents’ perception of church-based and family-based programs. When adding the very helpful designations (1) with the helpful designations (2), and comparing them with the unhelpful designations (4) and very
unhelpful designations (5), we can determine which areas are viewed as more helpful or unhelpful and which areas are viewed as more helpful or unhelpful than the other.

For church-based programs, 50% of the parents’ responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 15% of the responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the parents’ responses considered church-based programs to be five times more helpful than unhelpful.

For family-based programs, 28% of the parents’ responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 28% of the responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the parents’ responses considered family-based programs to be just as helpful as unhelpful.

Table 6

*Parents’ Perception of Church-Based and Family-Based Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church-Based</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Based</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows the students’ perception of church-based and family-based programs. For church-based programs, 61% of the students’ responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 0% of the responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, overwhelmingly, the students’ responses considered church-based programs as helpful.
For family-based programs, 59% of the students’ responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 0% of the responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, overwhelmingly, the students’ responses considered family-based programs as helpful.

Table 7

*Students’ Perception of Church-Based and Family-Based Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church-Based</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Based</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the composite perception of church-based and family-based programs. For church-based programs, 50% of the composite responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 14% of the responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the composite responses considered church-based programs more helpful than unhelpful.

For family-based programs, 53% of the composite responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 20% of the responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the composite responses considered family-based programs as more helpful than unhelpful.
Table 8

*Composite Perception of Church-Based and Family-Based Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church-Based</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Based</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note the difference of perceptions of the parents and students toward church-based spiritual practices. Fifty percent of the parents’ responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 61% of the students’ responses considered them as helpful/very helpful. At the same time, 15% of the parents’ responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful, while none of the students’ responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. This may indicate that students are more appreciative of church-based spiritual practices than their parents perceive.

It is also interesting to note the difference of perceptions of the parents and students toward family-based spiritual practices. Twenty-eight percent of the parents’ responses considered them as very helpful/helpful while 59% of the students’ responses considered them as helpful/very helpful. At the same time, 28% of the parents’ responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful, while none of the students’ responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. This may indicate that students are more appreciative of family-based spiritual practices than they exhibit while in their homes. It may also indicate parents’ frustration in leading out in family-based spiritual practices with their mid-adolescents.
The Survey Results of the Provided Resources

As stated earlier, the resources provided to the families were chosen to give a variety of materials that could assist in the spiritual nurture of the Adventist public high school students. I asked them to rate the benefit on a scale of 1, being very helpful to 5, being very unhelpful. I also included NA, which stood for “does not apply,” so that they could indicate materials they did not utilize.

One parent indicated that her teen refused to participate in the study, so she did not fill out the section of the survey dealing with the provided resources. Therefore, the surveys will only represent responses from five parents and four students. As stated earlier, all the parents were mothers; one of the students was a female, three were male. One student was 14 years of age, two were 15, and one was 16.

Below, I will give the responses of the parents and students to these books and compare their perceptions of the various types of materials as being helpful for the spiritual nurture of the high school students.

Dudley (2007)

Table 9 shows the scoring for Dudley (2007). Of the parents, two did not read the book. Of the three that did, one marked a 1, viewing it as very helpful; one marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; and one marked a 5, viewing it as very unhelpful. The parent that marked 1 stated, “Great encouragement, let me know I’m not alone and just because my teens don’t talk much . . . doesn’t mean they don’t have spiritual yearnings.” The parent that marked 2 stated, “This book is more helpful for the parent than the teen because [the] focus is on how to help our teens mature their
faith.” And, the parent that marked 5, which should have indicated a negative opinion of the book, stated, “Great book—it would be of benefit to any adult to try to see ‘religion’ through a teen’s eyes.”

Of the students, two did not read the book. One marked a 3, indicating a neutral position; and the other marked a 4, viewing it as unhelpful. This last teen stated, “The book was just facts. It seemed somewhat impersonal.”

When adding the parents’ and students’ scores on this book, four did not read the book, and one each the others marked each of the numbers. Therefore, there is no clear consensus on the benefits of this book for the spiritual nurture of high school students.

My initial perception that the book would be more helpful to parents than the teens was demonstrated in the survey. And, the parents who read the book give positive reviews of its benefits toward assisting them to spiritually nurture their teens.

Table 9

*Perceptions of Dudley (2007)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
Table 10 shows the scoring for Pierce (2007). Of the parents, two marked a 1, viewing it as very helpful; one marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; one marked a 3, indicating a neutral response; and one marked a 4, viewing it as unhelpful. A parent that marked a 1 stated, “Very engaging stories preface each chapter drawing the reader in. Excellent presentation of fundamental beliefs. Meant for teens but good for parents, too.” The other parent that marked 1 stated, “One of my kids read this cover to cover with great interest.” The parent that marked 3 stated, “This is good for SDA teens, but not a good way to bring in non-SDA teens as they think some of the beliefs are too weird. This would be a good book if the teens were interested in joining the SDA Church, but can be alienating for a group of friends that want to share Bible based values and morals yet remain faithful to their own family church affiliations.” The parent that marked 4 indicated “it had too much ‘teen stuff’ in it for an adult.” She went on to share that she would have preferred “a much more direct and informational format with ‘paraphrases’ of the 27 fundamental beliefs.”

Of the students, two marked a 1, viewing it as very helpful; one marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; and one marked a 3, indicating a neutral response. A teen that marked a 1 stated, “I loved this book. It was informational and very touching. I loved the stories that were used to convey the messages and I got a lot from them.” The other teen that marked a 1 stated, “This book has many understandable situations that I can relate to and it was very helpful.”

When adding the parents’ and students’ scores on this book, there were over twice as many who viewed it as helpful as those who indicated a neutral or
unhelpful position. Therefore, as a group, the parents and students viewed this book as being a positive benefit toward spiritually nurturing the high school students.

The positive evaluation of the teens toward this book was expected. However, I was pleasantly surprised at the positive evaluation by most of the parents. I believe that those that did not have a positive view about the book had a different idea of the purpose of such a book than intended by the author.

Table 10

*Perceptions of Pierce (2007)*

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<tr>
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</table>

Robbins & Robbins (2005)

Table 11 shows the scoring for Robbins & Robbins (2005). Of the parents, two did not read the book. Of the three that did, one marked a 1, viewing it as very helpful; and the other two marked a 5, viewing it as very unhelpful. The parent who believed the book was very helpful stated, “Excellent for both parent and teen.” One of the parents who believed the book was very unhelpful stated, “Too far removed from their realities of always wanting to be on the go.”

