A Movement of Authentic Christianity: an Embrace and Integration of Biblical Fundamentals in a Seventh-day Adventist Church Plant Among the Echo Boomer Culture of the 21st Century in Keller, Texas

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ABSTRACT

A MOVEMENT OF AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY: AN EMBRACE AND INTEGRATION OF BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTALS IN A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH PLANT AMONG THE ECHO BOOMER CULTURE OF THE 21ST CENTURY IN KELLER, TEXAS

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A MOVEMENT OF AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY: AN EMBRACE AND INTEGRATION OF BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTALS IN A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH PLANT AMONG THE ECHO BOOMER CULTURE OF THE 21ST CENTURY IN KELLER, TEXAS

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Problem

The median age of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is increasing due, in part, to the small percentage of echo boomers (millenials) who are currently present. Their absence reveals the need to approach North America as a mission field and teach biblical truth grounded in classical spiritual disciplines in the language of the culture of the 21st century.

Method

The development of the spiritual life as the foundation for mission in the Seventh-
day Adventist Church in North America will be explored through an echo boomer church plant in Keller, Texas.

Results

Currently seventy-four people are involved in the Come and See Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our members are accepting that they are missionaries to a culture different from their own and are actively discipling echo boomers who are involved in and leading ministry.

Conclusions

The church must first seek to connect to the community through spirituality because religion in the 21st century is suspect. Biblical truths presented through a discovery of classical spiritual disciplines provide an excellent format for this to occur. What follows is the development of primitive godliness as one discovers their belovedness through Jesus Christ. This renewed relationship with Jesus leads the church into mission.
Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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

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Date approved
For Ashley, to thank you for everything is still not enough.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NAD North American Division

OTKMA Old Town Keller Merchant’s Association
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The majority of Seventh-day Adventist congregations in North America now exhibit a median age significantly above the national figure.¹ Most congregations in North Texas contain few persons under the age of twenty five. This minority of children, youth, and young adults provides a compelling illustration of a congregational climate that has neglected to contextualize the gospel to post 1990s North American culture in North Texas. This lack of contextualization hinders many congregations from providing Christian spiritual growth for those under the age of twenty five, further contributing to increasing the median age in congregations. Spiritual growth has been stifled by a lack of contemporary instruction in Word and life of God’s existence as love through classical spiritual disciplines that substantiate the echo boomer’s² belovedness, unique identity in Christ, and mission to love others.


Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to vision, plan, gather a core group, and plant an Adventist congregation in Keller, Texas, that recognizes and engages the echo boomer culture as a mission field in which contextualization of the gospel in the North American culture of North Texas in the 21st century takes place.

Justification for the Project

The increasing margin between the median age of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America when compared with the national figure suggests that Seventh-day Adventist churches are failing to provide persons under the age of twenty five with Christian spiritual growth practices that penetrate and engage the culture of the 21st century. Many churches have exchanged mission opportunities in their communities, which would keep them informed of the current needs of echo boomers, for perceived spiritual security which leads them to maintain the status quo of the church as an institution. My observation is the decrease in the church’s contribution to Christian spiritual growth stems from an understanding of a spiritual life developed through “doing a relationship with God” as a replacement for “being in a relationship with God.” A focus on doing leads to fear of contextualization.

Delimitations of the Project

This project is limited in study to the population of Keller, Texas, although I am
hopeful that my findings here may prove of some benefit to other secular communities in North America in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not yet present. As this project began I faced limitations consisting of a cold start church plant. Our initial core group consisted of three people, me, my wife, and my seven month old daughter. In addition we are limited by the small amount of financial resources for ministry that have been promised towards this project of ten thousand dollars per year for five years. My lack of experience in church planting is another limitation of this project. Thus far my ministry experience has consisted solely in an established Seventh-day Adventist Church. A final limitation is the “dark area” (limited population area) for Seventh-day Adventists in which Keller is located. There is not another Seventh-day Adventist Church within a thirty minute drive radius, which for the metroplex of Dallas-Fort Worth is a low populated area for the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

**Description of the Project Process**

A theology of what it means to be the church in the 21st century, living a life of primitive godliness, will take its foundation in:

1. The Shema Yisrael found in Deut 6:4-9. Is the Shema Yisrael God’s invitation to move his follower from a relationship based on belief into experiences of everyday life? What does this life lived within the grace of God look like and where does perceived human obedience exist?

