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Applying Biblical Principles of Discipleship and United Team Work in the Owen Sound Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP AND
UNITED TEAM WORK IN THE OWEN SOUND
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Peter Caran

Adviser: Kenley Hall

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP AND UNITED TEAM WORK IN THE OWEN SOUND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: April 2013

Problem

I became pastor of the Owen Sound Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2005. Since then, the church has grown from 67 members to 86 members in 2009. In spite of the numerical growth the regular Sabbath worship service attendance has stayed the same. Pastoral observation suggested that this was due to a lack of unity and spiritual coherence in the church. The primary contributing factor to this lack of unity and spiritual coherence was in the unsynchronized work of the new converts who have undertaken leadership roles and the existing leadership in creating an atmosphere of unity and concord in the work of fulfilling the Great Commission. Additionally, the church representation at the board was skewed. More than 60% of the church population was under 60 and yet 80%

of the board members were over the age of 65. Disputes and the lack of balance in power sharing have been evidenced through the many conflicts the church has dealt with, that seemed mostly rooted in the control issues of those who have been in the church since its beginning in 1987.

As the journey through the project continued I was persuaded more and more that disunity in the church was not primarily an issue of church governance but rather the core problem was one of discipleship.

Looking at the problem as one of discipleship led to a further discovery that the problem in the church was mirrored in me. The fires of disunity in the church have been instrumental in bringing to the surface the disunity dross in my own heart and life and centered at its core was an issue of personal discipleship.

Task

The main task of this project is to work out a biblical solution to the ways newcomers into the church will be accepted, trained as leaders, and work harmoniously together with the existing leaders in fulfilling the Great Commission. When I began this project I naively believed that the simple solution to this issue was to establish, teach and enforce biblical principles of fair church governance.

However, as I described in the statement of the problem I discovered that church governance was not the core issue; rather the core issue was discipleship. Thus the task morphed into developing a strategy for discipling both new and previously existing leaders and members.

This move toward discipling led me to a problem and a task even closer to home. Looking at the problems out there even in my own church, I saw myself as in a mirror. I realized that change and improvements come only out of a changed agent.

Results

As I reflect on my experience in working with the OSSDAC, I would conclude that going through crises has helped me figure out my own heart issues as well as developing better leadership qualities. It has also helped all of the church leaders to mature and to know and understand the purpose of having an Adventist church in the area. I have discovered as well that I naturally tend to lean toward idealism and have a strong sense of fairness. After the first major conflict and many battles later, I realized I needed to spend more time with the leaders and members helping them find a biblically relevant church that can mature and grow as stated in the Great Commission.

Conclusion

Through my experiences at the OSSDAC the Lord used the fiery furnace flames to reform the failings of his own follower. Looking at the problems of OSSDAC as one of discipleship led to an awakening in my own life. The problem in the church was mirrored in me. Thus the fires of disunity in the church have been instrumental in bringing to the surface the disunity dross in my own heart and life centered at its core as an issue of personal discipleship.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and Christian counseling, I have dealt with my fears, bitterness, rebellion, pride, past abuse, moral failure, pursuit of temporal values, hypocrisy, harboring negative thoughts, an argumentative competitive spirit and have recaptured ground that was given up to the

enemy. I hope this project encourages you to face your own heart issues through prayer and Christian counseling.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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UNITED TEAM WORK IN THE OWEN SOUND
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
Peter Caran
April 2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
	1. INTRODUCTION	1
	Background	1
	Statement of the Problem	2
	Purpose of the Task	3
	Delimitations	4
	Limitations.....	4
	Definitions of Terms	4
	Methodology and Description of the Project Process	5
	Conclusion.....	6
	2. EXPLORING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES PERTAINING TO ISSUES OF FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION AS TEAM WORKERS IN THE OWEN SOUND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH	7
	The Great Commission.....	7
	Biblical Disciple Making.....	10
	Who is a Disciple/Leader of Jesus Christ.....	11
	Biblical Stages of Disciple/Leader	14
	Activity of the Biblical Disciple/Leader	16
	Biblical Principles in Team Work and Community Building	19
	Biblical Team Disciples/Leaders.....	21
	United as one Team.....	21
	The Need for Biblical Disciples/Leaders	25
	Biblical Principles of Inclusivity	27
	Barriers to Unified Work and Turning Conflicts Into Growing Experiences	29
	Biblical Ways of Dealing With Conflicts to Strengthen Teamwork.....	30
	Conclusion.....	33
	3. LITERATURE CONSULTATION REGARDING DISCIPLE MAKING AND INTEGRATION OF THE SAME INTO A UNITED TEAMWORK THAT WOULD GROW THE OSSDAC	36
	Obstacles for Biblical Disciple Making	36
	Literary Sources on Disciple Making.....	38
	Calling and “the Character” of a Disciple/Leader	38

Purpose of the Disciple/Leader	43
Evaluation of Disciple-Making Processes and Methods	45
Obstacles for United Team Work.....	48
Literary Sources on Church Team Work and Unity.....	49
Practicing Biblical Unity of Mission in Spite of the Opposition	55
Conclusion.....	59
4. IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSMENT AND POINTING OUT KEY HINDRANCES FOR UNITY AND MISSION AS WELL AS PRESENTING BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS FOR CHURCH GROWTH	60
Ministry Context.....	60
The Background of the OSSDAC	61
The Challenges at the OSSDAC	62
Implementing Biblical and Theological Solution for OSSDAC	63
Nehemiah’s Model of Rebuilding	64
The OSSDAC’s Journey of Rebuilding	64
Discipling	65
Inspiring Worship.....	65
Casting a new Vision.....	66
Implementing the Vision the Lord Gave to OSSDAC	67
Dealing With the Opposition.....	71
The Future of OSSDAC	73
Conclusion.....	74
5. EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF MY OWN GROWTH AS A DISCIPLE	76
Growth as a Disciple of Christ	76
My Background and the Three Major Crossroads	76
Personal Discoveries and Growth	79
Growing in Service to Others	84
Disciple-Making Recommendations	88
Recommendations on Disciple Making as a United Work	90
Recommendations for Personal Heart Work.....	91
Appendix	
1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MEMBERSHIP	92
2. GROWING A MATURE DISCIPLE	95
REFERENCE LIST	96
VITA.....	101

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

It was a great privilege to be able to do a Master of Divinity program at Andrews University after being in ministry for several years. In my heart I wanted to improve, grow, and do more effective ministry for the glory of the Lord. Thus, when the chance came to do a Doctor of Ministry program in church growth, I took it because of the desire in my heart to better learn how to help my church members to grow in Christian maturity and how to increase church membership numbers. By God's grace, a dozen churches that the Lord entrusted to me grew numerically and in Christian maturity, but that did not happen in all, nor did every church grow numerically every year. It would be true to say that this project was birthed out of frustration and a desire to see how the Lord would replicate the Acts 2 experience in the churches in my district. As I continue to wrestle with the project I am dealing with my own insufficiencies that have prevented the kingdom of God from growing both qualitatively and quantitatively. From my point of view, my biggest lack was not how to empower new leaders but how to integrate the work of the new leaders and members with existing leaders and members with a shared vision that would multiply church growth. Ideally, all this would be done while keeping the body of Christ, the church, united.

Only recently did I realize that by adding the DMin study and research that was birthed out of frustration I would be adding onto the already heavy load of full-time ministry and homeschooling three children. Additionally, I was adding all of this even though I was struggling to deal with my marriage, family, and ministry in a healthy way. The last four years of my life mark a time filled with frustration and wrestling, something that happened to Jacob on the Jabbok River before his name changed to “Israel” (Gen 32:24-32). Any observer of my personal and family life during this period would describe it as a fiery time of life trials.

As I have continued the process of rewriting this project four years have passed, and I can humbly say that the fire has not only provided “enlightenment” but “the refining” and “growing up” of a servant leader. I do believe a better servant leader has emerged who will give glory to Christ Jesus with his life and ministry, and who will find his joy increased in ministry.

Statement of the Problem

From 2005 when I became pastor of the Owen Sound Seventh-day Adventist Church the church has grown from 67 members to 86 members in 2009. In spite of the numerical growth the regular Sabbath worship service attendance has stayed the same. Pastoral observation suggested that this was due to a lack of unity and spiritual coherence in the church. The primary contributing factor to this lack of unity and spiritual coherence was in the unsynchronized work of the new converts who have undertaken leadership roles and the existing leadership in creating an atmosphere of unity and concord in the work of fulfilling the Great Commission. Additionally, the church representation at the board was skewed. More than 60% of the church population was under 60 and yet 80%

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This move toward discipling led me to a problem and a task even closer to home. Looking at the problems out there even in my own church, I saw myself as in a mirror. I

realized that change and improvements come only out of a changed agent. In Luke 6:45 Jesus tells us that good church happens when the heart of a changed agent is good. Thus the task was altered even further to deal with my own growth as a disciple and a servant leader.

Delimitations

I have gathered information for this research from the members of the OSSDAC and the community of Owen Sound, Ontario. The OSSDAC has her own traditions and cultures; hence, this project's research results may not apply to other church contexts in the North American Division (NAD).

Limitations

Even though I have spent over five years in OSSDAC, what I have experienced there is still a limited perspective. This project is unable to describe and research in a definitive way the over thirty years of OSSDAC life and culture; hence, it is limited to what we have observed, tried, and tested for the period of time I was at the church. However, I believe that this research data will provide a window into a church's culture, but will be limited in determining the root components of the same.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this project, I am using the following key terms:

The Great Commission: In *Wikipedia* (2012) it says: "The Great Commission, in Christian tradition, is the instruction of the resurrected Jesus Christ to his disciples, that they spread His teachings to all the nations of the world. It has become a tenet in Christian theology emphasizing missionary work, evangelism, and baptism."

Disciple: According to Matthew 28:19, 20 a disciple of Jesus could be understood narrowly to mean a person who has been taught of Jesus' teachings and baptized.

A disciple/leader: Jesus called his own disciples not only to baptize and preach the Good News of the Kingdom, but as Matthew 28:19, 20 says, to perpetuate the disciple-making process for the glory of God and the disciple's increased joy.

Unity and teamwork: Harmonious working of the new disciples/leaders and the existing ones that leads towards church unity. The root word for Jesus' prayer can best describe unity as recorded in John 17: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*" (v. 11, emphasis added).

Methodology and Description of the Project Process

Constant reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit through persevering prayer is the foundation of this project. Chapter 2 explores the biblical and theological foundations regarding Jesus' call to team work while fulfilling the Great Commission within the context of the Great Controversy.

Chapter 3 surveys literature describing some of the best ways to train and develop disciple/leaders. Additionally it will deal with conflict resolution.

Chapter 4 focuses on my discovery that church governance was not the core issue; rather the core issue was discipleship. It shows how the project task morphed into developing a strategy for discipling both new and previously existing leaders and members and the results in the OSSDAC.

Chapter 5 is about my own growth as a disciple/leader. The second part of this chapter probes the existing church “culture” at the time. It then finishes with some recommendations for pastors and churches wanting to grow disciple/leaders.

Conclusion

Often as we work on something over a period of time it does not seem to be as good as we thought it to be at the start. That in itself is good, because some kind of progress has been made, and that is certainly the case of my project focus. To start with, I believed that if we could only apply biblical principles to the problems we were facing things would improve, and maybe they have in some ways. However, as the focus changed from dealing with problems to focusing on being obedient to Christ and pursuing the call to make disciples in a united way some even greater improvements occurred in the OSSDAC.

The focus has changed for the third time during this journey. However, this time I did not only look outside and around me to see the problem. The Holy Spirit wanted me to use my own church as a mirror in order to see my own heart, soul, strength and whole being. I discovered that I must grow as a disciple before I could guide my own people to where Christ wants them to be.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES PERTAINING TO ISSUES OF FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION AS TEAM WORKERS IN THE OWEN SOUND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The Lord has commanded people to “make disciples” as stated in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). Yet, in my experience, when a church seeks to faithfully fulfill the great commission, issues that threaten church unity seem to arise. This chapter will address how to better fulfill the Great Commission while staying united in purpose.

However, before looking at the biblical principles and issues related to the teamwork and unity that is needed to fulfill the Great Commission some attention should be given to the Great Commission itself.

The Great Commission

The phrase “the Great Commission” is not actually found in the Bible. According to Wilken (2011) it is a term that was first developed and used by missionaries in the 18th century¹ to attract and inspire people to become serious about Jesus’ call to go into all the world and make disciples as recorded in Matt 28:18-20. Regardless of the origin of the phraseology or the fact that it is not a biblical term “the Great Commission” has become a

¹It was first used by Dutch missionary Justinian von Welz (1621-88); however, it was Hudson Taylor, 200 years later, who is credited with popularizing the use of “The Great Commission.”

generally accepted and recognized way within the church of referring to Jesus' call in Matt 28:18-20 to join Him in the disciple-making process. So this chapter will utilize this term to refer to Jesus' call to discipleship and discipling.

I am aware that the Great Commission encompasses greater evangelization than just disciple making. I do see the need of us to "go" out and meet the needs of our communities so we can gain their trust and glorify the Lord in the process. Additionally, I am aware that there is a process of leading a person to a loving relationship with a living God until he/she is ready to make a public commitment to Jesus through baptism. Even though these are important parts of the Great Commission I have chosen to focus on the parts that grow quality disciples for Jesus and that would offer quality evangelization of the whole world.

It does seem significant that in the context of Matthew's gospel the "Great Commission" is Jesus' parting words to his disciples. Even in today's world, before someone leaves it, what he/she tells us last is most important. Hence, what Jesus tells his disciples, and what he tells us today in the Great Commission is of central and utmost importance for his church.

The core message of Jesus Christ found in the Great Commission is about making disciples. Jesus commanded his disciples of the past and commands people today to go and make disciples. The English word "to go" is the Greek word **poreu, w** (poreuo) meaning depart, go, follow. In a way Jesus is saying with the word "go" to be on your way making disciples by following his example in making you a disciple of the kingdom of God. Even the disciples of Jesus Christ were not to remain where Jesus left them reminiscing, staying sentimental and immovable, thinking only of past precious

memories. The disciples were to move, to go, to depart and meet the needs of people, to go out and gain people's trust but still one major goal remained in front of them, and that was to make disciples.

The next word after go is "you." As I read the account in Matt 28:19, I see that Jesus is calling "me" to go into the field and make disciples. If we keep on asking others to accept the Great Commission call and exclude ourselves from the picture, who will then model what it means to make disciples? Only pastors? I need to accept the call to go, to depart from what I am doing, and to go make disciples for God's kingdom.

The English word "therefore" that often follows "go ye" denotes assurance that this is the main task of our activities. These things, meaning "going and making disciples" are so certain in the mind of the departing Jesus Christ that those who read it need to respond to the "going" and make sure they are involved primarily in this activity of making kingdom disciples.

The Greek word for a disciple in this word is μαθητευω (matheteuo) translated rightfully both as "to be a disciple" as well as "to make a disciple" (denoting stewardship). The same word describes a pupil, someone who sits at the feet of a teacher and is instructed, an apprentice. This apprentice will learn enough and mature over time to be able to lead others through the same process. Jesus went through the process, he led his disciples through the process, and his disciples led others through the process of a disciple in making.