Of the students, two did not read the book. One marked a 2, viewing it as helpful; and one marked a 4, viewing it as unhelpful. The teen who believed the book
was helpful stated, “This book was very good. I enjoyed being able to read this one. This book made a real good impression on me. I felt like this book helped me become closer to God.”

When adding the parents’ and students’ scores on this book, of those who read the book there were just as many who viewed it as helpful as those who viewed it as unhelpful.

I thought this book would be very well received by both the parents and students. It does not follow the typical doctrinal method of Bible study. Rather, it follows a method that promotes life application of the biblical passages. I had used the book in my Senior Bible class at Gem State Adventist Academy and had received good evaluations by those students. Therefore, I was somewhat disappointed at the response of those surveyed.

Table 11

*Perceptions of Robbins & Robbins (2005)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tyner & Gillespie (1996)

Table 12 shows the scoring for Tyner & Gillespie (1996). Of the parents, one marked 1, viewings the book as very helpful; one marked 2, viewing it as helpful;
one marked 4, viewing it as unhelpful; and two marked 5, viewing it as very unhelpful. The parent who found the book very helpful stated, “I have used this book for my own personal devotions and really enjoyed it. I think it would be a good resource for teens of varying backgrounds to use in a Bible study.” One of the parents who found it very unhelpful stated, “Too confrontational; in asking the kids to fill out answers, it is too much like a class to be graded. They REFUSED. Wouldn’t even read past the first lesson.” The other parent who found it very unhelpful stated, “Personally, I thought it was good, but my daughter was uncooperative to participate. . . . Personal stories to help get mental pictures work best.”

Of the students, two marked 2, viewing it as helpful; one marked 3, indicating a neutral position; and one marked 5, viewing it as very unhelpful. One of the students who found the book helpful stated, “The workbook helped me maintain structure through my studies. Some of it came off a little strong for me, just a little bit invasive. Overall, it helped me stay on track and keep on keeping on.”

When adding the parents’ and students’ scores on this book, of those who read the book there were just as many who viewed it as helpful toward spiritually nurturing high school students as those who viewed it as unhelpful.

I am somewhat dismayed that this book was not better received by those taking the survey. Perhaps it would be better received if used in a class instead of personal study. There is a study guide that comes with the book, so it could very well be used in a Sabbath school or youth Bible study situation.
Table 12

Perceptions of Tyner & Gillespie (1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Helpful Materials

At the end of the surveys, I gave an opportunity for the parents and students to indicate other materials for family-based spiritual nurture they used over the course of the study. One book that a parent and a student found helpful was Berecz & Soo (2002). The parent stated it is a “biography of Romanian Adventist pastor—good example of letting God lead in your life and forgiveness.” Another book mentioned by a parent and student was the Bible. The parent stated, “For non-SDA affiliated teens/friends; this is the friendliest and best source available!” One parent mentioned Chicken soup for the soul type of stories. She said, “When my daughter was resistant to scripture, these types of heart-warming stories allowed us to have worship time together and she would beg ‘please read just one more.’”

Comparing the Supplied Materials

Of the four selected books of this study, Dudley (2007) was a book on mid-adolescent development, Pierce (2007) was a book on Adventist doctrines, Robbins & Robbins (2005) was a devotional book, and Tyner & Gillespie (1996) was a practical book. When assigning percentages to the various responses, it may be
possible to determine which types of books were viewed as more helpful or more unhelpful. As with comparing the church-based and family-based programs, this has been done by taking the number of scores for a given response (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or NA), and dividing it by the total number of responses toward the specific type of book. These numbers have been calculated for the parents, students, and parents and students combined.

As indicated on Table 13, 40% of the parents viewed Dudley (2007), the developmental book as very helpful/helpful, while 20% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Sixty percent of the parents viewed Pierce (2007), the doctrinal book as very helpful/helpful, while 20% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Twenty percent of the parents viewed Robbins & Robbins (2005), the devotional book as very helpful/helpful, while 40% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Forty percent of the parents viewed Tyner & Gillespie (1995), the practical book as very helpful/helpful, while 60% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the parents viewed the doctrinal book as being the most helpful and the practical book as being most unhelpful.

Table 13

*Parents' Scores of the Materials*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dudley (2007)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce (2007)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robbins &amp; Robbins (2005)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tyner &amp; Gillespie (1996)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated on Table 14, none of the students viewed Dudley (2007), the developmental book as very helpful/helpful, while 25% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Seventy-five percent of the students viewed Pierce (2007), the doctrinal book as very helpful/helpful, while none viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Twenty-five percent of the students viewed Robbins & Robbins (2005), the devotional book as very helpful/helpful, while 25% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Fifty percent of the students viewed Tyner & Gillespie (1995), the practical book as very helpful/helpful, while 25% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the students viewed the doctrinal book as being the most helpful and the developmental book as being most unhelpful.

Table 14

*Students’ Scores of the Materials*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dudley (2007)</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As indicated on Table 15, when combining the scores of the parents and students, 22% viewed Dudley (2007), the development book as very helpful/helpful, while 22% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Seventy-seven
percent viewed Pierce (2007), the doctrinal book, as very helpful/helpful, while 11% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Thirty-three percent viewed Robbins & Robbins (2005), the devotional book, as very helpful/helpful, while 33% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Fifty-five percent viewed Tyner & Gillespie (1995), the practical book, as very helpful/helpful, while 44% viewed it as unhelpful/very unhelpful. Therefore, the combined group viewed the doctrinal book as being the most helpful and the developmental book as being most unhelpful.

Table 15

*Composite Scores of the Materials*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Dudley (2007)</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22%</td>
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<td>Robbins &amp; Robbins (2005)</td>
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<td>22%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyner &amp; Gillespie (1996)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

This chapter gave a report on the project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference. The fact that three-fourths of the high school age students on the records of the Idaho Conference attended public school combined with recent research demonstrating that Adventist education promotes church retention in young adults revealed the need for some compensatory program for mid-adolescents who were not attending Adventist schools. The process of selecting participants for this
family-based study was given along with the reasons for the specific materials selected for distribution and study to these families. The survey process was presented, with an explanation of the numbers of the respondents along with their views of selected spiritually nurturing programs and the provided materials.
CHAPTER 5

AN EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT DEVELOPED TO PROMOTE FAMILY-BASED YOUTH MINISTRY FOR ADVENTIST PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE IDAHO CONFERENCE

Introduction

This chapter will evaluate the project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference. The evaluation will consider the strengths of the project, the weaknesses of the project, and finally give some observations of what the project demonstrated.