2. Jesus’ addition to the Shema Yisrael in Mark 12:30, 31. The Great Commandment completes a message of living Christianity that places Jesus at the center

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3For the purpose of this study, secular is defined as a person who recognizes a spiritual hunger within but has little or no interest in exploring fulfillment of their hunger within the confines of a church.
of being for the Christian. Does this provide the necessary teaching to lay a foundation for mission?

3. Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt 25:31-46. How does the follower love others so deeply that they do not even recognize the depth of love that has flowed through them? Should the follower lean on the faithfulness of God rather than on their own ability to serve others and in so doing earn the right to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost?

Current literature will be reviewed to discover the function of Come and See as a mission within its community. How can members of Come and See live with lost people and earn the right to share Jesus with them? The goal of this review will be to discover concepts that can be applied to assist the Seventh-day Adventist Church in approaching North America as a mission field and learning to live in community with lost people in order to earn the right to share the gospel.

Over the last six decades the culture in North America has changed dramatically as new generations have come on the horizon suddenly. As a result, the church in North America has been placed on the margins of society and North America has become a mission field. Does the restructuring of the church necessitate the involvement of echo boomers, including leadership roles, so that they may take ownership to live and to lead as followers of Jesus within the echo boomer culture of Keller, Texas, while offering hope in the person of Jesus Christ? If so, what risk must the local church take to live this incarnational missional life? What does this life look like, and where within the follower’s life does it begin?

A concept of the development of the spiritual life as the foundation for mission
will be explored and part of the fruit of this exploration will be a discipleship model in the form of a prayer house that functions as a mission outpost in Old Town Keller that fosters a ministry of presence within the greater community of Keller, Texas, and within the church plant Come and See.

Through the founding of the prayer house, Tikva . . . A Gathering Place, community will be created in which not yet churched people and followers of Jesus will together be led into a discovery of spiritual disciplines through ten stations set up that in part lead into prayer and intimacy with God through music, painting, reading, journaling, reflecting, writing prayers on walls, and praying for the world. At Tikva echo boomers and their families will be able to connect with members of Come and See and be introduced into a discovery of spiritual disciplines that lead them into the presence of God.

The success of this project will be determined when a growing congregation consists of persons twenty five and under who have begun a journey of following Jesus by incorporating spiritual disciplines, service, and proclamation of the gospel in their daily lives.

A report on the experience will be formed to share with the Global Mission department in the North American Division (NAD), as this is a Global Mission sponsored mission project.

**Expectation from This Project**

This project will increase my effectiveness as a leader as I surrender to God through spiritual disciplines. This project will transform the lives of my core group as they actively experiment, evaluate, and apply spiritual disciplines in their lives.
project will plant a Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Keller, Texas, out of which other churches may be planted. This project will assist in providing a movement of echo boomers who will aid in leading the Seventh-day Adventist Church into the mission field of North Texas. This project will provide methods from which mission work in the North American Division can be embedded that will decrease the margin between the median age of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the national figure.

Outline of Project

1. Chapter one sets the purpose of the project, the justification for the project, the delimitations of the project, and the methodology with which this project will take shape.

2. Chapter two lays a theological foundation for discipleship grounded in primitive godliness through the Shema Yisrael and Jesus’ addition to the Shema. The life of the church and the life of the Christian are evaluated based upon Christ’s parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

3. Chapter three discusses literature within the last ten years of the challenge of the church in North America to become a mission field and a possible suggestion for engaging the mission field beginning with spiritual leaders is shown as a catalyst for sowing seed in the fertile ground for the gospel.

4. Chapter four evaluates the need for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Keller, Texas, to develop as a missional church.