The process of disciple making for Jesus did not happen through distance learning. Jesus himself did not just stay in heaven and send to earth an emailed version of a disciple-making manual with instructions on how to become disciples or how to make

disciples for God's kingdom. In John 1:14 we read that it was a hands on experience in which he himself went through the process of being a disciple of God (Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:35]; Jesus was of God [John 3:16]; He was growing in being a disciple [Luke 2:52]; and he served and shed his blood guided by the Holy Spirit [Heb 9:14].) Most of the Gospel stories tell how he was making disciples of his followers. Jesus was a disciple first and then a disciple/leader, making other disciple/leaders and calling people to do the same as recorded in the Great Commission.

Going through the process of being a disciple and making disciples (Matt 28:18), Jesus would turn to his disciples before departing this world, commanding them imperatively to preoccupy themselves with disciple making by supplying all authority to the disciple-making process, through blessing them with God's presence (Matt 28:20). People are working with God when making disciples for Christ Jesus.

Biblical Disciple Making

Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes the word disciple as a follower of Jesus Christ. As noted earlier, Jesus Christ was a disciple of God himself, someone who followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. After modeling what it means to be a disciple he then asks Christians to be disciples. Jesus Christ personally modeled what an ideal disciple/leader should look like and what that person should do. Upon his departure from his earthly life he extended the call to be and make disciples/leaders of other followers for Him. The next section will not only discuss what followers of Jesus Christ look like, but also the stages these followers might go through and what their main preoccupation should be.

Who is a Disciple/Leader of Jesus Christ?

In John 1:35-51 Jesus himself spends time seriously praying about whom to invite to follow him as His disciples. This is not just some kind of drive-through praying, but as Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; and Luke 5:16; 6:12 testify, Jesus spent serious, long hours in prayer probably wanting to know from God the Father who was ready to be called and follow the discipleship process. After bathing himself in prayer, Jesus Christ went and called his followers.

Prayer was an integral part of Jesus' life. He prayed before he undertook major tasks, such as calling his disciples. From previously mentioned passages Jesus prayed a lot. Luke 6:12 says that Jesus spent the whole night praying, and Luke 5:16 says that Jesus often took time to pray. Prayer was a time when he unloaded the pains from his heart, but at the same time, prayer was a time when he listened to God for directions of that day. Hence, he could say often that what he did was what his Father wanted him to do. John 5:19 and 12:49 testify that Jesus listened and did what the Father instructed him to say and do.

In order for people to hear the call of Christ Jesus they need to listen and then hear. Jesus always listened to God through prayer and His voice, including the 30 years before He entered into his full-time ministry of making disciples.

The text in Luke 2:52 says that Jesus grew in listening to God and grew in being in connection with God and in wisdom with God, but Jesus also grew in listening to people, in connecting with people, and in the wisdom of human beings. Again, it is necessary to stress that Jesus did not gain this education through distant learning, but

through incarnation as John 1:14 says. Jesus Christ was God in human flesh, called Immanuel.

The one who is called by Jesus Christ into discipleship is the one who listens, hears, and obeys because of wanting to follow him. According to John 1:35-51, Jesus' followers not only heard the invitation to a life of discipleship but they responded to that call and followed him. The same text says that they did not always come by themselves, but invited their brothers to share with them in a team disciple-making ministry. As Jesus Christ left this earth He gave the Holy Spirit (Acts 1 and John 14-16) to all his followers to guide and direct them in the disciple/leader-making process. Luke 14:25, 26, and 33 suggests that the Holy Spirit helps people "count the cost" of following, propagating, and making disciples for God's glory. A disciple/leader is one who has a sense of calling from the Lord, who prayerfully responds to that call, and may invite others into a team-working ministry.

Matthew 10:24, 25 states that a disciple is a learner. When the disciples of Jesus started on their journey of discipling it was difficult for them to endure hardship, but as they stayed committed to the cause, they ended up enduring some of the harshest treatment for the sake of Christ Jesus. That is what is called learning from the Master. According to Matthew 28:20 a disciple, and a leader as well, bathes all their actions courageously in prayer and listens to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is with them at all times.

In John 14:26 and Romans 8:14, 26 one can read that the Holy Spirit teaches, guides, comforts, and intercedes for those who commit their lives to God. The Holy Spirit led Philip by giving him counsel that would aid the church at Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit

works in conjunction with God the Father and Jesus Christ in the process of creating, regenerating, and sanctifying (Gen 1:2; John 3:6; 2 Thess 2:13). The activities of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament should not be overlooked (Gen 6:3). The Holy Spirit restrains the influence of evil so that his work described in John 16:8-11 is a work of conviction to the unbeliever that allows him/her to see the truth of the gospel in a clear light. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, it is the Holy Spirit who brings the repentant and willing follower of Jesus into the body of Christ, which is His church (Rom 12). The victorious life of a disciple of Christ, as described in Romans 6:1-10, is the result of the working of the same Spirit who helps believers have harmony in their lives and live in accordance with God's Word (Rom 12:1, 2; Eph 5:18; Col 3:16). The Holy Spirit puts the seal on a follower, on a disciple of Christ Jesus (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). From the birthing of a disciple until the glorious end, the Holy Spirit journeys inseparably, guiding the disciple/leader.

Lastly, a disciple of Christ Jesus spends time with the Holy Spirit allowing Him, as recorded in 1 Cor 13:4-8, to mold his/her heart in the likeness of the heart of Jesus. In harmony with Gal 5:22, 23 the same disciple/leader displays the virtues of the fruit of the Spirit, and the disciple/leader uses God-given gifts for the glory of the Father (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4; 1 Pet 4).

In discussing heart transformation there is an important component that I have found through my own experience and my work in pastoral counseling. Without a deep heart transformation it is almost impossible to be a stable, peaceful, and joyful disciple/leader of Christ Jesus. What is a deep heart transformation? A deep transformation of the heart goes all the way back to our formative years where pains are

revealed, given to God in prayer, and the ground that was given to the enemy through those pains in our heart is now reclaimed and the void in the heart has been filled with the truth of the Word of God. Paul instructs us to deal with our anger before the sun sets, so that such anger does not fester and in doing so gives ground to the enemy (Eph 4:26, 27). Unresolved anger, especially in our childhood, often does exactly what Paul describes in Hebrews 12:15, where it grows into bitterness and those bitter roots allows the enemy to have a foothold in our hearts. The enemy wants to destroy the sinner (John 10:10), so that grace does not have an effect and the sinner moves away from it. Romans 12:21 instructs us to go through this process of having a deep heart transformation so we can overcome evil with help from God who guides us in taking the evil from our hearts, and replacing it with the Word.

What has been described so far is part of the core of a disciple/leader, a heart of a disciple, but there is more to a biblical disciple and that is his/her activity guided by the Holy Spirit. Before looking at the activity of a disciple let us look at the biblical stages a disciple might go through.

Biblical Stages of Disciple/Leader

Biblically, a few stages can be extracted for spiritual growth of a disciple/leader.

Infancy stage: According to Heb 5:13 and 6:2, infancy is a stage when a baby relies on the basic elements of “milk” to be fed and parents who will feed the milk to the infant.

Child stage: The child as described in the Bible is a person who holds onto God’s promises (Prov 24:16; 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Pet 1:3; 1 John 3:7). A child listens to the council

of leaders and others while building his/her own relationship with God. As a child grows the child might practice spiritual body building or spiritual muscle flexing.

Adult stage: In the adult stage hearts and minds are more refined (Prov 4:13; Rom 12:2). God's wisdom makes more sense and the adults begin to transfer their experience with God to others who desire the Lord.

Parent or mature adult stage: Parents or mature adults have become spiritual adults, leading others to Christ, building and restoring others in more mature, discerning ways (1 Cor 4:15; Eph 4:12; Gal 6:1). Mature adults are walking in God's love displaying the fruit of the Spirit qualities (Gal 5:22, 23). A person becomes a disciple/leader when that person has given birth to a new disciple.

These stages should be used in the process of evaluation, together with stages mentioned in Chapter 3, for a discipling journey that would bring the greatest glory to God. Before finishing this section, it might be pertinent to share the stages Jesus led his disciples through as they matured into becoming disciple/leaders.

The book of Matthew shares how Jesus journeyed with His disciples through a maturing process. It is a manual for disciples/leaders to help them to work better at unity in the church. The linear process of Jesus' leadership can be summed up in four easy steps.

Step one: In Matt 5-7 Jesus has verbally shared what the Kingdom of heaven is like on this earth.

Step two: From Matt 8-13 Jesus modeled the Kingdom of heaven to his disciples.

Step three: In Matt 14 to the end of the book Jesus observed his disciples as to how they proclaimed the goodness of the Lord to others and gave a helping hand.

Step four: In the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles this circle of growth that encompasses making disciples is repeated fulfilling the charge of the Great Commission and completing the circle to all who desire to go through the same leader/discipling process.

Activity of the Biblical Disciple/Leader

The activity of the biblical disciple is found right in the Great Commission itself. A biblical disciple is one who goes. Imagine the oxymoron of a stone statue and on the bottom of the statue there is a plaque that says, “This is a disciple of Jesus Christ.” This is the Great Commission’s greatest impediment. The Great Commission disciple is one who goes, such as Thomas who went to India, Peter who went through Israel and Judah, Paul, Timothy, Barnabas, and others who went all the way to Spain, Illyricum, Macedonia, and other places. They did not accept the task of only being stone statues, but they accepted the challenge to go, mainly two by two, departing and following Jesus’ call to make disciples. Hence, the first task and the primary action of a disciple/leader is to join other(s) in order to make more disciples/leaders for Christ with the least amount of conflict and division in the present body of Christ, the Church. Calling disciples is what Jesus Christ did prayerfully and we are to do the same. As said earlier we are to model what it means to listen, hear, obey, and rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The action of the biblical disciple is closely connected to the message Jesus Christ preached as well. The message of Jesus Christ according to Mark 1 is Good News. According to Bible Works 6, the Good News in the Greek is *euvagge, lion* (*euaggelion*), and it simply means a good news or a gospel. According to John 3:16, the Good News, *Evangelion*, or *Evangelium* is the message of Jesus, the Christ or Messiah—

God's ruler promised by the Scriptures—specifically, the coming Kingdom of God, his death on the cross and resurrection to restore people's relationship with God. The whole New Testament testifies of the Good News of Jesus Christ. All can read it and find much pertinent historical information, but as John 5:39 states, the Bible is about Jesus Christ and He is the Good News.

The people of Jesus' time experienced, as the Gospels testify, the Good News in the form of healing, casting out demons, feeding the hungry, and other deeds of benevolence. Hence, to a biblical disciple of today, this Good News, the message however presented, needs to be a relevant message for people in their present situation so that when they receive it they can exclaim, as those in the past exclaimed, that it was truly good, and that Jesus, the center of the message, was a present truth, relevant truth to them. The disciples who saw thousands of satisfied "customers" of the Good News exclaim how relevant and good was the Good News they received.

As the Good News becomes relevant to people that are being taught, Jesus Christ becomes relevant to them, and as Jesus Christ becomes relevant, Jesus' kingdom as described in Luke 10:9-11 becomes true and real in the hearts of those people.

The next logical question to ask is what method(s) does the Bible speak of regarding how this Good News of Jesus Christ can be made relevant?

According to John 1:14 and other texts, Jesus spent time with the people and met people where they were. He met Zacchaeus as He was passing by the tree Zacchaeus had climbed (Luke 19:2-5). He met the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). He met the demoniac in Gaderene (Mark 5:1-20). Jesus not only met the people, but He met their needs. He healed the first two by forgiving their sins and out of the third, the demoniac;

He cast out the unclean spirit, meaning that He provided freedom from the oppression. To all of them, it was such good news that others around them felt the ripple effects of it.

When reading Luke 9:1, 2, it says that Jesus gave the disciples power and authority to drive out demons and then sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Jesus also gives the disciples/leaders Christ power to exercise authority to “cast” demons out of people, and “heal” the sick. So that those that see and hear what is taking place would be ready to hear the Good News preached with power. I have experienced this in my own ministry and can testify of it to be a true and powerful magnet to the Good News of Christ.

A biblical disciple mingles with the people, has his or her feet on the ground meeting the real needs of the people, but also obeys Mark 16:15 and preaches/teaches the Good News to the whole world. As believers live, meeting the needs of the people and preaching or teaching, people will come to the same point as the throngs did that heard Peter preached during Pentecost.

As Peter preached to the people who came to Jerusalem from around the known world as recorded in Acts 3:19 and as they heard Christ-centered messages that cut to the heart, Peter called them to a life of repentance from their sins. As these people repented the Great Commission was being fulfilled before the disciples. According to Acts 2:41 these new people did not just accept the Good News, but were baptized and were added to the church, the church in Acts, and further on as the Bible record states, the church grew, but it did not function without any difficulties. Expanding the kingdom of God by growing disciples/leaders biblically, from the beginning of the Bible record until the end, produces conflict. In John 15:18; 16:33 Jesus plainly states that His disciples will have

trouble; it seems that trouble is inevitable for any earthling, but even more for the disciple of Christ. However, in spite of troubles people can have peace. As stated earlier, peace only comes when people go through a deep transformational process with the Holy Spirit through prayer.

As seen in Acts 6 and 15 and elsewhere in the Bible, when churches grow troubles and conflicts often grow between those who are in the church and the newcomers. Because of that the next section will look at how new disciples can work in harmony with the existing disciples/leaders in order to grow the kingdom of God more successfully.

Biblical Principles in Team Work and Community Building

According to Matt 28:19, believers serve a triune God, so team work and community building needs to be modeled after three Greats. In the context of the Great Controversy² I would suggest that team work as well as community building within the church, whether that church is visible or virtual, can be accomplished through the Great Commandment as the following texts suggest: Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-28. The Great Commandment reads: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and also: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The bottom line message of the Great Commandment and the team work is the “other” or more precisely, “loving others.” The order is important here as well. People can love their fellow men and women if they have spent time “loving” God

²The term “the Great Controversy” is a term coined by the Seventh-day Adventists to denote the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

enough to give Him time to fill their hearts with love so they can show God's love to others around them. In Phil 2:3, Paul repeats this call for loving others by saying that people should in humility esteem others more highly than themselves. This is not an easy task for a self-seeking human being. If it was so easy to accomplish, people would have done what they were supposed to do long ago and Jesus would have come to take them to heaven.

Why is the Great Commission so hard to fulfill through the Great Commandment? That question brings about the third Great. The *Great* Commission is hard to fulfill through the *Great* Commandment because of the *Great* Controversy.

Specifically to believers, the Great Controversy is a battle between Jesus, who calls us into disciple-making work as a team by loving others, and the Enemy (1 Pet 5:8) who wants to destroy that plan. According to the book of Job, Satan almost destroyed the teamwork Job and his family were doing in building the kingdom of God, and he brought disunity among the Twelve (Matt 18:1-6) by leading Jesus' disciples to talk about the positions of prominence rather than humility.

As the disciples before Jesus' ascension did, so do many leaders today still seek for who will be greatest in leadership, not realizing that real greatness comes when surrendering completely to God and seeking empowerment from the Holy Spirit by allowing Him to use us in a united way in the ministry of our Lord. Beginning in Gen 3 one can find that the work of the devil is real and ever present interfering in the work of the Lord.

Before looking at conflict and disunity issues and biblical resolutions, let us look at the biblical core ingredients and principles that would foster unified teamwork in the

church and in building a strong loving community.