The Strengths of the Project

There are at least three strengths of this project: (a) it was an encouragement to parents of mid-adolescents to take leadership with spiritual nurture in their homes, (b) it provided resources and to these parents so that they could participate in family-based spiritual nurture, and (c) the Idaho Conference was able to communicate care for and assistance to these parents of public high school students. I will discuss these strengths in greater detail below.

Encouragement to Parents to Take Spiritual Leadership

As shown in chapter 2, there is a mandate in the scriptures for parents to train their children in the knowledge of and obedience to the Lord. As shown in chapter 3, current literature and research supports the hypothesis that parents are
to be the primary teachers of spiritual values to their children. This project as conducted encouraged the parents of Adventist public high school students to take leadership in the spiritual nurture in their homes. The parent newsletters encouraged them to keep working through the process of spiritual education even when their students demonstrated resistance to the idea. The project itself encouraged these parents to sense the importance of their tasks in guiding their mid-adolescents to the Lord.

Provision of Resources for Family-Based Spiritual Nurture

It is one thing to be convicted of a responsibility, it is quite another thing to know what to do to fulfill that responsibility. This project provided parents with resources they could use to spiritually nurture their children. The parent newsletters provided suggestions to the parents on how they could better go through the process of reading the materials themselves while encouraging their high school students to read the materials as well. The student newsletters provided suggestions to the student on how they could better relate to their parents as their parents were trying to take leadership in their spiritual life.

Communication That the Conference Cares

Far too often, families in the Idaho Conference which do not choose to, or which are unable to send their mid-adolescents to an Adventist school feel ostracized by the conference. Whenever conference representatives come to their churches, it is perceived that their sole purpose is to encourage them to take their students out of the public high schools and send them to the Adventist academy.
These parents have felt that there has been minimal (if any) conference resources given to encourage and support them if they have chosen to keep their mid-adolescents at home and send them to their local high schools.

This project provided the Idaho Conference an opportunity to communicate to these parents that it cared for them, even if they chose to send their students to a public high school. Further, the conference gave proof of that caring as it provided resources to assisting them in compensating for their children’s lack of Adventist education. While the research supports the importance of Adventist education, the conference also understands that the research also supports the importance of family-based youth ministry. These parents were made to feel part of the solution to the spiritual nurture of their public high school students rather than part of the problem.

The Weaknesses of the Project

There were several ways the project could have been improved. These will be discussed below.

Lack of Peer Support

The participating families were scattered throughout the Idaho Conference: from Northeastern Oregon to Eastern Idaho. Parents were not connected with their peers who were going through the same process of implementing family-based youth ministry in their homes for the Adventist public high school students. If a process had been established whereby parents had the opportunity to share
successes and challenges with others, there may have been a greater number of families participating in the survey process at the end of the project.

Limited Conference Support

While the conference provided the project materials, the secretarial help in distributing the newsletters and surveys and the provision of time needed to better conduct the project by the researcher was limited. Toward the beginning of the project time period, I was reassigned from serving as an associate pastor of a local church to the Bible teacher at Gem State Adventist Academy. Although both positions were considered half time, serving as a first-time teacher took up much more than that. If I had the opportunity to personally visit the families in their homes, or as groups in various parts of the conference, the families may have felt greater encouragement to persevere through the project.

Weak Methodology in the Distribution of the Materials

As the project was conducted, the materials were mailed to the families in one package with instructions and suggestions on how to proceed. The families then had nine months to study the books before taking the surveys. For families not possessing the experience or fortitude to be consistent with family-based youth ministry, the project was ripe for failure. It would have been better if the books had been mailed one per quarter to the project families. If a book mailed in September proved to be unappealing to a participant, the arrival of the second book two months later would have been an opportunity to start afresh with the project. As one parent stated in her survey, “I feel
... [it] ... would have been more helpful ... [if] a survey [was] sent with the books to be returned immediately after finishing each one.”

Missing Question in the Surveys

The surveys asked the participants about specific spiritually nurturing activities as well as their views of the provided materials. One question that was not asked was, “Please rate the benefits of this project for family-based spiritual nurture in your family.” The answers given would have allowed us to know how helpful the overall project was perceived. As it is, we are left with only specific responses to specific materials.

What the Project Demonstrated

While there were several strengths and weaknesses of this project, there were also several insights gleaned. These demonstrations should prove to be of encouragement and give directives to pastors, youth leaders, and parents of mid-adolescents.

A Felt Need for Family-Based Youth Ministry

There was a strong felt need demonstrated for family-based youth ministry throughout the Idaho Conference. Of the parents invited to participate in this study, 40% agreed to do so. Second, while the study was only a few months old, several families sent their children to Gem State Adventist Academy. While I never asked the parents why they did so, I had the impression that this project may have been one factor that encouraged the families to do more spiritually for their high school students.
Families Have Difficulty With Family-Based Youth Ministry Follow-Through

While the families in the study project had a felt need for family-based youth ministry, the ability to follow-through with that process at home was difficult to achieve. Of the 40 parents qualified to complete the survey at the end of the school year, only six returned the survey. Most of those not turning in a survey that I spoke with directly indicated they had not read through the materials and thus were reluctant to fill out the survey. Of the six parents turning in the survey, one indicated that her daughter refused to read through the books, so the mother did not fill in the survey questions regarding the materials distributed. Of the other five parents who filled out the survey, only two read through all four of the books provided. Of the four students who filled out the survey, half did not read through all the books provided.

Family-based spiritual nurture programs require most families to adjust family dynamics and develop new family habits. This is difficult to do, even if parents and mid-adolescents are both willing to try. But, in situations where the mid-adolescents are resistant to the development of new family activities that either have a history of failure, or that appear to be uninteresting, success is almost impossible to achieve.

Almost all of the survey respondents liked Pierce (2007). This one book demonstrates that it is possible to develop family-based youth ministry if materials or activities can be found that are of interest to both parents and students.
Mid-Adolescents See Value in Family-Based Youth Ministry

As mentioned earlier, only 28% of the parents’ responses considered family-based spiritual practices as very helpful/helpful while 59% of the students’ responses considered them as helpful/very helpful. At the same time, 28% of the parents’ responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful, while none of the students’ responses considered them as unhelpful/very unhelpful. It would appear that parents are not as positive about family-based programs as their mid-adolescents are.

It is encouraging to see such a high degree of positive attitudes toward the family-based programs among the mid-adolescents. Apparently, they sense a need to experience the mandate of the Bible that parents are to be the leaders of spiritual education for their children.