5. Chapter five suggests that the foundation for engaging in mission is the development of the spiritual life.

6. Chapter six tells the story of my experience over the last four years as I have
lived as a missionary in the echo boomer culture of Keller, Texas. I have included lessons that I have learned and recommendations.
CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MINISTRY

Introduction

Over the last four years my journey inward has become evident in my outward existence. Recently, a not yet churched friend of mine told me that they knew three things about our church: (1) we believe that church is more than a weekly service, (2) we believe in investing in the community in which our church is located, and (3) we believe in spirituality. This statement nailed down the journey that God is developing in my life and is leading me to develop in others through spiritual disciplines and discipleship.

Alan Jones in telling of his experience at an Egyptian monastery relays the following phrase spoken to him in farewell by the director of the monastery, “I am not yet a Christian, but I have seen them!” I have adopted this phrase as my own. I am a follower of Jesus who is learning to live deeply with God and others, but I still have much to learn about what it means to be a follower of Jesus who loves God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength and who loves my neighbor as myself.

Among the needs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America today are community and spirituality. These two concepts meet in the Great Commandment given by Jesus (Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27). In this chapter I hope to answer

\[\text{References}\]

the question: What are the biblical fundamentals of the journey of a Seventh-day Adventist in Keller, Texas, living a life of primitive godliness in the culture of the 21st century?

The purpose of the theological reflection in this chapter is to develop a biblical theology of community and spirituality upon which the mission statement of Tikva,² “[I]iving deeply with God and others,” will be based. Throughout my journey over the last three years of living as a missionary in North America in the 21st century I have discovered that not yet churched people believe the church should only maintain these two requirements: spirituality and community. Ironically, these are the two requirements that Jesus agrees to summarize for his followers.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of a theological understanding of ministry as discovered through the Shema Yisrael and Jesus’ addition to the Shema. This theological understanding will lead us to a church and ministry understanding of commercialism as a great barrier to primitive godliness in the 21st century and the call of Christ to overcome through grace so that a life of primitive godliness may be lived.

**Shema Yisrael as a Calling to Primitive Godliness**

The Shema Yisrael is God’s invitation to move his follower from belief into experience through relationship. David Benner writes, “Any authentic spiritual journey must grow from direct, personal experience of God. There is no substitute for a genuine

²Tikva is a prayer house started by Come and See Seventh-day Adventist Church in Keller, Texas.
encounter with Perfect Love.”

God’s command to Israel through Moses moves Israel from belief into experience through relationship within the Shema. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut 6:4, 5). This movement of theological belief into anthropological experience through relationship begins with identity that is shaped by love. Humanity finds identity through the One God who unconditionally loves the human race. God affirms his identity as love with the call for humanity to love him with its whole being.

According to P. J. J. S. Els, “The fact that love could be commanded indicates that in Deut 6:5; . . . expresses not primarily feeling, but rather a certain behavioral pattern, i.e., obedience (in gratitude) to Yahweh’s covenantal commandments and faithful and total commitment to him.” The love that God commands is not alone a system of rules to be observed and checked off in the daily life of the follower; this love engages the whole person, which anchors the follower to a foundation upon which experience through relationship is to be cultivated in the life of the follower. Rather than relating godliness to rule keeping, the Old Testament relates genuine godliness to love for God

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4Unless otherwise indicated all Bible references in this paper will be taken from the New International Version (NIV).


6Benner, 45.

that is unified within the follower through trust and faithfulness stemming from
gratitude. In Isa 41:8 Abraham is called the friend of God because of his relationship
with God; this relationship is the model of godliness (2 Chr 20:7). The events that take
place in the exodus-conquest lay the foundation for gratitude within Israel. Likewise,
Christ’s death on the cross lays the foundation for gratitude within the follower of Jesus
Christ.

The combination of “heart” (לב), “soul/life” (נפש), and (膂力) “strength/power”
reveals characteristics of mental and emotional faculties that display themselves in the
life of the follower through self-discipline. This self-discipline leads the follower to
enter into the inner self which is necessary for spiritual growth. David Benner observes,

Leaving the self out of Christian spirituality results in a spirituality that is not well
grounded in experience. It is, therefore, not well grounded in reality. Focusing on
God while failing to know ourselves deeply may produce an external form of piety
[godliness], but it will always leave a gap between appearance and reality. This is
dangerous to the soul of anyone—and in spiritual leaders it can also be disastrous for
those they lead.