Biblical Team Disciples/Leaders

The heart and character of a biblical team disciple/leader has already been described in depth in the first part of this chapter. However, what should be stressed is in these complex and rapidly changing times there is a need to understand more completely the church as well as the disciples/leaders through the analogy of the body of Christ (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4). This body of Christ in the context of the local church is not always the same in the composition of members in church membership or the disciples/leaders. So the crucial question for the church leadership after accepting the Great Commission is: Are we willing and how can we successfully accomplish disciple-making teamwork, with what we have and the situation we are in now?

What adjustments, if any, need to be made as to how to maintain the church building or work at building community within the church? How can adjustments be made in order to heed Jesus' call given in Matthew 28:19-20?

Who is the best disciple/leader(s) to move the process forward from where the church is right now and until the next disciple/leader(s) is chosen who will take the church into the next stage of a successful disciple-making program?

As time is spent together looking at how to accomplish those goals and continue evaluating them, trust will build among the team leaders and members and a greater unity and community will keep on emerging. This will not happen without conflict, but conflict will be discussed later on in this chapter. I now turn to some of the underlying biblical principles that would foster this united teamwork of building disciples/leaders.

United as one Team

In Bible Works 6, the word for unity in the Old Testament is: $\text{d}\chi; \text{y}$: (yakh'-ad) that connotes the basic meaning of union, unitedness, and a sense of togetherness. In its adverbial sense the word for unity denotes togetherness and being alike. The lesson that could be drawn just from the definition of the word is that the more time spent together in agreement the greater the union or unity there will be.

The unity that is discussed here is presented in a known verse from Psalms that probably best describes this coming together and seeking unity: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps 133:1). There are very few people that do not like this kind of unity.

According to Bible Works 6, the word for the unity in the New Testament is e`no, thj (hen-ot-ace') and it has the meaning of agreement, oneness, and unanimity. The word for unity or agreement used in John 17 is: *heis* or *mia* (fem.) or *hen* (neut.) denoting the sense of being in one accord, agreement, common, and unity. John 17:11, 21-23 exemplifies this unity found in the triune God and their joined team work, not only in creating the world, as will be discussed later, but in saving and healing its inhabitance into the same team work that awaits humanity in the Heavenly kingdom.

Jesus at first prayed for unity for his disciples (John 17:11) but now in this day and age as well for disciples/leaders (John 17:21). According to Him this biblical unity must be visibly based on love (John 13:35; 1 John 3:11; 4:12) so that when the world sees a united community, others will know immediately that the people are disciples of Jesus. However, this love and unity is not a moral effort powered by human energy; it is an outgrowth of the union Christians will enjoy with Jesus himself (John 17:21b), a union

modeled on the oneness of the Father and the Son (John 14:8-11), a union born when the Father and the Son dwell in the believers (Ps 119:11; John 15:1-4), with that indwelling producing a new birth (2 Cor 5:17) and growing a new creation in human beings.

In John 15:1-4 Jesus Christ envisions a profound spiritual intimacy that changes human life into His likeness. It is a unity encompassing the Father with the Son, the disciples with Jesus, and the disciples in loving and working in union with one another.

Matthew 18:19 shares one of the shortest and most concise calls for unity, coming right out of the words of Jesus, is the concept of “the agreement.” In order to come to an agreement and unite so there can be a move forward together making disciples, it is necessary to communicate, by coming together to hear and find mutually agreed ways to make disciples. Being mutually agreeable is not only saying agreeing horizontally but that the horizontal agreements are within the vertical boundaries the Lord has given.

So far the concepts of biblical unity and working together coming out of the New Testament are about commonality (Acts 2:44; 4:32), agreement (Matt 18:19), and oneness (John 17). The call for unity in the NIV Bible appears only about 12 times in the New Testament, and with such a low count maybe it can be assumed that the New Testament church did not have much of a problem with it as there is in today’s church. Realizing that the biblical foundation for the teamwork and unity in the church community is necessary, the next step to look at is how this teamwork and unity work in real life.

One of the best examples of teamwork is described in Gen 1 and 2 where right at the outset of this earth’s history it can be seen how God the Father uses the Word to create with the Holy Spirit right there on the ground so to speak, hovering upon the

waters doing all He can as a part of the team work.

John 17 is probably one of the best examples in the New Testament testifying to how united work among Jesus' disciples takes place. Note that a call to unity is in the form of prayer where Jesus is saying real biblical united teamwork can happen only after a lot of praying. In John 17, it relates that after Jesus called his disciples into ministry and after he modeled how to evangelize the world and then sent them out to make new disciples, He was praying that He would be an integral part of their teamwork so they could be successful in this magnanimous task in the context of the Great Controversy but only if they stay united with Him and each other. The unified team work is to be modeled, as John 17:21, 23 points out: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (emphasis supplied). Unified work of the triune loving God is to set the course for our unified work of a team of disciples/leaders. This united teamwork of God is seen in their work where God united the world to him through Christ (2 Cor 5:18, 19). In Matt 9 and 15 and other passages the Lord called his disciples to a united team working with him in the Great Commission He specified what the focus of that united team work was to accomplish. The Lord modeled a disciple/leader. Now closer exploration will be given to what this biblical team disciple/leader looks like for the church at the present time.

Jesus leaves those who are discipled, the church—the visible body of Christ (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12), to represent the kingdom of God in the world both passively and actively. People are as close and united to each other in the context of church and community, as they are close to Christ in their dependence upon Him. Unity that is Christ-centered, Bible-based and Spirit-guided is the ideal set before humanity. The Apostle Paul sets an

ideal as stated in Eph 4:13: “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Simply said, corporate unity is achieved through *coming* to a faith that builds trust that comes from the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is the reason and center of our *coming* to faith individually. This is derived from the time spent with Jesus and each other around the Word of God. This is accomplished by constantly focusing more and more on Jesus Christ, who is found in the Bible, through prayer, meditation, and simplified living, rejecting worldly values and embracing biblical spirituality, authenticity, and life in community.

The Need for Biblical Disciples/Leaders

The triune Lord emulates unity and unified work, and as people look up to find an ideal for unity in the Lord so do the church members look for unity and unified work among the disciples/leaders of the churches.

In looking into passages from the Bible, a number of biblical models for a disciple/leader can be found. The first ones come from the book of Exodus and the pen of Moses that describe working models for church unity and working together.

Exodus 17:9-12 describes what Adventists are very much aware of—the concept of the Great Controversy. In this text those in leadership/authority work in unity and agreement so the Lord can triumph over enemies as the Kingdom of God is expanded.

In the next chapter (Exod 18), another principle can be found for a united, biblical leadership that has to go together with the one in the previous chapter. In verses 20-23 it is found that someone can be held in authority not only because that person is a winner in

battles but because he/she has qualities described in the following text: “Able men, such as fear God, men of truth and those that hate covetousness.” These texts in Exodus talk about underlying character qualities and shared responsibilities among the leaders which not only make leadership lighter for the leaders at the church but it also lightens the burden of the pastor who often has the main responsibility of leadership.

The support for leadership found in Exodus 17 could be connected to Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 out of which a different model for harmonious team work of the church community can be found. When the body is standing, feet support the legs and the legs support everything above it. Feet and legs can do that, but not all the time. Sooner or later the body has to sit down and give the legs and feet a rest. All the body parts function to support each other. This is also what should happen within the body of Christ—all the members should support each other’s strengths so the body functions together in the team work of church communities. This is not talking about supporting any particular leader at all times as often happens, but answering the questions asked at the beginning of the chapter and finding which disciples/leaders could best help to accomplish disciple making by leading the whole body of Christ with their strengths. To stretch this analogy further, think of situations when the body of Christ made it through some difficult times by walking on her arms, or standing on her head.

When speaking of unified work, it does not mean that the work needs to be done exactly how Jesus did, but as in John 14:1-3 we ought to walk in the direction that leads to the New Jerusalem. It is necessary to be committed to walking together as one body of Christ, a body with limbs having different talents, roles, and strengths, yet working together (Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, Eph 4), and as 1 Corinthians 3:10 admonishes, building the

church of Christ Jesus. Some other biblical principles that would help in a unified teamwork will be explored next.

Biblical Principle of Inclusivity

The Lord anticipated that His people and his church would grow. What we do with those who join, those “immigrants and strangers,” is important. In the book of Numbers the Lord instructed the Israelites to treat those who joined them, those who were strangers to them, as equal with them and to let them participate in worship so they could connect and grow in the church (Num 15:14-16). The text further instructs that there will be only one ordinance, one law, and one custom that applies to both the foreigners and strangers and the Israelites that were part of one body. The bottom line of this equal treatment, according to the text, is that they should feel kindness from the Israelites. This same underscoring principle has been repeated in the New Testament church where kindness permeated the newly formed gentile church community (Eph 4:32).

The book of Ruth testifies of great blessings given to Ruth the Moabites. Boaz treats her well as a foreigner and a newcomer, and Ruth would later become part of the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophet Isaiah stated: “For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa 56:7). Traditions can be adjusted with God’s call to the churches to be the house of prayer for all people.

Jesus has been so inclusive that He trained female disciples as well. As we read in Luke 10, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, followed Jesus and chose “the better part” of sitting at the feet of Jesus (the posture of a disciple, pupil, learner, apprentice), many times

listening to her Master teach. She chose to be in a humble and teachable position. John notes of Mary as “one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair” preparing for what she understood would happen to Jesus soon (John 11:2).

Luke refers to a number of people accompanying Jesus besides the twelve. From among them he names three women: “Mary, called Magdalene, . . . and Joanna the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources” (Luke 8:2-3). Mary Magdalene and Joanna are among the women who went to prepare Jesus’ body in Luke’s account of the resurrection, and who later told the apostles and other disciples about the empty tomb and the angels there. Mark includes Mary, the mother of James, at the crucifixion and Salome at the tomb. John includes Mary the wife of Cleopas at the crucifixion.

Inclusiveness often builds teamwork in the church as evidenced in Acts 6:1-7. Here it says that this new church chose seven disciples/leaders that would take care of the better service for the whole church membership. As a result of this joint team effort, not only did the church grow numerically, but also it says that the church attracted fresh new disciples/leaders. Paying closer attention to this passage it is seen that the early church does something reminiscent of the command the Lord gave through Moses. Not only did the early church listen to the newcomers in the faith who were once strangers, but also asked them to help solve the problem they themselves brought before the disciples. The problems arose only to be solved by the teamwork of those who chose inclusivity of the old and the newcomers to the church community. Such action attracted other leaders to join in. Only one characteristic of biblical teamwork has been mentioned, but teamwork

requires unity in order to even be called teamwork. Before looking at unity in teamwork, some barriers that might prevent teamwork and unity in the church will be discussed.

Barriers to Unified Work and Turning Conflicts Into Growing Experiences

Luke 6:45 points out that the issue of disunity is found almost everywhere, and even within our churches. However, people need to wake up and realize that disunity is rooted within their own hearts as well (see also Rom 7:14-25).

Jesus addressed the issue of unified work because there were some indicators that his own disciples struggled with it. People in this age still struggle with it as well. Matthew 18:1-6 states that the disciples wrestled with each other about who was going to be greatest in the earthly kingdom of God. People today can be seen struggling for higher positions in the church and its devastating consequences are the same as they were back then.

There is another indicator of disunity in the work (Luke 4:49) and it is what can be called the issue of credentials and recognitions. Jesus answered that problem by saying to his disciples and people today (v. 50), if someone is doing the work of the Lord they are building His kingdom even if they are not recognized or if they did not receive issued credentials or if they did not belong to the group or have training, they should be allowed to do the work of kingdom building. Paul had very little contact with the organized church at that time (Gal 2); however, he was under the guidance of Jesus Christ himself doing marvelous work among the Gentiles (Gal 1:17).

Achan (Josh 7) is a good example of one who is separated from, yet acting like a part of the team. He went on a mission with the Israelite men to conquer a city and

because they were not unified the army lost the battle. No matter how hard the Israelites worked together to take Ai, the sin of Achan prevented them from being victorious.

Disunity should be addressed as it was in Acts 15. The Holy Spirit brought unity between the two different views by showing that He was working both with “the Jews” and “the Gentiles,” “males” and “females.”

Acts 6 talks about a practical reason for disunity, the unequal distribution of bread among the growing Gentile disciple population. It may not be seen as such a big problem until one reads Act 11, and then it is clear that there was a great famine happening in the region at the same time. When there is not much food around a little injustice about the distribution of bread becomes a real issue, and a pressing one that needs to be solved in order for unity and teamwork to continue in the church. Again, the problems were given into the hands of the Holy Spirit who led the church in finding a beautiful solution that made the work even more united than it was before the problem arose. Solving problems through the guidance of the Holy Spirit makes the church better not bitter, stronger rather than weaker.

Teamwork sometimes collapses due to incompatible temperaments. Paul had to separate himself from Mark, acknowledging that they just could not work together. Later on he worked with Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and others just fine.

In view of the latest examples, there is one common thread to disunity and that is conflict. The next section will explore important ways to deal with disunity biblically.

Biblical Ways of Dealing With Conflicts to Strengthen Teamwork

Conflicts and disputes often take place in churches (Matt 18). Therefore some grounding passages for biblical conflict resolution need to be addressed.

Paul calls people in 1 Corinthians 10:31 to choose to give glory to God as a way to deal with conflicts that arise. This was definitely evident in the Apostolic church in the case with a distribution of bread (Acts 6), circumcision issues (Acts 15) and numerous others recorded in the Pauline Epistles.

Paul says that sometimes our perceptions are foggy (1 Cor 13:12) and distorted (Matt 7:3-5) so we have been asked to acknowledge our own “logs” before dealing with the specks in someone else’s eyes. Acknowledging our “logs” creates a wonderful atmosphere of possible reconciliation and of winning our brother or sister back to teamwork.

Matthew 18:15-17 gives some biblical principles that would help to win a brother or sister back into the united community of believers. Dealing with issues privately and promptly is a respectful and spiritually safe way to work on a problem. Jesus said that when choosing not to deal with matters of utmost importance that arise among the members (Matt 5:23), then there is the chance that those issues will grow into roots of bitterness (Heb 12:15). Those private issues could then be shared with others in the form of gossip, which Paul strongly cautions against (1 Tim 5:12-13; Rom 1:29b-32).

Problems and conflicts will always be present in the church, but as Bible believing Christians problems and conflicts can be resolved in such ways that they would give glory to God. God wants all to seek reconciliation (2 Cor 5:1-6:13) among the members of the faith so that all can enjoy a peaceful relationship with God and others (Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14). People can “enjoy” a Christian walk that others might admire, but without peace in the heart it is worth little.

Speaking from my own personal experience and experiences I have gained in

some churches, there are circumstances when the church has allowed certain issues to grow into bitterness (Heb 12:15). Bitterness issues destroy peace in our hearts and leads to despair and depression. Emotional issues of the heart often prevent people from finding resolutions biblically. After finding peace in my heart I have been blessed to do seminars on the whole concept of forgiveness as described in Matt 18 and how according to Matt 18:34 we are tortured emotionally if we do not deal with the issues at hand. Some of the church members have asked the question: "I do not think my brother/sister is ready to be reconciled, so could I just work the issues with God and be done?" My response is: "If your brother or sister hurts you, JESUS SAYS, "go, and work through the issue." I understand the people, what they are saying, and why they are saying it. In essence, they are saying that the root of bitterness that has grown in their hearts (Heb 12) is there because the issues have not been dealt with (Eph 4:26), and not in the biblical timing, before the sun sets. If that is not done the anger festers overnight, explodes, and someone is hurt often an innocent bystander in the home. Biblical conflict resolutions are often impossible to deal with due to the pain experienced in the heart from the present situation or from way back in the formative years of life, which are much deeper.