It could be that parents have experienced a degree of frustration in their attempts to lead out in family-based spiritual practices with their mid-adolescents. But, they should be reminded that what worked for their pre-adolescent or early-adolescent children probably will not work with their mid-adolescent children. This affirms the value of parents being exposed to materials such as Dudley (2007) that can help them better understand what their mid-adolescents are going through and how better to work with them in the family-based setting.

**Conclusion**

This chapter evaluated the project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference. It
covered the strengths of the project, the weaknesses of the project, and gave some observations of what the project demonstrated.

Three strengths of this project were highlighted: (a) it was an encouragement to parents of mid-adolescents to take leadership with spiritual nurture in their homes, (b) it provided resources to these parents so that they could participate in family-based spiritual nurture, and (c) the Idaho Conference was able to communicate care for and assistance to these parents of public high school students.

Four weaknesses of this project were highlighted: (a) there was a lack of parental peer support in the project, (b) there was limited conference provision of time for the researcher to conduct the project, (c) there was a weaker methodology in the distribution of the literature than could have been, and (d) there was one question that was not asked, which should have been: “Please rate the benefits of this project for family-based spiritual nurture in your family.”

Three observations were demonstrated by the project: (a) there is a felt need for family-based youth ministry participation in the Idaho Conference, (b) families have difficulty in following-through with family-based youth ministry programs, and (c) mid-adolescents see value in family-based youth ministry even as their parents do not. These observations substantiate the value of family-based youth ministry and should encourage pastors, youth leaders, and parents to continue seeking ways for it to be successful.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist with high school students in the Idaho Conference encompassed a time period of one school year: from September 2008 through May 2009. The survey process to determine the perceptions of the project participants took place from May 2009 through September 2009. A summary of the report will be given, followed by specific recommendations based upon the findings of the project.

Summary

This report of the project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference consisted of the following:

An overview of the need of family-based youth ministry in the Idaho Conference was given.

Theological reflection, focusing on the spiritual education of children being the responsibility of families in general, and parents specifically was given.

Current literature was reviewed on the subject of family-based youth ministry, parental spiritual influence, and the role of the church in supporting parents in this task. This substantiated the results of the theological reflection
conclusion that the spiritual education of children is the responsibility of families in general, and parents in particular.

A detailed explanation was given on the project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference. I explained how the idea was formed; why the specific materials were selected; how the participants of the study were found; how the materials were distributed; a review of the communication with the participants during the project period; how the survey process was conducted; a report on the perceptions of the spiritual nurturing factors; and a report on the perceptions of the provided resources.

An evaluation was given, pointing out the strengths and the weaknesses of the project. Lastly three demonstrations of the project were highlighted: (a) there is a felt need for family-based youth ministry, (b) families have difficulty following through with family-based ministry, and (c) mid-adolescents perceive value in family-based youth ministry.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations will be given to these entities: (a) the publishing houses who print materials useful for family-based youth ministry along with the distributing companies, (b) the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Board of Directors, and (c) the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists along with the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. A final recommendation will be given for further research.
Publishing Houses and Distributing Companies

The publishing houses responsible for the materials used in this study are to be commended. Specifically, Hancock Center Publications, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Review and Herald Publishing Association, and Youth Specialties. The distributing companies responsible for placing these materials in the hands of pastors, youth leaders, parents, and mid-adolescents are also to be commended. For this project, these organizations included the Idaho Adventist Book Center of Boise, ID; AdventSource of Lincoln, NE; and Youth Specialties of El Cajon, CA.

It is recommended that the publishers and distributing companies of Christian education resources continue producing and marketing materials suitable for family-based youth ministry. It is also recommended that new materials be produced on a frequent basis in order to keep up with the changing dynamics of mid-adolescents.

Idaho Conference Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is to be commended for supporting the project through the purchasing and distribution of the materials, for providing resources for communicating with the project families during the term of the project, for distributing the surveys to the project families, and for providing the researcher with time and means to conduct the project.

It is recommended that the Idaho Conference expand the promotion of family-based youth ministry through the promotion of programs such as developed by Kids in Discipleship Center of Collegedale, TN. This organization states the
following about itself, “The Kids in Discipleship Center’s purpose is to lead children to be faithful, fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ.” They assist the children to “begin a lifelong, personal relationship with Jesus by establishing a daily devotional life of prayer and study of God’s Word” (http://www.thekidcenter.org/article.php?id=2, downloaded on December 2, 2009). They do this through training the parents to serve as spiritual mentors to their children. From the conversation I had with Don MacLafferty, the K.I.D. Director & Trainer (June, 2008 in Caldwell, Idaho), I understood that while the program welcomes mid-adolescents, most of those children in the program are later pre-adolescents and early-adolescents. The value of the program for family-based youth ministry is that if young people are immersed with family-based ministry before reaching mid-adolescence, then when they reach the sometimes more turbulent mid-adolescent years, it will be easier for the parents to continue with spiritually nurturing programs at home.

It is also recommended that the Idaho Conference appoint a person with primary responsibilities of training pastors, youth leaders, and parents in family-based youth ministry concepts and practices. Copious financial resources are expended for the 26% of the high school age youth in the conference who are taking advantage of Adventist education at Gem State Adventist Academy. While not minimizing the advantages of doing this, it would also be prudent to provide additional resources for the 74% of high school age youth in the conference who are attending public schools through the promotion of family-based youth ministry.

North Pacific Union Conference and North American Division
The departments of education, family ministries, and youth ministries of the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the North American
Division of Seventh-day Adventists are to be commended for the personnel hired and for the materials produced and distributed benefiting the young people in their field.

It is recommended that these departments pool their efforts for the greater promotion of family-based youth ministry. This can be done by the production and maintenance of a Web site specifically for parents and mid-adolescents; by the publication of newsletters and magazines of particular interest to family-based youth ministry; and by the development of training events for conference youth leaders, local church youth leaders, pastors and parents involved with family-based youth ministry.

Further Research

Because of the geographic spread of the subjects of this research as well as other factors mentioned in the evaluation chapter, there was a small sample from which to develop conclusions from this project. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted to better determine the influence of family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students. Adjustments to the research reported in this writing would include: (a) studying a geographically concise population, (b) distributing the literature on a piecemeal basis, and (c) asking the key question.

Study a Concise Population

Instead of inviting families from an entire conference, it might prove better to invite families from a given geographic area, or even from an individual church. This
study would have to be conducted in a larger conference than the Idaho Conference in order to have enough participants in the study who are in closer geographic proximity. Examples of conferences in the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists with large enough churches to be of sufficient size for a concise study would be the Oregon Conference, the Upper Columbia Conference, or the Washington Conference.