Benner’s point is the follower must have self-knowledge.

The temptation of the follower of Christ to focus on rule keeping parallels their
temptation to lay rule keeping aside. Both paths provide cultural change that disconnects
appearance and reality and neither path leads to love of God with all of the follower’s

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8Ibid., 286.
9Ibid.
10“'The Great Commandment Is to Love God,'” *Word Biblical Commentary*, 59 vols. (Nashville,
11Ibid., 143.
12David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 20-
21.
“heart,” “soul,” and “strength.” The Shema provides opportunity to move past this disconnect through an invitation to enter into the experience of the law of God.

The life of primitive godliness gives everything it possesses internally and externally, but this life is not easy for human nature wars with the inner Christ continually. Thomas Merton describes this battle as \textit{agonia}, a state of being versus a state of nothingness.\textsuperscript{13} Will we live within the law of God—a state of being, or will we live outside the law of God—a state of nothingness?\textsuperscript{14}

This choice is one of experience through relationship, not right or wrong answers. Ellen White writes, “It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His [God’s] professed people.”\textsuperscript{15} This return to primitive godliness manifests itself in a life committed to following God in the midst of failing to live up to the law of God. The command to love God is an invitation of grace to allow God to preside over the secondary aspects of human life that vie for God’s position.\textsuperscript{16} This is godliness. Perfection does not have any place except in the perfect love of God for humanity. Any attempt to keep the law of God is imperfect (Isa 64:6), for how can imperfect people keep a law designed by perfect love, in a relationship that exists in grace and flows from God to humanity?

The command to which the Shema calls the follower is life that continually lives


\textsuperscript{14}For an in-depth study of this thought read C. S. Lewis’ allegory \textit{The Great Divorce} (Ashland, OK: Blackstone Audiobooks, 1999).

\textsuperscript{15}Ellen G. White, \textit{The Great Controversy} (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 478.

\textsuperscript{16}“Moses’ Second Address: The Law Proclaimed,” 104.
within the grace of God. Perceived obedience exists only within the grace of God whose grace covers the imperfections of human obedience. According to Ray Anderson, “All too often people become less whole and less human under the influence of a theology that does not understand that ‘take up your cross’ must be preceded by ‘the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death’ (Rom 8:2). The litmus test of theology is not only what it says of God but what it does to persons when it is preached, taught and practiced.”

Primitive godliness as suggested in an experience through relationship places all facets of human life into faith. Love for the follower’s Creator within anthropological experience is the mark in that the decisions made throughout the twenty-four hours of their day give evidence to the degree of grace, or possibly the follower’s recognition of their need for grace, that is needed that day for them to live out the command to love God in action with their entire being. Primitive godliness is then lived moment by moment within each circumstance in which the choice is made between love for the One God and love for the secondary, which claims to the human “heart” and “soul” to be more valuable than the One God.

Thus the Shema brings holism back to a relationship that has been fragmented by sin. Within the context of the follower of Jesus the apostle Paul writes, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). Doug Pagitt affirms, “Nothing is outside the reach

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18Simon Chan, Spiritual Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 141.

and presence of God.”

Therefore the entire evaluation of every aspect of the follower’s life comes under the command of the Shema. Holy and secular are done away with and everything becomes holy. A decision made that obeys the command to love God with all of the follower’s “heart,” “soul,” and “strength” is as holy as a decision that disobeys the command to love and as a result finds itself in need of grace.

Through this recognition the follower is set free from self loathing, for one of two things takes place continually in the life of primitive godliness—love to God is given from the follower or grace from God is given to the follower so that love to God may be given from the follower. Thus grace and love dance continually in the life of primitive godliness. The beloved follower is taken with God who created the follower so that they could be taken by God.

The Shema brings confidence to the follower because their God is the one and only God. This confidence ignites a commonplace community into an atmosphere of living expectancy from God. Thus a community of primitive godliness is born in which decisions are made and actions are carried out that collectively carry an attitude of love toward God within a posture receptive of grace. This energetic community risks everything within and without for the mission of loving God with all of its “heart” and “soul.” Everything else is secondary and Christ’s Lordship of his church is evident.