Before a solution to the issues of disunity in the church can be found a look needs to be taken at the root of the problem of disunity. The problem of disunity in our churches (Rom 7:15-25) is rooted in the disunity of the members' own hearts. Leading hearts through a spiritual and emotional healing process is where a solution can be found. Such hearts will be united with the Lord creating the foundation for a lasting solution of unity and fruitfulness in accomplishing the Great Commission.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ was not only a disciple of God, but also someone who built great teamwork among the 12 disciples/leaders, the 70, the 120, and many more since then. Jesus Christ did an excellent job of disciple making by being a good listener to God and to men. He prayed and studied the Scriptures in order to be the Master/Teacher, by what he taught and did. As written in John 13 He modeled servanthood as a foundation to leadership, met people where they were, met their needs, preached, taught, and died for others in order to make their lives better. I do believe He did all of this to train disciples/leaders that would perpetuate the same and that is why we find the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

As stated in 1 Corinthians 10:31 the purpose of a disciple/leader of Jesus Christ is to glorify God by becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. As one reads the New Testament account of the church the person can see that the Holy Spirit is ready to unite individual hearts into a community of men and women under the banner of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can truly do it. This project is Jesus' call to fulfill the Great Commission through the body of Christ, His church through united teamwork.

The teamwork and unity of the church at large and unity in the whole world in a sense is possible as it is expanded from people's hearts (Luke 6:45) to our immediate sphere, the church and the world. What can be found in Matthew 25:35-40 is an expression of compassionate hearts that have been changed through knowing the same Jesus Christ read about in the previous paragraph. This is the work of a disciple in teamwork, a work of looking after the good of others who are less fortunate in their

knowing and connectedness with Jesus that will help put our ways aside and invest time in saving the lost from their specific sins and burdens, which goes together with baptism. This wholesome work is done out of a compassionate heart that loves God and is the foundation for the fair and biblical structure that perpetuates the unity and grows the kingdom of God while building new disciples who would do the same.

The problems of disunity are complex enough that people cannot even think of achieving any lasting unity and a team-working atmosphere around the Great Commission without the guidance of the Great Counselor through constant prayer, corporate dependence on Him, and an attitude of humble hearts.

In order for people to respond to Jesus' call for disciple making, they need to have the following attitude. As the biblical servant leader of today found in Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9 all need to be impassioned by the call of the apostle Paul who wrote to the Ephesians, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith you were called" (Eph 4:1). It is applicable to everyone today, as it was to the gathering of men and women of many nations till now. The moral qualities that come out of this text will help people to have an attitude of a prisoner/servant that is essential for unity. Disciples/leaders and church members will need to choose to decrease "weak" qualities and attitudes, such as gossip, slander and sense of superiority, and respond to the power of God through seeking, asking, and praying in order for the churches to grow and be healthy.

As a result of God-dependent, God-initiated, and God-led transformation of peoples' hearts, they will be led to develop great interpersonal skills (the gift of the Spirit harmonized with 1 Cor 13) and would work together building common unity (team work

and community—Acts 2, 3), common unity bound by the love of the Lord that would compel them to steadily move forward in order to fulfill the biblical mandate given by Christ Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20.

Jesus said in John 15:8: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit (*making more quality disciples*); so shall ye be my disciples” (emphasis added).

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE CONSULTATION REGARDING DISCIPLE MAKING AND INTEGRATION OF THE SAME INTO A UNITED TEAMWORK THAT WOULD GROW THE OSSDAC

Obstacles for Biblical Disciple Making

In the *USA Today* newspaper, dated March 1, 2012, Cathy Lynn Grossman had an article entitled “For Many, ‘Losing My Religion’ Isn’t Just a Song: It’s Life.” In the article she talked about finding that more and more people in America are tailoring their religion to fit their needs. When people are asked about God or organized religion, their attitude could be summed up, according to Cathy, as “So what?”

Additionally, one can get even greater clarity of today’s Western world and the religious communities through the pen of Friedman and Treadwell (2007) who paint a real, yet grim picture. The key words that keep on repeating in their work are: anxieties, entrenched “ruts,” failed emotional processes, obsessions with data and techniques, reactive leaders, empathy, quick fix, neurosis with safety since 9/11, seeking self vs. togetherness, and failure to have the nerve to stand and confront ruts of life.

Church leaders can definitely identify with some of the problems above because today’s religious people in most congregations like to cut and paste out of religion what is good for them rather than let the Bible community help in shaping them into a disciple/leader. People are pushed and shoved, troubled and anxious, looking for quick fixes in life as Freedman points out. Speaking to conference and union leaders and

reading articles in the *Adventist Review* I can see that our world church, even though it is diverse, is united throughout the world and works together to keep it that way.

However, when it comes to discipling, the church tends to prepare a person for baptism through intellectual Bible studies in order to make sure that there are signs of transformation, but after baptism and the new birth “the baby” is left alone to find its way to heaven. This DMin project aims to make disciples out of our pastoral staff and members. There are programs for discipling Adventist members and leaders, one such program has been prepared by Don James called “Growing Adventist Disciples.” There has been some success with Mike Cauley’s program presently in the Florida Conference that was put into practice, evaluated, and written into the DMin work by James Wibberding with the goal of raising lay preachers. Don James’ main premise for making disciples comes from Matthew 28:19 where Jesus Christ instructs all to make disciples by teaching them to obey. New disciples are apprentices that need to be taught, modeled to, empowered to serve in God’s kingdom, and sent to make more disciples.

In reviewing simple obstacles in disciple making, the article “10 Barriers to Disciple Making” by James (2009), shows what churches go through when they try to grow disciples. James, in the article, cites Aubrey Malphurs’ list of barriers for disciple making with number one being lack of vision.

In his book *Strategic Disciple Making* (2009), Malphurs shares some pointers as to why churches fail to have a vision for disciple making. He includes four points about the state of the church:

1. American churches are struggling;
2. Number of “churched” is declining;

3. Number of cults and non-Christian groups is growing;
4. The church landscape is rapidly declining.

Hull (2010) mentions a few barriers for making disciples that are different from Malphurs. He considers the two greatest to be: human nature and resistance to change from the usual, and institutionalism.

What Malphurs and Hull said could be applicable to some degree to the Adventist church. From my observation of my own ministry and church we do lack the vision for disciple making and are very proud of our institutionalized church. We like the numbers of baptisms, but after a member is baptized, he/she is carefully recorded in the book of church membership and cared for like any other member of the church, definitely not disciplined in order to go and make more disciples for Christ.

Literary Sources on Disciple Making

Calling and “the Character” of a Disciple/Leader

Sweet (1999) in talking about discipleship says: “The essence of leadership is sending vibrations of truth that hunt people down inviting them to join the song.”

According to Sweet, we respond to “the deep, rich rhythms of God’s heart beat within us, seeking us out and beckoning us into relationship” (p. 149) as God did with Abraham and Sarah, Priscilla and Aquila. According to the author this rhythmic call is recorded in Matthew 11:17a.

Being more specific about the world we live in, Careaga (2001) in his book *Eministry* sees Net-Generation (N-Gen) gathering themselves around four dynamics that would signify their discipleship: truth, love, relevance, and faith. Commenting on these four drawing qualities of N-Gen, Long (2004) goes as far as to say that we should just do

away with the Great Commission and stick with the Great Commandment that encompasses all four essentials of N-Gens.

Christian sociologist and statistician, Barna and his co-writer Viola (2008) believe that the church is at “a crossroad” and needs to choose either to defend the traditional structures, or choose effective ministries that would conform to the biblical mandate for fulfilling the practical needs of its members including the N-Gen. In agreeing with Barna (2001) I would stress that the greatest need of a church member as he/she conforms to the biblical mandate is to find purpose in disciple making. Both Careaga (2001) and Long (2004) need to understand that the community which they describe is attracted to the four essential qualities of N-Gen that has been formed because someone in the same community has invited them into it, which in part is the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Most of us are part of a church community because someone from that community has invited us and brought us in.

Something that Careaga points out and that is of interest to Adventists who cherish the truth is that the “truth” to a Net-Gen person is as negotiable as preferences are. Truth is not as much an idealistic notion that stays in the head, but something dynamic, which experienced transforms lives. Bible truth that transforms the life was a concept idealized by White (1903) in a description of a man who was a faithful and honest to God as a needle of a compass to the northern pole, a man who will not be bought or sold, but will be true to the principles of heaven even if the heaven fall down. In addition, Sweet and Viola (2010) shared that Jesus mentored his teachable disciples, and that quality was more important than quantity. They point out that Jesus majored in quality disciplining. It was the responsibility then of the Holy Spirit to grow the numbers

through the disciples of Jesus who would turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6) and over many generations call over 2.18 billion people professed Christians. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, in 2010 there were 2.18 billion Christians around the world, nearly a third of the global population (Pew Forum, 2011).

According to them Jesus did not see the promise land (Acts 2), but he made sure to leave “successors” (Acts 1:8) who would accomplish even greater things than He did while with them.

Jesus qualified his relationship with his disciples as a relationship seen in a family. As Sweet quoting Matthew 12:46-50 pointed out, this sense of “prioritized” family was born out of Jesus’ tight bond with his disciples. Guder and Barrett (1998) feel the discipleship family is formed when “we live as we pray.” The key biblical qualities of a steward, disciple, or leader, according to Rodin (2010), is that the person is accountable, always ready to accept criticism and deflect praise, by giving praise to God. He continues by saying that intimacy with God is not about minimums, self-reliance, distance, and maintenance of a shallow relationship but about the depth, wealth, and richness of an authentic God-steward relationship.

People can accomplish this today as well, mainly by spending time with those who are willing and have time to bond, and to fill-in this closeness with the help of technology. However, knowing where the member/disciple is on this journey in a close bond with Jesus Christ and each other is important, and that is why it is necessary to look at the stages of spiritual development.

As found in his book *The Different Drum*, Peck (1998) suggests four stages of spiritual development. The stages described by Peck are closely aligned with the stages of

cognitive, social, and moral development proposed by Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg (1973), respectively.

Stage 1—This stage Peck calls chaos because a person is mainly childish, egoistic, and self centered. Disorder, distrust, and desperation arise in the life of an infant faith.

Stage 2—An institutional stage of order and “blind” obedience. As I have discussed these stages with my DMin colleagues, in class we could agree that most of our church members are at this stage.

Stage 3—A disciple/leader is doubtful and cynical at this stage. But it is a stage where people want to find answers to their questions so they “probe” things in order to grow into maturity.

Stage 4—A mature stage is where a disciple/leader lives by the golden rule. Conflict in the mind and heart are recognized and the person enjoys finding life’s purpose in ministry.

These four stages of the disciple/leader development have helped me to understand my own life and the life of those I serve so that all can be helped in that desire to grow and move towards maturity. I do not know if people ever mature fully, but like a tree they grow enough to bear fruit that would be similar to the fruit Jesus Christ bore. That maturing aspect is what will be explored next in the life of a disciple/leader.

According to Fowler (1981) there are seven stages of faith development in a disciple:

Stage 0—“*Primal or Undifferentiated*” is the faith of a baby that is learning, wanting to be warm, safe, and secure. If the “baby” is nurtured it will develop a sense of

trust and safety about the universe and the divine. Moving to the next stage begins with integration of thought and languages, which facilitates the use of symbols in speech and play.

Stage 1—“*Intuitive-Projective*” faith is that of a preschooler and is characterized by the psyche’s unprotected exposure to the things not exposed to conscience such as repressed feelings, automatic skills, unacknowledged perceptions, thoughts, habits, and automatic reactions, hidden phobias, desires, and other complexities.

Stage 2—“*Mythic-Literal*” is the faith of a school child who is developing faith in justice and reciprocity of the universe that includes notion of deities that are humanly fathomable.

Stage 3—“*Synthetic-Conventional*” is the faith of a teenager who conforms to religious authority while at the same time does all that is possible to develop his or her personal identity. Any conflicts with one’s beliefs are ignored at this stage due to the fear or threat from inconsistencies.

Stage 4—“*Individuative-Reflective*” is the faith of a mid-twenties to late thirties person in which faith is blended in with fear, anxiety, and struggle. The individual at this stage takes personal responsibility for his or her beliefs and feelings. As one is able to reflect on one’s own beliefs, there is openness to a new complexity of faith, faith that might increase the awareness of conflicts in one’s belief system.

Stage 5—“*Conjunctive*” faith is the faith of the mid-life crisis, which acknowledges paradox of that which is beyond and how that is related to reality behind the symbols of inherited systems that the person has grown to accept. The individual often resolves conflicts from previous stages by a complex understanding of a

multidimensional, interdependent “truth” that often cannot be explained by any particular statement.

Stage 6—“*Universalizing*” is a faith of deeper insight into the spiritual meaning of life. People at this stage are part of the universal community that is based on justice and expresses love towards others.

Even though Fowler gives help to understand basic faith development according to people’s ages, stages at the middle become somehow fuzzy as to what age a person is. I do believe that Scott’s view on development helps leaders see even “adults” who might be at a lower stage of their spiritual development than might be expected. For some more possibilities of spiritual development please see Appendix 2.

Purpose of the Disciple/Leader

The purpose of a disciple depends on a definition of a disciple. For McGavran (1970) a disciple is someone who has made a commitment to Christ through baptism and will continue to follow Him. Bruner (1990) goes a step further in seeing in the Great Commission that McGavran’s followers of Jesus need to be taught as well. Most people in today’s churches go beyond that, as the next section will explain. Encouragement is given to Christ’s disciples not only to be baptized and to be educated in the principles of heaven but also to share the same with others.

James (2011) and Burrill (1996) go even further and see the call of Christ in the Great Commission as a total discipling process, what I would call the fourth level discipleship or making disciples/leaders. This means that Jesus calls his disciples of today, as he did in the past, not only for baptism and Christian education, but to continue making disciples and assist those that are disciples/leaders in making disciples. There is

perpetuity in the disciple-making process that ends only when Jesus comes in the clouds. Out of this commitment to grow disciples for Christ the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church highlights doctrine 13 in the Church's Fundamental Beliefs that encourages us to grow as disciples. Additionally, in the last quarter of 2012, Adventists and their friends were given the opportunity to take a journey of discipleship through the Sabbath School lessons entitled "Growing in Christ."

All four levels of discipling are fine, but my own ministry experience shows that when people allow the Lord to deal with their heart pains they automatically want to be plugged into the discipling process for themselves, as well as to help others who have seen the transformation in their lives to become and make disciples. According to Regier (1999), when the heart and life is transformed in the likeness of Christ, that transformed heart wants to do all it can, naturally, to grow as a disciple and eventually as a disciple/leader, making disciples of Christ out of "neighbors." Similar transformation is described by White (1941), a transformation that results in service to others for the glory of the Lord: "New thoughts, new reeling, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up – the life of Christ. . . . Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties are sanctified. . . . We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God" (pp. 98, 99). In the previous chapter the process that Jesus Christ used to make his disciples was discussed, and in the next section I will look at the processes others have suggested, and will also evaluate them. However, before moving to that section I would like to mention one more possible hindrance to making and growing Bible based disciple. According to Duhigg (2012), habits are powerful. Disciples/leaders need to be aware that around 45%, as Duhigg states, of all activities during the day are

done out of habit. In my observation of others as well as of my own growth as a disciple I have noticed that when baby Christians are invited to leave their “childish” self-seeking ways, make a greater “commitment,” and grow greater in the discipleship process they might want to slide back into their own babyhood or old habits. Backsliding can happen at each stage of discipleship growth, however, if disciples and leaders as team members “help each other up,” understand the frailty of human beings, learn together, and move into a greater maturity, they will be reflecting the Great Commandment even more brightly.