This scenario would also make it more likely to set up a peer support system for parents in the family-based youth ministry study. It would also make it more likely that the researcher could contact those families in the study on a more frequent and personal basis.

**Distribute the Materials and Conduct the Surveys on a Piecemeal Basis**

Instead of distributing the books all at once at the first of the study, it is recommended that the books be distributed every two or three months. If a book given in September proved to be unappealing to a participant, the arrival of the second book two or three months later would serve as an opportunity to start afresh with the project.

Instead of having the participants fill in the survey at the end of the study period, it is recommended that surveys for the specific books be distributed and collected at the end of the two or three month period given for the families to study that book. In this way, the memories of the benefits of a particular book will be fresher in the minds of the participants of the surveys.
Ask the Key Question

One question that should be asked at the end of the project period is: Please rate the benefits of this project for family-based spiritual nurture in your family. The answers to this question would allow the researcher to know how helpful such a project is according to the perceptions of the parents and mid-adolescents in the study.

Results

By following these adjustments to the research, a greater number of families might participate in the entire study, thus allowing more dogmatic conclusions and observations regarding the benefits of family-based youth ministry in Adventist families with public high school students.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the project developed to promote family-based youth ministry for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference starting in September 2008 and ending in September 2009. In response to the findings of the project, three recommendations were given to these entities: (a) the publishing houses who print materials useful for family-based youth ministry along with the distributing companies, (b) the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Board of Directors, and (c) the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists along with the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. A final recommendation was given for further research.
It is the hope of this researcher that ways and means will be implemented for Adventist public high school students in the Idaho Conference so that these mid-adolescents will be spiritually nurtured and thus remain supportive and active members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as they leave late-adolescence.
APPENDIX A

PROJECT ABSTRACT

September 2008

Project Title

Family-Based Ministry for Public High School Students within the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as a Factor in Promoting Spiritual Nurture

Researcher

John Bryson, Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Coordinator

Project Dates

September 2008 – August 2009

Justification for Project

Extensive research has indicated that there are three factors essential to the retention of young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Adventist education, the local church, and the home. Recent statistics show that the majority of youth in the Idaho Conference Adventist homes attend public school. Attempts to address the lack of spiritual nurture available to these public school students have been limited to two approaches: 1) encouraging public school students to transfer to Adventist academies, and 2) offering youth Sabbath School classes.

Recent research has demonstrated that parents have the largest influence upon their children of any other groupings of individuals. Therefore, home-based spiritual nurture may serve as a viable compensatory factor for high school students who are not receiving the benefits of Adventist education.

A tentative hypothesis to be investigated is that if resources are provided to the families of public high school students, there will be a noticeable improvement in spiritual nurture.

Project Summary

We will supply materials to 35–50 families with high school children attending public school beginning September 2008. Beginning in August 2009, surveys will be given to the students and their parents that will enable me to evaluate the benefits of the materials.
Authorization

This project has been approved by both Andrews University and the Idaho Conference. The conference has also committed to covering the expenses and allowing me time to conduct the project. Other supporters include Pacific Press Publishing Association, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Youth Specialties and AdventSource.
APPENDIX B
LETTER OF SUGGESTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project for public high school Adventist students. Although you have a year to go through these materials, that is not reason to delay (or rush through) them. Following are some suggestions on how you could use them:

1. Use them for family worship readings. Then take a few minutes to talk about what you read.

2. You and your teen can read them individually and then have a time to talk about what you read.

3. I’m sure there are many other ways . . . use your imagination.

Regarding the specific materials in the packet, let me comment a little more on them:

1. *Enjoy the Silence*, by Maggie and Duffy Robbins is a devotional book that assists us in listening to God through His Word. There are spaces in the text to write your thoughts and impressions. (I do have extra copies of this book. If you would like a separate copy for teens and parents, let me know and I can get another copy to you.)

2. *What We Believe for Teens*, by Seth Pierce explains the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists especially for teens. You may find that it is different from you are used to and you may not always agree with the author. Take time to talk about these things with your teen.

3. *Walking on the Edge*, by Stuart Tyner and V. Bailey Gillespie has 13 interactive Bible studies for Adventist students in Public High School. I am interested in learning if this book is as relevant as it claims to be. This will give you and your teen opportunities to talk about life as an Adventist in public school.

4. *The Complex Religion of Teens*, by Roger Dudley is a really good book that reveals how adolescents relate to spiritual matters. Your teen may not be interested in this book, (it is especially written for pastors, teachers and parents.) On the other hand, your teen may be very interested in how others view him or her.

I will be setting up ways to encourage you as you go through these materials. Some of the ways I’ve thought of doing this include:
1. Sending encouragement through email.
3. Having meetings (in given areas) where we can get together and share our frustrations or successes with these materials.

Please share other ideas you may have how I can help you out.

Feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or suggestions whatsoever. You can reach me by email at or call me on my cell phone at

I believe what this study will demonstrate will be helpful for not only public high school student families, but for Adventist school families and families of all ages.

Again, thank you for your participation in this project.

Sincerely,

John Bryson, Coordinator
Youth Ministries
APPENDIX C

FUEL NEWSLETTERS

Project Facts:
- The Idaho Conference and publishers of the books are paying for the expenses of this project.
- 48 parents are part of this project.
- 31 public high school students are part of this project.
- Look for additional resources at http://youth.idahoadventist.org/index.php

You Have the Books
Congratulations for being part of the spiritual nurturing project for Adventist families with students in public high schools. You have chosen to be part of a group that will positively impact not only your family or your conference. You have chosen to be part of a group that will positively impact Adventist youth ministry across North America and beyond.

Do you realize that throughout the United States and Canada, over 70% of Adventist teenagers are attending public high schools? What we want to do is tap into available resources for the purpose of binding our children to Jesus (no matter what school they attend.)

What you might want to do is to take one of the books (such as What We Believe for Teens) and start reading it for family worship. It takes only five or six minutes to read a chapter. If possible, you can talk about what you read, have a prayer and be done with worship for that day.

One hint: sometimes, teens don’t want to talk about what you read to them. Later, something will be heard on the radio, or something will be mentioned in conversation, and your teen will comment on something that was read in the worship book. Try not to really do it, but in your mind raise your hand, giving yourself a high five and shout, “YES!”

Let us know what you think!
Next month, our newsletter will feature the book, What We Believe for Teens. Share with us what you like about this book. Do you think it could be improved? How have you used the book in your family?