Evaluation of Disciple-Making Processes and Methods

According to the document that emerged after the International Catholic Stewardship Council in 1993, the description on ideologies of training disciples was changed. The bishops linked the evangelization of the world to discipleship as one of the best ways of responsible stewardship of church resources. The document titled: “Go and Make Disciples,” issued by the USCCB in 1992 as part of *A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, emerged as a result of Pope Paul VI’s teaching to the people of the United States. This life-long process of the stewardship of disciples includes embracing new believers, cultivating Catholic teaching, and enjoying and sharing of the same with others. According to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) it is the “duty” and “honor” of the disciples to give back to God a portion of their gift to their Creator by using their giftedness in responsible evangelization of the world through stewardship discipleship (Ringkamp, 2006?).

At the 2007 National Ministries, the American Baptist Churches USA adopted a working mission statement for growing Christian disciples. The American Baptist

churches in North America saw the following progression in the life of a person who becomes and grows as a disciple of Christ consisting of: Dependent relationships with Jesus Christ, self, and others through an equipping process that would help believers discover and nurture their God-given gifts and continue obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills by ministering and serving as a part of God's work in creation, both within and outside the church (Marston, 2008). One of the shortest and most concise disciple-making manuals for the local church can be found at www.HarvestBaptistKS.org. In the manual is a cognitive teaching of the Word of God on how to be a disciple, the cognitive understanding of the Word, and the working of the Holy Spirit that produces loving disciples who are part of the church through baptism.

If I were to make some of the observations about the limited material I have looked at about disciple-making which focused on developing disciples that resemble Jesus in character I would observe and concur that most of the training manuals acknowledge that discipling is a lifelong process. However, only a few training materials on discipling have gone far enough to suggest that to be a disciple of Jesus in action totally, means to continue to perpetuate the disciple-making process. The Omega Discipleship Ministries is one of the few programs that describe this process.

The Omega Discipleship Ministries is an example because its program promotes a cyclical, process of training people whom they call "seekers." To begin with they take the seekers on a journey in discipleship that includes steps needed to accept Christ. Then they help the seekers grow into strong disciples, and train the same to become disciple-makers of other "seekers."

The processes mentioned earlier are fine and biblical, but I offer some suggestions

on methodology that could help improve these processes of disciple making. What is missing is an evaluation at the beginning of the training process that would lead each “disciple” to his or her next step of maturity. Often a shotgun approach in the training of disciples takes place. A trainer and the trainees are invited for a weekend or a week where the trainees receive information and learn from the trainer and the material. That is fine. However, if where the “disciples” are in their growing process was determined first then they can be led to the next phase of their development easily by bringing two to four trainers who would focus specifically on the next step of the disciple(s) development. They would be satisfied with a diet tailored to their needs and much greater joy would be experienced. This process might be slow and tedious and may be costly at the outset, but if each of the disciples or disciple groups is taken to another level of development there would be more satisfaction. The trainer(s) would know that they met the trainees where they were and led them one step higher. The taking of ample time with the training process would not help the present administration get re-elected because the results are not quickly noticed but are seen over time. However, we can do diligent work as Jesus did when he accomplished his goal of disciple training in three and a half years, and those disciples of Christ went on in the power of the Spirit doing even greater things as their Master had promised.

I have looked at and gone through the written discipling process of Don James and really appreciate its scope. Burrill (1996) has also dealt with the discipling process and I see that both James and Burrill see discipling as a total or four-level discipling process.

Obstacles for United Teamwork

According to Dybdahl (2007) our churches greatest problem in North America is a belief in a Deistic God, a distant God with whom we are disconnected. Unity and teamwork is impossible without connecting with each other. However, if it is believed that God is distant, where is the hope?

Why do teams fail to work together? Some work is almost impossible without a team. In looking at some of the best working teams, I would say they are the firefighters, police, soldiers, emergency services, pilots, flight attendants, air traffic controllers, mechanics, support staff, and sport teams, just to name the few. According to my web research, Byrnes (2008) and Rogers (2009) have written that there are just a few repeating obstacles that are top ranking obstacles for teamwork: lack of trust, lack of team leadership, and lack of commitment to the team and team purposes. Maxwell (2001) adds that in teamwork the weakest link will bring down a team.

Sweet and Viola (2010) and Barna and Viola (2008) present chronological evidence to show how pagan traditions of dominance, and power structures infiltrated Christianity and changed the roles of leadership within the church. This substitute of secular structures in place of spiritual order leads to the absence of shared power among disciples/leaders as well as believers at large. Richardson (2006) claims that for most Christian, life is about doing religious things that will provide calming of our guilty feelings, securing our future in heaven, and domesticating Jesus in order to meet our daily needs. A comfortable lifestyle has become a modern god even among Christians of today, further dividing heart commitment.

Talking about this unity of the heart, Bandy (2001) said our focus should be on

transformed and united hearts rather than unity “of the mind,” which he calls the intellectual consent. As a united body of Christ, Bandy and Regier (1999) encourage believers to share the experience of the transforming power of God which would encourage others to want the same experience of transformation. Gottmann and Silver (1999) describe the “discipling” process best by sharing how parents can disciple their own children into emotionally healthy adults. In so doing, Jesus Christ is continually being transfigured in the experience of the congregations growing disciples, and while they may each have perspectives and interpretations of this incarnational mystery and intellectualized assent to dogma, according to Bandy, ideology is secondary. In my experience in dealing with church members, as well as doing the spiritual gifts assessments, I have found that members usually make decisions based on how they feel. The schism is obvious in the fact that the majority of Adventist knows the truth, so an intellectual assent is there and aligned to the Word, but the hearts out of which decisions are made are full of pain that we have not been able to deal with successfully. Hence, we as a worldwide church need to pay more attention to emotional healing in order to be well-balanced disciples of Christ.

Literary Sources on Church Teamwork and Unity

The power of teamwork and unity in any church is most visible in a relatively healthy church. In order to find out the characteristics of a healthy church there is a need to look at the groundbreaking work of Christian Swartz. For a church to have a good working team and to stay united under the banner of the Great Commission and to fulfill the same through the Great Commandment while still existing in the context of the Great

Controversy, the church, according to Swartz (1996), needs to have eight quality characteristics no matter where in the world the church is located.

1. Empowering Leadership is making sure that there is a good match between the pastor and the local church. Such a pastor leads through a clear vision that encompasses the whole church, leads through mentoring disciples/leaders and equips all desiring that mentoring, delegates, and shares church ministries while constantly moving in the direction that leads to the ideal found in the New Jerusalem.

2. Effective Structures help the church to know and understand who they are, where they are heading, and what will help us get there. Effective structures aim towards finding better and more effective ways that would help the church get where it is going, by mapping the journey and responsibilities of those who will help it achieve the direction.

3. Gift-based Ministry helps the church members understand their spiritual gifts and how those gifts could be matched so everyone can experience greater joy in ministry while giving glory to the Lord. Coaching a disciple through a gift-based ministry consists of training, support, and working through challenges with Christ towards an ever-maturing disciple of Christ.

4. Holistic Small Groups exist in the local church to meet relevant felt needs of its members while being welcoming to new persons. An inseparable goal of the holistic small groups is to keep on making new disciples/leaders and groups while fostering an atmosphere of active participation for everyone.

5. Inspiring Worship focuses on being visitor-friendly, biblically founded, and life-transforming preaching bathed in God-centered celebrative music. Inspiring worship

is all-gender and age inclusive providing a feeling of inspiration to all who worship at the church.

6. Loving Relationships foster an atmosphere of joy and trust among the interdependent church member relationships. Such loving relationships affirm and encourage others and, when conflicts arise, they chose to deal with any conflicts lovingly, redeeming others and the church family.

7. Need-oriented Evangelism stands for a member's own personal evangelism as well as working with others in the church on corporate evangelistic strategies that would help those who are seeking the Lord to find Him with our help of members throughout the process.

8. Passionate Spirituality is about developing personal and corporate spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, service, witnessing, worship, and how those things help believers become more contagious disciples of Christ Jesus.

These eight qualities are necessities in a church that desires to work together making disciples/leaders perpetually. United team work is showing how to accomplish these eight quality characteristics in the local church(es) as guided by the Holy Spirit.

Teams or the company of "associates," according to Smith (1998), is where the greatest learning and most effortless learning of life takes place, learning that stays with people for life. According to John 14 we are all encouraged to travel towards the New Jerusalem where we will be gathered together around Jesus Christ as the Bible describes him in Revelation 21 as being in the center of the city. The reward of achieving the New Jerusalem, living with Jesus Christ and developing close relationship are strong motivation for direction and united teamwork. Working in line with the *Seventh-day*

Adventist Church Manual, Knight (2000) inspires me that my church unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has potentially adopted all of us as His precious children. Hence my major source of unity is beholding the Triune God and being changed from seeking individualism to seeking unity, always remembering that the Christian movement started in the East where church “happened” in community, and not as one person watching a church program on the “tube.” We “shed” individualism for the sake of community through constant deflection of praises as pointed out by Rodin (2010).

Sweet (1999) points out that within the team of 12, Jesus spent more intense training time with James, John, and Peter. Usually the military takes ordinary people, as Jesus did, and makes them into team players who will accomplish great things. The first thing to teach the newcomer is discipline. The military takes a different approach than Jesus, but the starting point is similar. If a disciple/leader is wanted, discipline needs to be learned first. That discipline has to have a root somewhere and that is where Peck’s ideas on the same subject can help. As noted by Peck (1987), the teamwork and unity of the church at large, the unity of the whole world in a sense, is possible as it is expanded from our own hearts as stated in Luke 6:45, to our immediate sphere of influence and for that matter into the whole world.

This common unity with our Father, as well as common unity with each other, is the prerequisite for any mission work according to Mead (1991). Wilkins (2004) comments on Matt 18:19 seeing the power of agreement and the importance of consensus in praying for God’s will in the community. According to him, the correspondence sought in the community of disciples between earth and heaven also promises to guide the church’s attempt generally to carry out the will of the heavenly Father on earth as

stated in Matthew 6:10; 26:39-42. Love to God and each other, as well as unity, is inseparable for a biblical community. Hence, without “unity” all that is left is “common” things such as dogma, but with the love of the Lord that unites community all is possible.

Talking about the activity of the church united Stott (2008) points out that all who are Bible-believing Christians must encompass both evangelism and social action. My take on this is that I would not “keep the church united” by being mainly a social action club as the emergent church calls us to be in competing with the service clubs such as the Lions or Kiwanis, just to mention a few. Abbotsford SDA Church offers a relevant gospel described by Sjogren (2008): Servant evangelism = deeds of love + words of love + adequate time (my adaptation). This is the simple and relevant actualization of the Great Commission that is supported by Isa 58:11. Sjogren in his earlier work (2004) shares how we can “meet” the spiritual needs of a person by “peeling” away layers to reveal those spiritual needs and discusses how “to peel” them. The outermost layer is meeting the physical needs that are taken care of by active kindness, emotional/relational needs are taken care of by active listening, directional needs are looked after by active “wondering,” and spiritual needs are taken care of by active sharing of Christ Jesus. The cyclical process of evangelizing is about sowing, watering, tending, following, reproducing, and starting the process again, all for the glory of God and our increased joy. This work requires a much greater amount of patience than we have shown in the past, as well as a great amount of hard work from a disciple of Christ Jesus. The Gospel then, according to Newbigin (1995), becomes so powerful it needs to be shared with others. It breaks the cycles of life and death, and with the new life in Christ Jesus and his body, the church, our eternity starts right here on this planet. These kinds of experiences

are proofs that the Holy Spirit is close and active around us, as pointed out by Richardson (2006). Team unity and mission, according to Rodin (2010), is found in the Lordship of Jesus Christ that forms a steward, disciple, or leader who seeks to fulfill the will of his or her Lord.

According to McNeal (2006), fulfilling the mission that Jesus has left us will keep the church strong. He said that how we do mission is negotiable, but “the mission” itself is non-negotiable. I find the same resonance in my church expressed not long ago through the book *The Neutering of Adventism* by Knight (2008). Avis (2005) agrees with Knight by stating that ministry is a God-given work to us and affirmed in the work of Jesus Christ himself. Agreeing with Gen 1:22 and Jesus, who repeated the concept in John 15:16 calling upon his disciples, Newbigin (1995) emphasizes the importance of the need to “go and bear fruit.” However, Cole (1999) warns that the united work of Christ can never become a fire insurance or reservation for heavenly vacation. In our time mission is best disrobed by Sjogren (2004), who states that the Word we preach with our lives needs to be harmonious with the Word we preach verbally. To him the Word is not referring to the linguistic segment that we use to make a sentence; it is a person who is transformed, shown to us by Jesus Christ who was dwelling among the people (John 1:14). Agreeing with Sjorgen, Kimball (2004) said, and I could not agree more, that the process of growth of a disciple is preceded by a person being evangelized first, in a quiet solitary place by the Lord Himself, and then that person extends the evangelization to others. The mission of God, according to Guder and Barrett (1998), is God initiated, and rooted in God’s purposes to both restore and heal His creation.

People are often paralyzed and unwilling to move forward united under one

mission work. According to Newbiggin (1995) this is due to a lack of mission theology in North America and Europe. As Adventists continue to accept the mission-less models from other Christian churches, we can expect no other results but stagnation of our churches as well. To determine whether biblical and Adventist mission work can be successful requires a look at the work that Hispanic, African-American, and other immigrants are doing in North America. Growth in discipling and lay-led ministry were manifested in the 1990s in the Pennsylvania SDA Conference and in the 2000s in the Florida SDA Conference under the leadership of Mike Cauley as noted in Wibberding's dissertation (2009).

Sometimes we cannot move forward because we just do not know what is out there that can help us to launch out. Don James has step-by-step material that can lead believers into a relational discipleship with Jesus that teaches relational truth of our God as presented by our church. As growth continues in accountable communities, disciples in pairs will work together to build more disciples for Christ Jesus. Jane Thayer has a similar process of discipling (personal conversation, April 12, 2012).

As mentioned earlier and as evident from the Bible, whenever the Lord's call is taken seriously and the choice is made to follow Him troubles will arise, troubles that might turn into conflicts. Since conflicts are part of the life on this planet I need to learn how to deal with them biblically, so that as a disciple of Christ I can become more mature and the church's working together might become stronger. That is something that will be looked at next.

Practicing Biblical Unity of Mission in Spite of the Opposition

Peter Steinke has talked to many Lutheran congregations and has found that a

lack of mission causes decline and conflict. Of the congregations in conflict Steinke has consulted, “213 admitted that they had little or no sense of mission.” In order to address conflict and stop decline, congregations need to move from a “membership to the church culture” to a “mission culture” (Oslovich, 2012).

Learning from his teacher, E. Friedman, Steinke (2006) presents one of the main reasons believers experience conflict in the church as being that of anxiety which makes the church “reactive.” “Reactive leaders” are those who fail to be good and mature stewards and who fail to manage their situations and problems. A short list of reactivity includes: slander, blame, accusation, silent neglect, secret meetings.

The Bible identifies similar problems as mentioned above, and further warns us that in the last days believers will experience great divisions and struggles within the churches (Ps 37:8; Eccl 7:9; Eph 4:26; Rom 7:18; Eph 6:12; 2 Tim 2:16-17). Conflicts in churches are often created due to expressions of anger. Anger is often a secondary emotion coming out of the primal emotion of fear, according to McNeal (2006). Not only conflict, but also division is often caused due to outbursts of anger, anger that is not biblical and anger that divides and controls others. I would agree with Gibbs (2000) who gives practical advice in any conflict situation: “Conflict can only be resolved as the people involved talk to one another and not about one another” (p. 112).

Steinke (2006) who has studied many congregations with deep problems suggests that Christians whether they are Adventist or Lutheran (his own church) are not here to survive and manage the church buildings, but to join God in what God is doing. This is the big picture solution and as we continue in that direction, we will still have conflict. Haughk (1988) has suggested that shepherds of the sheep do not only expose the wolves,

but also take a defense stick, “a sword” firmly, persistently, and gently with the hope that “discipline” would be redemptive.

One of the best processes for dealing with conflict in my churches has been suggested by Sande who has written *The Peacemaker*, a biblical protocol dealing with conflict. In the book, Sande (2000) presents four simple steps for dealing with conflicting situations prevalently found in churches. Based on 1 Corinthians 10:31, the author brings up the first and directional principle, whatever we do, we should do it all to the glory of the Lord. This is the overarching principle for overall conflict resolution.

The second step states that before taking the speck out of my opponent’s eye, I need to follow another biblical directive, which is asking me to take “the plank” out of my own eye so I can see the situation clearly. This practice sets the stage for a humble group dynamic or a humble dialogue of two people involved in finding resolution.

The third step calls us to deal with the opposition by following the Matthew 18 principle. Principles out of Matthew 18 state that in order to redeem my brother or sister I ought to deal with the issue between us privately at first, and if unsuccessful bring someone who can help us redeem the person and if those two steps have not brought good results, then the matter is to be brought to the church.

The fourth step is to be reconciled (Matt 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph 4:1-3, 32; Phil 2:3-4). This is something that I still need to work on in a conflicting situation I find myself in. It is to continue patiently relying on the Lord to work out fair solutions for all parties involved while waiting, and to continue to be gracious and loving throughout the process, as pointed out by Richardson (2006). This will serve as a model to others who desire to keep the biblical bar of 1 Corinthians 13 high.

As Southerland (2000) said: “The reality is that criticism and opposition will drive you somewhere. Let it drive you close to God and you will become better; let it drive you away from God and you will become bitter” (p. 120).

I do believe that we need to form new images or perceptions of crises we experience among ourselves. Images or perceptions that would see crises as opportunities for growth as suggested to us by Cole (1999) who sees the presence of crisis as the presence of fertilizer in good soil that is ready to bring abundant fruit in a unified team work of building disciples.

As believers witness in the world, said Guder and Barrett (1998), they need to bear in mind that the Greek word for a witness is *martyria*, out of which is the English word martyr, someone who is ready to give his life for the cause of God. Suffering with Christ always makes sense because the winner is known at the end of the story. I am accepting suffering and modeling it to others knowing well that this is the new mode of operation and needs to become a regular part of courageous living within the church culture.

Together with others we have relied on prayer and God’s intervention even more heavily as we saw our powerlessness with present situations. What I am doing in the present district is something that I have not done in the previous one. After being prompted by Hull (1995), I am encouraging first the elders and then the board members to sign a covenant of commitment that will help build the kingdom of God and our local churches.

Compelled by God’s grace, as good steward leaders we give glory as we deal with different conflict situations, building the kingdom of God by working unitedly in

perpetuating disciple making in our local sphere.

Conclusion

The Great Commission calls us to an open and honest communication that would develop trust and sense of belonging to a loving community that is willing to evaluate and improve individual disciples and to grow a team spirit. The disciple-making process is uniting the church that was founded on the premises of the Great Commandment no matter how intense the Great Controversy becomes, especially in the last days before the coming of our Lord. If I were to summarize how we have dealt with opposition it could be described in two simple words: “firm and gentle,” but constantly, persistently, working within the will of the Lord.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSMENT AND POINTING OUT KEY HINDRANCES FOR UNITY AND MISSION AS WELL AS PRESENTING BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS FOR CHURCH GROWTH

As I reflect on the journey the Lord has taken me, my family, and the OSSDAC on for the past five years I see three distinct parts. In looking back at the problems in the OSSDAC, at that time I believed that “problems” could be solved if the church governance issues were addressed. The second part of the journey began when I discovered that dealing with local church governance did not address the core issue. Instead I needed to give attention to the Great Commission that calls for disciple making in the context of the Great Controversy. The third part was a journey of self-realization. I learned that the troubles in the church were like a fire showing impurities in my own heart that Jesus Christ needed to work on so I could be His loving disciple.

In this chapter I will share what I have done in the OSSDAC along with the results as I implemented the governance principles as well as what worked and what did not when it comes to united efforts in making disciples.

Ministry Context in the OSSDAC

The Lord has given churches the mandate or call to make disciples who would perpetuate the disciple-making process for His glory as stated in the Great Commission. From my experience in the OSSDAC as the church joined the Lord and moved forward

in fulfilling the Great Commission, issues of disunity seemed to surface. At this point I will assess the OSSDAC from the biblical description found in Chapter 2, from my own observations, from the observations of others around me, as well as from my contribution to the situation at hand.

The Background of the OSSDAC

The city of Owen Sound is nestled on the banks of Georgian Bay, about two hours northwest of Toronto. It attracts many tourists who come to enjoy its crystal clear waters, sandy beaches, waterfalls, and the beauty of its natural setting in general. The community consists mostly of blue-collar workers and some professionals.

Owen Sound has a rich history including being the final location for many Blacks who used the underground railroad to escape slavery in the United States to come and live here. (For further information on the Demographics and Community profiles see Appendix 1.)

The weather is relatively pleasant here for ten months of the year; however, in the winter months of January and February it can be severely cold in this district, with a lot of whiteouts and closed roads that would prevent even the bravest from venturing to the church.

The Bluewater SDA church district consists of two churches and a company. The Harriston SDA church in the south was the oldest church in the district, organized on February 20, 1971. The membership of the church was at 32 when I left, and the average attendance while I was there was about the same since visitors from other SDA congregations made up the lack of attendance by church members. This congregation was young and vibrant, but quite a distance for me to travel to as often as I would have

desired to during the week in order to form deeper relationships and have more meaningful ministry. My relationship with the first elder of this most distant church was an exception. He worked not far from my home. Every week we had a chance to meet, talk, pray, and grow together and make decisions that would be beneficial for the church and the Lord's work.

The Hanover Company was organized with the help of a Bible worker who was sponsored by the conference even before I came to this district. This Bible worker retired a year after I came to the district. However, she was still guiding the group in their weekly activities. The group was located in the town of Hanover and had an average attendance of 10 people.

The Owen Sound Adventist Church was in the same city where my family and I lived. The church was organized on the 24 June 1987 largely with the help of the Harriston church. The Owen Sound Adventist church had a membership of 84 upon my departure with an average attendance of about 55 on any given Sabbath at worship time.

The Challenges at the OSSDAC

It did not take long to discover that there was a system of church governance in place that had been created due to the church's circumstances, as well as to suit the personal interests of those in the church who created the system. This was evidenced in the imbalance of power representation in the church between the general membership and the church board. Approximately 60% of the church population was under 60 and yet 80% of the board members were over the age of 65. Such a structure did not give fair representation to the younger member of the church body.

As I observed the lack of involvement of younger leaders in the church it was clear that there was not a sense of ownership by the majority of the leaders except for those who had planted this church some 25 years before. In fact there was a sense of disconnectedness with the OSSDAC. I realized there were potentially multiple causes for this leadership issue. Some of it may have been due to my inability to train the old and the new leaders effectively, or perhaps I did not take enough time to gain their trust in me, or maybe people were just comfortable with where they were and did not want to move forward. When I began this project I naively believed that the simple solution to this issue was to establish, teach and enforce biblical principles of fair church governance. Thankfully, God would wake me up to the fact that my solution would never work because it was primarily addressing the wrong problem.

As I observed this situation, I asked myself the question: Do I follow my feelings, or the church power brokers, or do I prayerfully listen to what the Bible has to tell me? I chose the last option, finding primary direction in the following text: “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13 NKJ).

Among many of the members in OSSDAC there was a good level of tolerance but the challenge was to grow from just tolerating to truly loving one another as Christ has shown us. The challenge to create an atmosphere in which the leaders could be trained and empowered to bear much fruit in their ministry still remained.

Implementing Biblical and Theological Solutions for OSSDAC

Listening to the issues at hand, a couple of pastors at a union meeting at Canadian University College in the summer of 2009 suggested I spend a lot of time reading the

book of Nehemiah. As a result of listening to the Lord from this wonderful book, a few answers became clear to me with respect to the present and future situation at OSSDAC.

What does the big picture look like? It became very clear to me that if the OSSDAC was ever going to move from a patriarchal-led to a pastor-led church, and eventually be led by a team of elders that would fulfill the Great Commission, it would be necessary to follow Nehemiah's model.

Nehemiah's Model of Rebuilding

After reading the book of Nehemiah, I sensed a clear call to rebuild the OSSDAC around the concept of disciple/leaders. At the start, as in the book of Nehemiah, I saw myself having a sword in one hand and rebuilding the above—mentioned “walls” with the other.

The OSSDAC's Journey of Rebuilding

In 2005, when I began working at OSSDAC the church leaders and members gathered together to work on a vision for the church. The vision that was formulated read: “As God's family, we choose to love each other so we can all grow into Christian maturity.” Even though the vision was mostly inward focused, the Lord worked through a few to grow the church numerically, not only through biological growth, but growth through conversion as well.

The vision of OSSDAC led the church to focus on two primary goals. These two goals were clear and simple and consisted of the discipling of newer and seasoned members as well as creating an inspiring worship.

Discipling

The church discussed the potential value of using the G12 principle from the perspective that every leader of the church would continuously impact and train others to use their gifts to care for those who were in the church and those who were coming into it. As seen on the web page <cellexplosion.com>, the main goal of the G12 principle is to develop every church member into a leader who will also be able to impart the character of Christ to his or her team of twelve people.

The church envisioned members coming to maturity in Christ Jesus. Methods to achieve this goal, beside those of private devotions were: (a) participation in activities that occurred during the Sabbath day as well as the mid-week prayer hour and (b) small group meetings. Upon the completion of the nominating process in the first year of my pastoral work there, it was decided to give copies of the OSSDAC vision statement to all the departmental leaders and then ask them to share with me how their mission statement complemented the corporate church vision. Some of the leaders cooperated but not many. In looking back it seems that I wanted to work with people before taking the time to become connected. To this day I still wonder if I could have connected more with the people at OSSDAC as I have done in the present church where I pastor.

Inspiring Worship

The second goal was to provide an inspiring worship for all who came to OSSDAC. The worship services involved praise and singing, interaction and involvement in the sermon, decision-making, and prayer time.

Casting a New Vision

In 2009, the Empowered Church survey was administered to the OSSDAC. The results showed that even in the fifth year of my ministry at the church the majority of church members still had hearts full of discontentment with the status quo. Like Nehemiah who wept when he saw that Israel was not measuring up to what God expected I also felt like weeping for this church of mine. However, this survey helped propelled the church to seek a biblical purpose centered in Christ and wrapped around the Great Commission.

In response to the Empowered Church Survey, individuals in the church positioned themselves prayerfully to create a new vision. Only a few visionaries in the church worked to create a new vision. By this point I had learned a big lesson I needed to work with the willing who desired to build the kingdom of God, and to not spend much time with the opposition and their agendas. In the same period I believe the Holy Spirit inspired us to create parallel structures of governance and leadership that lead to a less controlling and more representative church board.

When the few visionaries of the church created the new vision it took into consideration the present situation and a view toward the future. The new vision was then taken before the board of elders. It was well accepted there and the next step was to present it to the church board. Once the church board passed it, it was sent to the church at large. In Nehemiah 2:16 it reads that not all who were involved in doing the work knew of the vision of Nehemiah. However, in chapter 3 it lists all the priests and other leaders who were heading up the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. What happened in between these two chapters?

I believe that Nehemiah shared his vision, prayed fervently, and the remainder of the leadership bought the vision. The OSSDAC vision that was crafted in the fifth year reads: “Jesus Christ is the center of our purpose to: reach, grow and send.” Church members were excited by the new vision because it was Christocentric, and its foremost purpose was outreach. The majority of the vision was about reaching and sending grown disciples to reach out to the lost. The purpose still needed to be accomplished just as Nehemiah accomplished rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Implementing the Vision the Lord Gave to the OSSDAC

Beside the technicality of sharing the vision through proper channels, that is, the board of elders, the church desired that all the other departments such as social, health, and youth would join in this vital endeavor as they raised “the wall.” The wall, for the church, during the next five years was to reach a membership of 150, from the current 84, and to accept that the Lord would do this. The OSSDAC also choose to use the Natural Church Development Program (NCD) as a yearly assessment tool to track their progress.

As the fifth year was closing the purpose statement of the church was clear and directive. The members moved forward setting some larger and smaller goals for each of the five years that were ahead. They knew roughly that they were using the NCD vehicle to set parameters as to how to do things. The leadership team would be responsible for implementation of a ministry plan designed to strengthen the church’s NCD Minimum Factor(s).

The OSSDAC completed the NCD survey in year 2009 and discovered that the churches minimum factors were in the areas of gifted spirituality, holistic small groups, and inspiring worship. A written job description was to follow for each job and activity,

which improved the church tremendously. We worked on this for a year and had some good results.

A great shift happened among the willing, from just doing ministry routinely to doing all that they could to reach, grow, and send out disciples of Jesus Christ for His glory and their joy. It was my joy seeing those servants of Christ reaching for a higher level of Christian maturity. In the same period I believe the Holy Spirit inspired us to create parallel structures of governance and leadership that lead to a less controlling and more representative church board. By 2010, the OSSDAC had five out of 11 board members who were under the age of 60, which was more representative of the church membership.

The church board instituted a segment in our worship called “the church at service,” where all who wished shared faith stories of how the Lord was working in their lives. The purpose of this segment was to encourage people that God was at work in this church and to encourage them to rely upon Him daily. According to Hybels (2004), one of the best motivations to those who serve comes from knowing that their serving energy builds as they see transformation occurring in the lives of those they have helped. However, as we serve others we also learn that longevity of service requires self-care as well.

Prayer times moved the OSSDAC forward. The grace of the Lord was evidenced by the decision of leaders and members to come together, to agree, and in spite of difficulties to form a biblical vision together, finding ways to share it with others. The church united in desiring to meet together no matter what, and agreed to move in the same biblical direction, harmonized in practice by the Great Commission.

In order to build greater unity in the OSSDAC, small groups held in private homes were utilized on a larger scale. As pointed out by Hull (2010) and Burrill (1996), small group gatherings are places where the quality of discipleship can be increased. I believe that small groups and one-on-one meetings have been the catalyst and inspiration for the greater commitment of leaders and members to give themselves over to the working of the Holy Spirit who has increased their quality of Christian life.

Prayer meetings became a great time of power. This not only happened in the middle of the week, but also throughout the week when members relied on the prayer tree, as well as on prayers before and during the Sabbath worship. Once a quarter the Sabbath worship was restructured around prayer. Everyone who came to those worships had an opportunity to pray individually or with others at least 10 times. Additionally, the church went through the 40 days of prayer, Global Rain, and added a number of special prayer days to the church calendar. The members knew the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest, mentioned throughout the book of Hebrews, was with them, joining them in prayer.