You can share your thoughts, opinions, or experiences by email to brysonyouth@gmail.com, by small mail to John Bryan, Idaho Conference Youth Ministries, 777 W. Fairview Ave, Boise, ID 83704, by phone to...
Project facts:

- The Idaho Conference and publishers of the books are paying for the expenses of this project.
- 48 parents are part of this project.
- 30 public high school students are part of this project.
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You Have the Books

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Do you realize that you are part of over 70% of Adventist teenagers in the United States and Canada who are attending public high schools? But, that's no reason for you to be left behind in your understanding of God, or what it means to follow Jesus.

We have sent your family four books that we hope you will go through and be changed by. We have tried to pick books that will be interesting to you. At the end of the school year, we will find out your opinions (good or bad) about these books.

Your parents might be a little hesitant to start going over these books with you, so give them a chance and suggest that you sit down together and start going through one of them.

Done right, if you do this, you might notice a glint of tears in your mom's eyes or a big grin on your dad's face.

Let us know what you think!

Next month, our newsletter will feature the book What I Believe for Teens. Share with us what you like about this book. Do what you think could be improved. Have you used the book in your family?

You can share your thoughts, opinions or experiences by email to brynsonyouth@gmail.com, by snail mail to John Bryan, Idaho Conference Youth Ministries, 3777 W. Fairview Ave, Boise, ID 83704, by phone to
I really didn’t plan on it, but it happened…Since the last newsletter in October, I have been given a new work assignment. Instead of being the Associate Pastor of the Caldwell Church while serving as the Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Coordinator, I am now the Bible Teacher at city State Adventist Academy while serving as the Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Coordinator. The new responsibility has been a bit overwhelming, but it has taught me to trust God and to focus on the work at hand. I have caught up with myself enough to send you this newsletter. Instead of helping in the spiritual nurture of 32 high school students through this study, I now have another 94 students to influence in my three classes at the academy. I cannot remember being so busy, and I cannot remember being so fulfilled as Iinteract with the academy students on a daily basis.

For my Sunday Bible class, I gave them as a project the Enjoy the Silence book. I had some extra copies, and still, do, but that was last week. I decided that I should probably read the book too. I wanted to see if a book I gave to 48 parents, 32 public high school students, and 94 academy seniors was really all that good. So far, I have been very impressed and pleased with the book.

This morning, I was working on Jeremiah 31 where it talks about road signs and I thought about the road signs God has placed in my life. I realized one sign the Lord has put in my road reads, “Unknown road ahead! It’s not always as easy to do, but the Lord has never let me down, so I’ll just keep doing it!”

I fully recommend trusting God, and I fully recommend seeking His guidance on a daily basis through devotional Bible study such as found in Enjoy the Silence!
Unexpected Changes

I really didn’t plan on it, but I found I became a book lover. On October 26, I began teaching a Bible class at Bonneville Adventist Academy. I teach the freshmen, juniors, and seniors. But, fortunately, I am continuing as the Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Coordinator—which means I will continue with this study. I will continue going on youth mission trips, and I will continue visiting churches in the conference. Now, instead of working with 32 high school students and 48 parents, I have another 34 students (along with their parents). The most total is...a lot, but never been so busy. And I never had this much fun, either!

For my senior Bible class, I gave them the project to read the 1000 Bible study and the book, and I found some extra copies... and still 60% off that matter. Well, last week, I decided that I should probably see the movie, too. I wanted to see if the book and the movie would be good. So far, I have been very impressed and pleased with both!

This morning, I was reading a verse in Jeremiah 33:8, where it says about God keeping his promises and being faithful to his people. The passage is about the Lord being faithful to his people, and it says, "The Lord is faithful to his promises, and he will keep his covenant with his people."

I fully recommend reading the book and watching the movie. It is very well done, and I highly recommend it to anyone who loves God and wants to understand his plan for their lives.

I’m here!

Starting a spiritual study regimen such as this study is hard to begin. But, if it is meant to be good, then you have to find a place that allows you to go there and practice. Consider going through these books to train for spiritual growth.

By the way, I’m involved with planning a youth mission trip to the Sanja Nation in March. You can find more information on Facebook, or by visiting the website: www.youth.idahoadventist.org.

You can share your thoughts, opinions, and experiences by email to

December, 2009

Idaho Conference Youth Ministries
Public High School Project

87
New Year, New Opportunities

Guess what? Your teenager knows what you are up to. She knows if you study your Bible and pray. He knows if you are up or down.

One of the key aspects of the Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Public High School Project is getting the students into the Bible. As they do, they will experience specific guidance from God. This isn’t a bad thing for us as parents to experience either.

Yesterday, I was working on a project at home and my 63-year-old college son calls me on Skype (in an internet place where you can talk with others). “How are you doing, Dad?” “Fine, how’s it going with you?” (And so forth.) After a while, I asked, “What’s that noise?” My son says, “I’m playing a computer game.” I think, “It’s like he’s still at home.”

We stay connected for 10 or 15 minutes, even tough we aren’t talking with each other. He takes a phone call. He hears a clicking away on my keyboard. Finally, I say, “Hey, I’m heading out to the store.” “OK, Dad, I’ll visit with you later.”

Connections: That’s a major part of parenting.

Consistency

Sometimes, some people will tell you that if you don’t have devotional time with God every day, you can’t have a relationship with Him. While I think it is good to have a devotional time with God every day, sometimes it doesn’t happen. There are some mornings I sleep too long. There are other mornings I have really early appointments. Other times, I was not able to sleep the night before. And, I think God understands.

What I do think is important is consistency. Most of the time, we spend that special time with God. When that happens, our hearts are more open to God’s guidance and our ears are more open to His special communications.

How are you doing?

At Thanksgiving, I started working through the “Enjoy The Silence” book. I finished it during the first two days of January, 2009, so it took longer than 30 days. I still enjoyed it. And the blessing and guidance I gained was the purpose of reading through the book, anyway.
Fun Facts:

- While I still know how to ice skate, it hurts worse to fall now than it used to. (Especially when I fall on a cell phone in my pocket!)
- Two of my aunts are getting married this year. One in April and the other in June.
- I might be coming to your church to preach this year! Maybe... look for me and I'll look for you.
- Check me at http://youth.klamathadventist.org/index.php
- 13 students are signed up to go on the March Mission Trip to the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

New Year, New Opportunities

I grew up going to Sabbath School and Church. We had family worship once a week and my parents even sent me to Seventh-day Adventist schools from 1st grade through high school. While other boys wanted to be cowboys or freemen, I wanted to be a minister. However, by the time I was finishing high school, I wasn’t sure.