Many members reported sensing God's power as we took part in the prayer meetings. The Lord was so close to us that we felt His presence right in the room we were in rather than somewhere out there, or in heaven.

Other discipling measures included taking church leaders to a spiritual retreat where in a quiet scenic atmosphere they were able to sit at the feet of Jesus. It took place over the weekend where leaders through prayer and supplication sought God's power to transform their hearts and make them ready for service as His disciples.

Community events were organized, such as a community barbecue, play day,

health expo, and others to meet the needs of the community and to build friendships. Jesus started his ministry attending a wedding party. Friedman and Treadwell (2007) point out that in today's society of stress and tension people need to be more "playful," and to offer more relaxed ways of building disciples for Jesus Christ. Community events where there was fun, play, food, and interaction with strangers was in my opinion a relaxing way of building disciples for Christ Jesus.

Mission was modeled and encouraged. My family and I went two times during our term at OSSDAC on short mission trips to Mexico where people of all ages participated in building the kingdom of God in the form of building churches, giving away books from home to home, presenting health seminars, doing child evangelism or having evening evangelistic meetings. Having the vehicle tires slashed, seeing burned drug cartel vehicles, and watching federal police and the army in full combat gear was not fun. Mexico mission trips were a serious part of building disciples for Christ. I have met preteens and older people who entered Veracruz province knowing that they might die, but were ready to do so working for Jesus. What a privilege to work with this kind of devoted people. The seed for mission was being planted.

The Empowered Church Program gave direction to the evangelistic efforts of the OSSDAC. The Empowered Church Program took the church through five steps of development:

Step 1. The local church leadership team for the Empowered Church and the church at large was informed of the Empowered Church purposes and direction.

Step 2. Evaluation of the church was performed which helped the church know how to improve its growth.

Step 3. Bridge events were the next logical step helping meet the needs of the communities around the church.

Step 4. The OSSDAC revival meetings were held before evangelistic meetings so that the church family would be ready and prepared to meet others who were not yet part of the church family.

Step 5. Evangelistic meetings were conducted, followed up with a network of discipleship groups. This 5-step program would repeat from year to year, helping the church to grow.

The OSSDAC accomplished disciple making with turbulence at times. Most likely it was because that same turbulence and unsettledness was in the hearts of many members. Satan has worked hard to destroy the environment of growth, but the leadership in the districts of the OSSDAC and I, have been more ready to resist him and let the Holy Spirit prevail in His agenda of disciple making as stated in Isaiah 8 and Matthew 28. The board of elders performed a great job as well. As conflicts arose the elders dealt with it.

Dealing With the Opposition

In the book of Nehemiah (4:1a) Nehemiah had to contend with the people who were furious about his call to rebuild “the walls.” The opposition was coming to Nehemiah from the outside, but how do we as a church rebuild “the walls” and use “the sword” skillfully if the opposition is from the inside, from within the church family? In summarizing how the OSSDAC dealt with the opposition one could describe it in three simple words: “firm, persistent, and gentle.”

First of all, the Bible warns that in the last days there will be great divisions and struggles within (Rom 7:18; Eph 6:12; 2 Tim 2:16-17). Division is often caused due to outbursts of anger, anger that is not biblical, and anger that divides. According to McNeal (2006) anger is often a secondary emotion coming out of the primal emotion of fear (p. 16). This fear is rooted in genetics or/and formative event(s) of the past. I have noticed that people have used anger to manipulate and control others in the church as well. In reading the Gospel stories, especially the incidents where Jesus is dealing with the opposition (Matt 23:33 and many accounts in John), it shows that Jesus had to put religious leaders of his time in their rightful place. It is hard to have courage to do this, but as shepherds of the sheep we do not only expose the wolves, but take a defense stick, “a sword” firmly, as suggested by Haughk (1988), using it persistently and gently with the hope that discipline would be redemptive.

I do not think that the members of the church as a whole ever broke their contacts with the segment of the church in opposition to the pastoral leadership, but always tried to meet, send information back and forth, talk, understand and find ways to work so the church would benefit from service. They may have just been following the old adage: “Keep your friends close and your enemies even closer.” From this perspective, I do believe the church has shown mercy and gentleness to this segment and therefore the church at large has benefitted.

I have tried to utilize Sande’s (2000) principles of conflict resolution that were explored in chapter three. He presents four biblically based steps in dealing with conflicting situations in churches. From 1 Corinthians 10:31 the author presents the first and all encompassing principle that calls people to do all things in the church to the glory

of the Lord. This includes finding solutions for conflicts. Therefore conflicts in OSSDAC were firstly approached from this basic principle to find a solution and at the same time give glory to God. People in opposition were approached with love and care.

Sande's second principle is derived from Matthew 5. In order to take the speck out of an opponent's eye one needs to take "the plank" out of one's own eye so that the situation can be clearly seen. As some church leaders and myself found the need to point to some issues and concerns of the opposition, one thing was clear that before we as leaders even attempt to point out mistakes and weaknesses in others we need to look humbly at our own. With lots of prayers, fasting and submitting ourselves to God we as leaders of OSSDAC were ready to approach the opposition.

The third principle deals with opposition by following the Matthew 18 principle—trying to settle the issue one-on-one, next bringing a witness, and finally using the whole church. In some cases I as their pastor would meet alone one to one with some of the opposition in an attempt to solve the conflict, but in many instances I needed to bring along a witness with me. Many lengthy meetings were held in order to calm the situations and come to solutions with God's help.

The fourth principle calls for people to be reconciled, and forgive each other. Unfortunately not many members seemed to truly forgive each other even though they claimed to be reconciled.

The Future of OSSDAC

I understand more and more that the future vision of the OSSDAC needs to be grounded on the core values of the church and redefined and flexible enough to be adjusted as the church grows with a new pastor and new leaders. According to Bugbee

(1995), the church needs to continue in the process of reformation, which is the current focus of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is reformation that will bring the church back to being a biblical community with integrity (Acts 2:42-44). The church needs to continue working in greater accord with spiritual giftedness (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4); the church then is more able to fulfill the Great Commission for the greater ministry of Christ in the world. And He will keep working with us until we have completed the work that He has in mind (Phil 1:6).

Conclusion

As I reflect on my experience in working with the OSSDAC, I would conclude that going through crises has helped me figure out my own heart issues as well as developing better leadership qualities. It has also helped all of the church leaders to mature and to know and understand the purpose of having an Adventist church in the area. I have discovered as well that I naturally tend to lean toward idealism and have a strong sense of fairness. After the first major conflict and many battles later, I realized I needed to spend more time with the leaders and members helping them find a biblically relevant church that can mature and grow as stated in the Great Commission.

Maybe I still need to grow in this area, but when it comes to making deals with the powerbrokers this is where I stand right now. What I am going to say might sound a bit proud, but hopefully I will grow out of it. In the OSSDAC situation, the pioneers of the church were the powerbrokers. In my estimation they had created a church that suited them, and due to that fact they seemed to be disconnected from the rest of the church family. I have also realized that because of their disconnectedness from the rest of the church, any kind of discipline, the use of the sword so to speak, would be a challenge. In

order for any discipline to actually become restorative, those who are disciplined need to be connected with people who would keep them accountable throughout the process of restoration.

I chose not to make deals with the powerbrokers in the church because I did not see Jesus making any kind of deals with the religious leaders of His time. However, new leaders stepped forward who have prayed harder than ever, given the church's inadequacies to the Lord, and asked Him to continue to bring the transformation. The transformation was painful and taught the leadership valuable lessons so even more discipling can be done even in the future in the OSSDAC.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF MY OWN GROWTH

AS A DISCIPLE

Through my experiences at the OSSDAC the Lord used the fiery furnace flames to reform the failings of his own follower. Looking at the problems of OSSDAC as one of discipleship led to an awakening in my own life. The problem in the church was mirrored in me. Thus the fires of disunity in the church have been instrumental in bringing to the surface the disunity dross in my own heart and life centered at its core was an issue of personal discipleship. This chapter will share my story and how God used the OSSDAC to bring me to a third major crossroad in my life that would lead me to a deeper discipleship journey with Him.

Growth as a Disciple of Christ

My Background and the Three Major Crossroads

My grandfathers were military officers and entrepreneurs. I have Eastern European roots, and my parents held different worldviews of life and different ideologies. My mother was an Adventist; my father an existential communist.

At the tender age of five or six I faced my first major life crossroads. Many times my father and I took walks together. The night walks were memorable and very influential to an early crossroad. My father used to point to planets and stars in the night

sky and say, “ Peter, when you grow up and live and die, you will not have a chance to live on that planet, or that, or any other, no matter how many years pass by. So do your best to make this life the best you can, because you will never have a chance to live again. This life is all that you have.” Putting together what my father told me and what my mother and church taught me, I came to the conclusion that if God gave me a life to live for 70 or 90 years, and if that was all I had forever, then life was the biggest and the cruelest joke the Lord could play on us. The disappointment with what my father said to me led me to tears and deep agony many times. That disappointment led me to distance myself from what my father was teaching me and to seek ideals in the Adventist church and the faith of my mother.

Life with Jesus here on the earth and throughout eternity is something I have believed in and lived for as devotedly as I could ever since my early childhood. From that time onward, the Lord has placed me on the pathway of making Him the center of my life.

At the age of 11 I took classes with my pastor who regularly and lovingly encouraged me to one day pursue ministry. Even though I read the Bible that same year from cover to cover, I did not understand much, but somehow I believed I had to read it before my baptism, that took place the following year at the age of 12. At the same age I preached my first sermon at a church of around 200 members, and taught the youth class not long after.

Creativity is something that the Lord has gifted me with. While in primary school most of my pictures and sculptures hung on the school hall walls or the walls of my

teachers' homes. They believed that I should attend art school and make my family, city, and country proud of the talents I had. The Lord, however, had a different plan.

I ended up in our Adventist school where at age 15 I experienced a second major crossroad, or point of growth as a disciple. For over a year I was searching to find an authentic Adventist, but to no avail. I thought that if there was none in the Christian school what was the point of living; Adventism did not work. I was so disappointed and depressed that thoughts of suicide crossed by mind and I even planned an attempt. God intervened miraculously and my attempt to end my own life did not work, instead God performed another miracle the very next day.

A classmate whom I had teased due to my own insecurities reacted to my teasing differently than anyone else previously. That day as I asked him why he was not hurt like the others, he told me that he did get hurt, but that he gave his pains to the Lord in prayer. When he said that he was praying for me my knees just gave way, and at that same moment I just knelt, and he knelt with me and we prayed together. I made a decision to give my life completely to Jesus. From that time until this day that same classmate and I study and share what we have gleaned from the writings of Ellen G. White, and we encourage, support, and pray together. We have stayed friends and prayer partners for over 30 years with three other friends I met at that time in Marusevec Seventh-day Adventist School.

My third and greatest crossroad and growth in life happened while in ministry. I say this even though I have been harassed for my faith in Christ both in public school in my formative years and imprisoned while serving compulsory army service.

Working with the Lord to rebuild the OSSDAC did not happen without my own

heart rebuilding. It started with the realization that my conference officials did not send an angel to the OSSDAC district. I knew I needed to focus on my own “logs” first, which to some degree had prevented the church from fulfilling the Great Commission.

Personal Discoveries and Growth

It was a rude awakening to discover that my heart was full of bitterness, pride, and rebellion. It led me into a reactive depression that is genetically part of my family background. I was fortunate that the conference office supported my wife, my children, and me during this dark time and did all that they could to help us find healing in Christ. This healing took place with the help of “The Caring for the Heart Ministries” founded by John Regier. John and other biblical counselors helped me deal with my choleric personality and my depression and the deep-seated issues of my heart.

Experiencing healing for the issues of my heart had led me to be much more intentional about taking the time and energy needed to connect with the Lord regularly, and with others around me. In my experience I have maintained this spiritual growth through daily devotions, listening to the guidance of the Lord, and prayer. Fasting was part of my life during my younger years. However, these days, fasting helps me to simplify my life, by fasting from TV or the Internet or some foods while focusing more on some major issues of life. Being aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the communion with Him is something I need to practice more and more.

Dealing with my internal heart stuff has impacted my ministry in numerous ways. First of all, like many pastors, I had the ability to speak, but I did not really listen well. My own pride and rebellious attitudes were the roots of such deficiency. That was where I needed to grow and mature. However, through the process of counseling my listening

skills have developed greatly. I have also developed a greater humility needed for listening rather than speaking.

Second, when reading the Bible I applied the text to my local district, seeking to envision how the district would look if this were implemented. “Idealistic glasses” were the prism through which I observed the world as a child. The more I read the more idealistic I become and perhaps more justice oriented, but the more time I spend with people the more I learn to be realistic and gracious.

When I first arrived at OSSDAC I heard from the present leaders repeated statements of how nothing that they had tried worked, so I was instructed to preach, visit, and keep the status quo. However, when the church grew numerically, but the worship attendance was the same, I knew there was a problem, a problem that needed to be addressed.

When I saw the reality of the church situation and compared it with the ideal the Word of God expected, I spent sleepless nights wrestling with the Lord praying for biblical solutions. Idealistically I did not believe this was what ministry was supposed to be like. I have come to increasingly accept that wrestling with the Lord, and others, has to become more and more a normal part of daily ministry.

As I look back now, and forward, I can say that I do not mind the tears, pains, and crisis because the Lord, I believe, has rebuilt me as a leader. A leader who cares more deeply for the people God has given him to shepherd, diligently seeking God’s blessings for their lives.

In dealing with my depression brought on by my heart issues I researched thoroughly in order to find biblically based counseling services and was greatly helped by

John Regier, the founder of “Caring for the Heart Ministry” located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. His ministry has helped me heal from issues of anger, bitterness, and pride. He had my wife and I take the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis test. The insights gained from this test and from counselling have helped me to be a better spouse, a better parent, and a better servant-leader in my churches and the community at large. My wife and I have taken training with Regier as biblical counselors, wanting to see people healed and freed to serve others as stated in Luke 9:1, 2. There were times when I could agree with Cole (1999) who states that “we do not ask, because we do not care” (p. 4), but those days were over, a long time ago, I believe.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer, I have dealt with my fears, bitterness, rebellion, pride, past abuse, moral failure, pursuit of temporal values, hypocrisy, harboring negative thoughts, an argumentative competitive spirit, and have recaptured ground that was given up to the enemy. The chains have been broken I believe. I am not the only one to notice but lots of people that know me noticed the change in me and I want to give thanks and praise to my Lord. I must say that sometimes almost unexpectedly the enemy tries to bring back those chains, but knowing how that hurts my Lord, my family, and others I choose to go down on my knees and beg the Lord to keep on changing my heart.

As a disciple of Christ I believe that accountability starts with the Lord and because of that I have written personal journals from the age of 12, but have greatly improved the technique of journaling through the influence of such people as Bill and Lynn Hybels, some of my peers at the Andrews University Seminary, and Dwight Nelson who pastors the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. I like and sense

a need to be accountable to the Lord who is close to me, and like to help others be accountable to the Lord out of gratitude.

As a servant leader I believe that I have been disciplined enough to work, study, read, write reports, and collect data that enhances this DMin project as well as to work well and serve the Lord in the Church and the community I live in. However, being a practical person, I want to see the results of God's actions in my ministry. Although sometimes I get frustrated when things do not work, that frustration just compels me even more to find biblical solutions for the problems. It also pushes me to seek advice from others in order to take appropriate actions.