I went to college 300 miles from home, so for the first time in my life, I lived away from my parents. I decided what I would go to bed and when I got up. I washed my own clothes and picked out my own food. One of the things I started doing was reading the Bible for myself for at least 15 minutes every morning. Within weeks, I knew what God wanted me to do with my life. He wanted me to be a minister!

I’m not suggesting that if you consistently read the Bible every day you will become a minister. God has something very specific for you to do that very well is different than He wants me to do. I am saying that you will sense God’s guidance as you listen to His word on a consistent, daily basis.

Consistency

Sometimes, people will tell you that if you don’t devotionally time with God every day, you can’t have a relationship with Him. Well, while I think it is good to have a devotional time with God every day, sometimes it doesn’t happen. There are times I sleep too long. There are other mornings I have really early appointments. Other times, I was not able to sleep the night before. And, I think God understands.

What I do think is important is consistency. Most of the time, we spend that special time with God. When that happens, our hearts are more open to God’s guidance and our ears are more open to His special communications.

How are you doing?

At Thanksgiving, I started working through the “Enjoy the Silence” book. I finished it near the first few days of January, OK, so it took longer than 30 days. I still enjoyed it. And the blessing and guidance I gained was the purpose of reading through the book anyway.

Keep going through the books I sent you. And, if you haven’t started yet, January is a good time to get started!

You can share your thoughts, opinions, or experiences by email to John Bryson, Idaho Conference Youth Ministries, 7777 N. Fairview Ave., Boise, ID 83704; by phone to

89
Fantastic Facts:
- Weddings: One down, one to go. (All my sons, that is.)
- It's sometimes cold in Salmon, Idaho in April.
- Resources at http://youth.idahoadventist.org/index.php
- 11 students participated in the March Mission Trip to the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

It's Never Too Late

May be there are some of you out there who haven't done as much as you had hoped with the books I sent you. Maybe you got busy with work, church events, or family events and it has slipped by. Well, it is not too late to get going again.

Let me give you a rundown on the books once more. *What We Believe for Teenagers* explains Seventh-day Adventist beliefs to teenagers. *The Complex Religion of Formosa* is an exploration of teen spiritual development. *Walking on the Edge* is an interactive guide for Seventh-day Adventist teens who are attending public high school. *Joy to the Silence* is a devotional book where you allow God's voice to speak to your soul.

So, I encourage you to crack open the books. See what they say. And then let me know what you think!

You read 2 1/2 of the books so far. I'd better finish the one and read the other one, too!

Plan on coming to the Lake Camp Meeting June 9-15, 2009. This takes place on the Bannock State Adventist Academy campus. There are meetings for all ages, including a Youth Division in the Residence Hall Chapel. I hope to see you there.

It's Spring Time!

When April rolls around, you know the school year is drawing to a close. You are probably making sure your teen has all the assignments in for his or her classes. Not to mention the regular parenting chores.

Now that it's April, our Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Public High School Project is also drawing to a close, too. Next month we will begin our survey process. We will send you some papers to fill out and mail back. This will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of all we have done.

In the meantime, you can share your thoughts, opinions or experiences by email or by phone at...
Fantastic Facts:
+ Weddings: One down, one to go. (Off my sons, that is.)
+ It is sometimes cold in Salmon, Idaho in April.
+ Resources at http://youth.idahoadventist.org/index.php
+ 15 students participated in the March Mission Trip to the Navajo Nation in April.

It's Never Too Late

Maybe there are some of you out there who haven't done as much as you had hoped with the books I sent you. Maybe you got busy with sports, church events or school work and it has slipped by. Well, it is not too late to get going again.

Let me give you a run-down on the books once more: What We Believe for Teens explains Seventh-day Adventist beliefs to teenagers. The Complex Religion of Focuses on an exploration of teen spiritual development. Walking on the Edge is an interactive guide for Seventh-day Adventist teens who are attending public high school. Enjoy the Silence is a devotional book where you allow God's voice to speak to your soul.

So, I encourage you to crack open the books. See what they say. And then let me know what you think!

I've read 2/3 of the books so far. I'd better finish the one and read the other one, too!

Plan on coming to the Idaho Camp Meeting June 9-15, 2009. This takes place on the Gem State Adventist Academy campus. There are meetings for all ages, including a Youth Decision in the Residence Hall Chapel. I hope to see you there!

It's Spring Time!

When April rolls around, you know the school year is drawing to a close. You are probably making sure you have all the assignments in for all your classes so that you can finish your year... and look forward to moving to the next level next school year.

New that it's April, our Idaho Conference Youth Ministries Public High School Project is also drawing to a close, too. Next month, we will begin our survey process. We will send you some papers to fill out and mail back. This will help us to evaluate the effectiveness of all we have done.

In the meantime, you can share your thoughts, opinions or experiences by email or by phone at...
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
The Doctor of Ministry Department

Informed Consent Form
Title: Family-Based Ministry for Public High School Students

Purpose of Study: I understand that the purpose of this study is to discover what materials would be helpful for family-based spiritual nurture for public high school students.

Inclusion Criteria: In order to participate, I recognize that I must be a parent or guardian of a public high school student and of sound mind, and must either currently or at some point in the past, been an active participant in a Seventh-day Adventist congregation.

Risks and Discomforts: I have been informed that there are no physical or emotional risks to my involvement in this study.

Benefits/Results: I accept that I will receive no remuneration for my participation, but that by participating, I will help the researcher and the Seventh-day Adventist Church arrive at a better understanding of what materials would be helpful for families to spiritually nurture their public high school students.

Voluntary Participation: I understand that my involvement in this survey is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any pressure, embarrassment, or negative impact on me. I also understand that participation is anonymous and that neither the researcher nor any assistants will be able to identify my responses to me.

Contact Information: In the event that I have any questions or concerns with regard to my participation in this research project, I understand that I may contact either the researcher, John Bryson at (Tel: ), or his advisor, Dr. Barry Gane, Director, Leadership & Professional Development, South Pacific Division at (Tel: ). I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

_______________________________  __________________________
Signature of Subject  Date

_______________________________  __________________________
Informed Consent Form
Title: Family-Based Ministry for Public High School Students

Purpose of Study: I understand that the purpose of this study is to discover what materials would be helpful for family-based spiritual nurture for public high school students.

Inclusion Criteria: In order to participate, I recognize that I must be a student at a public high school and of sound mind, and must either currently or at some point in the past, been an active participant in a Seventh-day Adventist congregation.

Risks and Discomforts: I have been informed that there are no physical or emotional risks to my involvement in this study.

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APPENDIX E

SURVEYS

Survey

Parents or Guardians of Public High School Students

The purpose of this study is to discover what materials are helpful for family-based spiritual nurture for public high school students. The information received is confidential and will help the researcher compile and distribute lists of resources to families with public high school students. Participants need to be a parent or guardian of a public high school student and are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time during the survey.

Background Information:

Gender: ___ Male  ___ Female

Marital status: ___ Single; ___ Married; ___ Divorced; ___ Separated

How many children do you have who attend public high school? _____

Please rate the benefit of the following sources of spiritual growth for your teenager:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale: Very Helpful</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Very Unhelpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA=Does not apply</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Worship Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Sabbath School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Worship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Teen Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Devotions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate the benefits for family-based spiritual nurture of the following resources provided by the researcher:

**Scale:**  
Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unhelpful  
NA=Does not apply

A. Book: *The Complex Religion of Teens*, by Roger Dudley:

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>NA</th>
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</table>

Comments:
B. Workbook: *Walking on the Edge: Thirteen Interactive Bible Studies for Adventist Students in Public High School*, by Stuart Tyner and Bailey Gillespie:

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</table>

Comments:

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C. Devotional Exercise Book: *Enjoying the Silence* by Maggie Robbins & Duffy Robbins:

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<th>NA</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Comments:
D. Book: *What We Believe for Teens*, by Seth Pierce:

If you used other materials for family-based spiritual nurture, please indicate and rate their benefit.

*Scale: Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unhelpful*

NA=Does not apply

A. _____________________________:

1 2 3 4 5 NA

Comments:
B. __________________________________________________________________:

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<th></th>
<th>NA</th>
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</table>

Comments:
Survey
Public High School Students

The purpose of this study is to discover what materials are helpful for family-based spiritual nurture for public high school students. The information received is confidential and will help the researcher compile and distribute lists of resources to families with public high school students. Participants need to be a parent or guardian of a public high school student and are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time during the survey.

Background Information:

Gender: ___ Male   ___ Female

Father’s Marital status: ___ Single; ___ Married; ___ Divorced; ___ Separated
Mother’s Marital status: ___ Single; ___ Married; ___ Divorced; ___ Separated
How many siblings do you have who attend public high school? ____

Please rate the benefit of the following sources of spiritual growth for yourself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Helpful</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Very Unhelpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church Worship Service</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Sabbath School</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
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<td>Family Worship</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please rate the benefits for family-based spiritual nurture of the following resources provided by the researcher:

Scale: Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unhelpful
NA=Does not apply

A. Book: The Complex Religion of Teens, by Roger Dudley:

Comments:
B. Workbook: *Walking on the Edge: Thirteen Interactive Bible Studies for Adventist Students in Public High School*, by Stuart Tyner and Bailey Gillespie:

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Comments:

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C. Devotional Exercise Book: *Enjoying the Silence*, by Maggie Robbins & Duffy Robbins:

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Comments:
D. Book: *What We Believe for Teens*, by Seth Pierce:

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Comments:

If you used other materials for family-based spiritual nurture, please indicate and rate their benefit.

*Scale: Very Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Unhelpful  
NA=Does not apply*

A. _______________________________________

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Comments:
APPENDIX F

SURVEY PROCEDURES

Purpose: To evaluate the effects of providing resources for parents within the Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to spiritually nurture their children who attend public high school.

Methods: Four books been supplied to the focus family groups along with a brief explanation of the process. The students and their parents are being given surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of utilizing the supplied materials.

Time Frame: September 2008 to May 2009

Confidentiality: No names will be connected to the responses given and no record will be kept of who gave what response. The only record that will be kept will be of the actual responses given.

Procedures to be followed:

1. Surveys will be mailed to parents and students who have agreed to be part of the study.

2. In order for us to use your survey, we must have an Informed Consent Form. Please note the following:
   a. For students under the age of 18, a parent must also sign and date the form.
   b. Besides the signature of the parent or student, someone who is at least 18 years old needs also to sign and date the form as a witness.
   c. We cannot use any surveys returned with a properly signed Informed Consent Form.

3. In order to maintain confidentiality while ensuring that each person filling out the survey also signs the Informed Consent Form, we will follow this procedure:
   a. Those taking the survey will fill out the Informed Consent Form and the Survey (specific to either a parent or student.)
   b. They will then place both of these documents in the return envelope provided and return to the Idaho Conference.
   c. Eve Rusk will open the envelopes in the following manner:
      i. She will make sure that the Informed Consent Form has been properly filled out.
ii. If the Informed Consent Form has been properly filled out, she will place the Informed Consent Form in one container and the Survey in another container, to be later given to the researcher, John Bryson.

iii. If the Informed Consent Form is not in the envelope, the Survey will be shredded and will not be used in the study.

iv. If the Informed Consent Form is improperly filled out, she will return it (with the survey and another envelope) with instructions on what is still needed.

v. Eve Rusk will not concern herself with the surveys, other than getting them to the researcher, John Bryson.

4. We request that all surveys be returned as soon as possible. Preferably before May 31, 2009.
Dear First Name,

I want to thank you again for being part of the Adventist Public High School study. Two months ago, I sent out surveys for the participants to fill out. According to our records, we have not yet received your survey back in our office. I know how paperwork can be mislaid, so I am sending you the survey materials once more. Please take the time to fill them out and send them back as soon as possible. I am hoping to go through the returned surveys this summer when I don’t have the pressures of my teaching responsibilities at Gem State Adventist Academy.

If you were not able to read all (or any) of the books, I would still appreciate the return of the survey. Your specific usage (or non-usage) of the materials will be helpful as we analyze the results of this project.

Once I have completed the analysis of the project, I will send you a report so that you can see for yourself the information we discovered.

If you have any questions about this process, feel free to contact me by email at or by my cell phone at .

Again, thank you for your participation and help with this project.

Sincerely,

John Bryson, Coordinator
Youth Ministries
## APPENDIX H

### SURVEY SCORES

*Parents' Scores of Spiritual Practices*

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REFERENCE LIST


VITA


Bryson served as a pastor in churches of the Northern California Conference and the Idaho Conference from 1977–1978 and 1981–2008. Currently, he is the chaplain and Bible teacher at Gem State Adventist Academy in Caldwell, Idaho. Since 1999, he has been serving as coordinator for senior youth ministries for the Idaho Conference concurrent with his pastoral and chaplain duties.

In 1977, Bryson married Joan McMurry. They have four adult sons, two daughters-in-law, and one grandson.