My personal vision is to "Prepare the Bride for the Wedding." I do that passively, by being a light, and actively through leading others to Christ. In recent years I have made a conscious effort to mentor and build disciples/leaders by bringing them along with me to Bible studies with baptismal candidates so they can learn to do the same.

In my personal life and work I constantly see in front of me the place that Christ is preparing for me as stated in John 14:1-3 and in order to reach that place I commit to a daily routine and an organized plan that is:

1. Setting aside morning and evening personal time in private prayer and Bible study.
2. Journaling daily in order to keep me accountable to the Lord and close friends. Through the journaling I process internal ideas, thoughts and moods, and pen them down.
3. Making prayerful decisions daily that will help me keep priorities in perspective, while attempting to maintain a balanced lifestyle.

4. Maintaining personal and professional accountability through a meaningful ongoing dialog with colleagues in ministry.

5. Listening to my MP3 Bible at least three times a day while walking, driving, or working. I love the God of the Bible, and cannot literally live without His Word.

Since my family life comes right after the Lord and because we are a closely knit family, we interact with each other often. We maintain these ties and increase the purpose of the family by daily stressing the importance of existing for the service of the Lord. We are committed to going on our yearly family mission trip to Mexico to build a couple of churches and to preach the gospel over each Christmas break. This is something that people from our district participated in and will hopefully be part of in the future.

My greatest responsibility before the Lord is to help my wife and children spend eternity with Christ and me. I plan to accomplish this by what we have done in the past:

1. Having at least one worship session a day, as well as praying with my family.

2. Having a strong persuasion that each day has been given to us by Christ to be local missionaries in order to serve Him.

3. Enjoying Sabbath worship times with my family as the highlights of the week and as a taste of what the heaven will be like.

4. Spending quality and quantity time in loving care of my family and having regular family meetings for feedback and encouragement.

5. Choosing to have a healthy balance between working and home life with my family.

6. Working towards taking the time to have a regular vacation together, and trying to keep the 4th commandment by working only six days and taking one day to rest.

We do love to travel and visit places together, but this goal is still a challenge for us.

7. Taking time for recreation and maintaining my physical health by walking with my family, kayaking or canoeing with the family since we live close to water, as well as jogging and playing tennis.

8. Taking time for community building by visiting members and friends. We all help with spiritual activities.

I believe this DMin project has helped me to grow as a disciple of Christ. I also believe that out of that growing heart for Jesus came my desire to serve others.

Growing in Service to Others

I have served in leadership roles in many capacities while at the school and church, starting very young as a teenager. I have been privileged to serve as a church elder for over 20 years, and have led small group ministries, evangelism events, and discipling ministries whether my life took me from Serbia to Croatia, Montenegro, Austria, Germany, England, Sweden, the US, Mexico, or Canada.

Some of the greatest experiences in my Christian service were connected to the educational institutions I have attended. The community bond that I have experienced at Andrews University, for example, while planting and maintaining the Passage Church was incredible. Accepting accountability, working together in evangelism, supporting the mission of the church, and worshiping together as a loving church family produced the almost perfect discipleship community that the book of Acts talks about.

From time to time ambitious ideas pop up challenging my servant leadership, but the desire to maintain a loving and united community helps me patiently keep these ideas in check. I do believe that Robert Peck, Kenley Hall, Stanley Patterson, as well as Joe

Kidder have influenced my ministry in very positive ways that have brought many notable transformations, only for the better.

Not only did the Holy Spirit help me deal with my issues of bitterness and depression, but He enabled me to help others for the glory of my Lord and my elation in ministry. The conference officials gave me ample time alone with the Lord so I could study John Regier's material, be guided by the Holy Spirit through the reading of His Word, and have prayer time with the Lord. All of this has helped me to be where I am right now. There are people like me who need to undergo a large-scale chiselling process by Jesus. This happened to me at the same time as we (my wife and I) were developing a loving marriage, homeschooling our three children, totally renovating our home, serving in full-time ministry, and doing the DMin program. I give God the glory for the growth in my life and in my service as His disciple.

Personally, I still need to learn as an immigrant pastor what it means to make disciples for Christ perpetually and consistently while being flexible within the biblical borders as Cole (1999) suggests in the foreword of his book. I need to learn to give a little and take a little. Some leaders would instruct in that way and I personally do not have a problem with it, but giving a little and taking a little when things are not biblical or ethical or in harmony with church principle is something I struggle with. This is probably due to the fact that I had to fight for my faith for 14 years while living with non-Christian friends on the street, or in my public school that ran under the communist ideology, and because I have come close to dying too many times that I am well aware that I only live and serve because the Lord is graceful to me.

Reflecting on the past experiences, I still need to improve more in expressing

appreciation to all the people that are working with me. I also still need to improve more in my working relationships with the volunteers around me, especially those who call Canada their native land. I try to do so by following a four-question strategy shared by Hybels (2004):

1. Did the work feel meaningful?
2. Was the work emotionally energizing?
3. Whether the team of people that you served was a good fit?
4. If not, “are they willing to continue experimenting till they find the best fit both for the team, and ministry involvement?”

The best fit in both areas, with people and ministry, will keep people volunteering for decades and keep them energized and fulfilled serving God.

I am also aware that we are not called to ministry to be the firemen of the church most of the time, but rebuilders of the church exemplified by Nehemiah. As for me, I will continue to be a better listener to my leaders that are looking for empowerment. Hybels (2006) wrote that we as church shepherds need to hear what our church leaders’ and members’ needs are and respond by being the resource provider person. We should answer the call, which will in turn build trust with the people because we were relevant to them.

As the Holy Spirit leads us, I concur with Anderson (1997), who is calling us to find out what needs to be done in our churches and then to move ahead and do it. This is especially true when it comes to making biblical disciples through the Great Commandment in the context of the Great Controversy. In my experience that is what I keep on doing, but I still see a tearing of the church around me; however, I accept the fact

that pain will be present until Jesus returns and will keep me humble and reliant on Christ as the church moves forward. I have seen always that the Lord can lead the church forward as we cooperate with Him. This journey takes boldness that comes from the Holy Spirit, perseverance from the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the nerves and patience not of iron but of platinum.

Concurring with Reiner (2004), I as a leader will continue to be an authentic leader, one who evangelizes personally and mentors others to be the same, to be warm relationally, creating the atmosphere of life and acceptance and to be the one who does not compromise the essentials. Growing the kingdom with God in the context of the Great Controversy within the parameters of the Great Commandment will always demand a life commitment and not a business one that requires paid staff as stated by Cole (1999). The Great Controversy, the chaos, and the growth in spite of it, is something that Jesus prepared his disciples for and is preparing us for, according to Stetzer and Rainer (2010), so we can give Him glory in church growth through a loving sense of a Bible-based community. This takes the ministry experience to a higher level beyond this romantic, “lovie-dovie,” warm, fuzzy place where people “like me.” It is a place of love and care, but also of maturity as well and preparation for the second coming of Christ for us and others that the Lord wants to save through us. The Adventist church does not have a congregational church pattern where it cannot be prophetic. We are blessed to be able to be connected with the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all the truth, as stated in John 14, and our congregations need to hear that truth in love as the apostle Paul instructs us (Eph 4:15).

Disciple-Making Recommendations

In my journey at OSSDAC and through this DMin project I have discovered a great deal about myself. I have also discovered numerous insights about discipling. I will end this chapter with some recommendations for those who would like to lead their church on a discipling process.

In disciple making, first of all it is necessary to find out where the local church members are before starting the training processes. Church leaders/members are at different stages in their Christian journey so having facilitators that would lead them to a next step on their discipling journey is very important. Often discipling courses are offered over a weekend or a week and are given to a group of 20, 50, or 200.

While such larger groups are taught the presenters are content if everyone in their group gets something that will help them move forward in accordance to where they are. As presenters get a better picture of where the trainees are over the weekend or week training session, more would be given by bringing four or more facilitators who would lead each specific group more wholesomely to what is their next step. The specific group would understand the facilitator better and gain more from him/her in valuable growth. What I am saying is that instead of throwing the seeds at random, evaluate different productive soils and tailor the discipleship training to bring the best yield to both the disciple and the disciple-trainer. A mature disciple will train a new disciple/leader who will in turn keep the process perpetuating as stated in Matthew 28:19-20. This process should keep on perpetuating until the end of time.

Other pastors, including me, need to be trained regularly until we develop good conflict resolution skills. The challenge still remains today to create an atmosphere and

place where leaders will be trained and empowered so that they are in a position of bearing much fruit in their ministry. Some things that are crystallizing in regard to the Great Commission fall into two major parts. Luke 9:1, 2 tells that we are to heal, cast out demons, and to preach the kingdom of God. When someone is healed and set free (the Lord has blessed me to have learned how to do that in the name of Jesus Christ) we have the “authority” to share the good news without much problem. There are two major steps in making Bible-based disciples of Jesus:

1. Lead a person(s) to freedom and in the healing process (15-50 hours)

2. When the soil is good and the roots are healthy (not perfect) four stages of biblical disciples are introduced and mentored. (Please note that the Roman numeral “I” [one] is on the bottom signifying work from the root or the ground, and the Roman numeral “II” [two] on the top signifies the growth of a disciple. To better understand the concept, please refer to Appendix 2.)

II—*Growing a Mature Disciple*: (Exod 19:5, 6; Ps 101:6; Isa 56:6; Luke 9:1, 2; John 14:1-3; Acts 26:16; Eph 3:7; 6:21; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 21). According to Dybdahl and based on Mark 1:

A—Preparation of the messenger: (a) listen, (b) allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in your ministry, (c) call others and guide them.

B—Preparation of the message: (a) the message is the Good News, (b) true and relevant in present time, (c) fulfillment of the rule of God, here and now,

C—Methodology: (a) preach/teach, (b) extend healing and salvation, (c) repent

D—Mode: the church can grow in number and discipleship only where there is an accountable community.

I—Freedom And Healing of the Heart

A—Testing: Ps 26:2; 2 Chr 32:31; Exod 20:20; Deut 8:16; Judg 7:4; Ps 11:4; Jer 17:10; 20:12; Zech 13:9; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 2:9; 13:5, 6; 1 John 4:1; Rev 2:2

B—Counseling sessions that will further help us reveal the issues at hand
Isa 1:18; Job 13:15; Ps 51:7; Isa 41:1, 21; 43:26; Phil 3:15

C—Going through the process of healing found in Jesus Christ: Ps 102:2, 3; 147:3; Isa 30:26; 43:25; 44:22; 55:7; Ezek 18:27; Acts 9:36, as well as continuing to work with you and give you tools that would help you stay free and healthy (John 8:32, 36; Gal 5:1)

What I have described on this last page is going to be the greatest focus of my ministry now and in the near future, and up to now represents the core of what the biblical ministry is all about. Heal as Jesus healed, gain trust, and people will follow desiring to hear the foundation of why we are healing and casting out demons.

Recommendations on Disciple Making as a United Work

In each new congregation a pastor finds that he or she needs to prayerfully and carefully evaluate where the church is. What kinds of leaders are necessary to lead the teamwork of biblical disciple making? The teamwork has to be flexible and adaptive but still united for the greater goal that is building the kingdom of God by “going” in order to make disciples for Christ Jesus.

Recommendations for Personal Heart Work

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer, I have dealt with my fears, bitterness, rebellion, pride, past abuse, moral failure, pursuit of temporal values, hypocrisy, harboring negative thoughts, an argumentative competitive spirit, and have recaptured ground that was given up to the enemy. I hope this project encourages you to face your own heart issues through prayer and Christian counseling.

APPENDIX 1

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MEMBERSHIP

Based on the study of Ammerman et al. (1998), these are the demographics of OSSAC members (November 2008). The following data is taken from personal observations and a survey taken:

1. AGE OF THE ATTENDEES

Church members	Age	Number
Children	1- 12yrs	approx 9
High school and up	13- 26 yrs	approx 8
Adults	27 - 64 yrs	approx 26
Mature members	over 65 yrs	approx 23

2. ATTENDEE GENDER

Male	- approx 19
Female	- approx 47

3. RACE

White	- approx 63
Black	- approx 3

4. MARITAL STATUS

Married	- approx 23 couples
Single	- approx 14

5. INCOME

Less than \$50,000 a year	- approx 61%
More than \$50,000 a year	- approx 39%

6. EDUCATION

Less than a bachelor's degree	- approx 36
Bachelors degree or higher	- approx 14

7. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employed	- approx 23
Unemployed/retired	- approx 29

8. NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE CHURCH

Less than 5 years	- approx 17
Less than 10 years	- approx 4
More than 10 years	- approx 35

9. DISTANCE FROM HOME TO CONGREGATION

15 minutes or less driving	- approx 24
More than 15 minutes driving	- approx 42

10. YEARLY TITHE FROM 2005-2008

2005	\$82249.67
2006	\$95091.02
2007	\$96255.53
2008 Jan-Oct	\$70452.82

The total yearly tithe increased the year I began working at OSSDAC, which in my humble estimation is an indirect effect when a pastor takes an office. I do believe that those who are giving give faithfully, but the challenge remains to work with those who do not yet give so they would stay faithful to the Lord.

APPENDIX 2

GROWING A MATURE DISCIPLE

II—GROWING A MATURE DISCIPLE

Exod 19:5, 6; Ps 101:6; Isa 56:6; Luke 9:1, 2; John 14:1-3; Acts 26:16; Eph 3:7; 6:21; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 21)

According to Jon Dybdahl and based on Mark 1:

1 - (Preparation of the messenger)

Listen, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in your ministry,
and call others and guide them

2 - (Preparation of the message)

Message is the Good News,
True and relevant in present time,
Fulfillment of the rule of God, here and now,

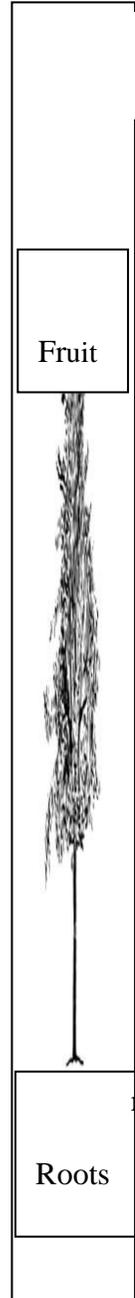
3 - (Methodology)

Preach/teach, extend healing and salvation, and repent

4 - (Mode) church can grow in number and discipleship only where
there is an accountable community.

I – FREEDOM AND HEALING OF THE HEART

1. **Testing** (Ps 26:2; 2 Chr 32:31; Exod 20:20; Deut 8:16; Judg 7:4; Ps 11:4; Je 17:10; 20:12; Zech 13:9; 1 Cor 3:13; **2 Cor 2:9; 13:5, 6**; 1 John 4:1; Rev 2:2)
2. **Counseling sessions** that will further help reveal the issues at hand (**Isa 1:18**; Job 13:15; Ps 51:7; Is 41:1, 21; 43:26; **Phil 3:15**)
3. **Going through the process of healing** found in Jesus Christ (**Ps 102:2, 3**; 147:3; Isa 30:26; 43:25; 44:22; 55:7; Ezek 18:27; **Acts 9:36**) as well as continuing to work with you and give you tools that would help you stay free and healthy (**John 8:32, 36; Gal 5:1**)



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