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20Ibid., 91.


22Scott McKnight, A Community Called Atonement (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007), 27.

23Will Mancini, Church Unique (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 129.

Howard Stone and James Duke describe this phenomenon as *embedded theology*:

“Christians learn what faith is all about from countless daily encounters with their Christianity—formal and informal, planned and unplanned.”

It is from this community that incarnational mission finds its source in the person of Jesus Christ who expands the Shema into horizontal relationships between humans. Just as God became a Man through the person of Jesus Christ, we become his hands and feet through incarnational ministry. According to Christopher Wright, like the Shema, Jesus’ addition of Lev 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” is founded on “indicatives about the identity, uniqueness, singularity and holiness of YHWH as God. It is the reality of YHWH that constitutes the authority for these greatest commandments, on which, Jesus declared, hang all the rest of the law and the prophets.”

God’s existence as love and his manifestation of that love through grace are his authority through which he rightfully calls humanity to obey.

### Jesus’ Addition to the Shema Yisrael

The command to “Love your neighbor as yourself,” given by Moses (Lev 19:18), added to the Shema by Jesus in His teaching of the greatest commandment (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27), and taught by Paul and James to the New Testament church (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8), challenges the self-centeredness of humanity. Today, as in

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Moses’ and Jesus’ day, love for one’s neighbor primarily manifests itself to the extent that it benefits self-interest.  

Scott McKnight observes,

> It is attention-grabbing to love the poor, to show compassion to AIDS sufferers, and to show mercy to victims. But it is attention-deflecting to wake up in the morning and ask, ‘What does my wife, or husband, my daughter or son need?’ and then attend to those needs. It is easier to see love in the public square than to show love in the home . . . neighborly love begins in the home. In fact, if it is not shown in the home, it is a sham in public. How can we show such love?

After quoting the Shema, Jesus links Lev 19:18 with the words “you shall love,” which He patterns after a common rabbinic practice known as equal category. As a result His teaching reflects the importance of loving God and loving humanity equally. The question asked of Jesus by the expert in the law follows rabbinical thinking of placing the commandments of the law in order of importance. To discover the most important commandment and then to carry it out gave the greatest assurance of one’s place in society and eternal life.

The Pharisees manifested evidence of this thinking through daily living by neglecting the last six commandments of the Decalogue while favoring the first four. In doing so they separated love for God and love for humanity. This thinking enables the

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perceived follower to love God with the assurance of reward while neglecting the needs of humanity which, if addressed, may lead the perceived follower into action which would perceivably honor God less and therefore lead to fewer honors received upon one’s self. Commandment keeping is considered life-giving to the perceived follower of Christ who does not understand grace.

It appears that Matthew understood this dilemma in the minds of his Jewish audience in that he adds, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:40). Thus Matthew takes the reader back to Jesus’ words:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:17-20).

Douglas R. A. Hare posits, “The references to the law and the prophets in 5:17 and 22:40 bracket Jesus’ ministry to Israel as the God-authorized end-time teacher.” As Jesus is God’s authorized end-time teacher, He has the authority to place emphasis on the hierarchy of God’s law.

Jesus’ addition of Lev 19:18 to the Shema gives His followers a command which, if followed, leads them to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. The expert in the law who tests Jesus appears to understand this as evidenced in his response: “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is

33“Matthew,” 5:484.

one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:32, 33). This reply is the first interpretation of Jesus’ summary of the law. Through this statement one who is at the center of law-keeping in Judaism acknowledges love for God and man above the sacrificial system. Thus the follower of Jesus who loves God and loves others surpasses the righteousness of the sacrificial system, the righteousness of the Pharisees.

This idea is not new to Judaism, as Micah set forth a similar command: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8). The Pharisees, however, lost sight of this command in their obedience to God. Rule keeping replaced love for others and in doing so rule keeping led to an attempt to attain favor with God. For when the follower does not understand the love of God for who he or she is, they may fall to the temptation of finding favor with God through rule keeping, in order to keep from discovering who the real person is that God loves within themselves. As Hauerwas suggests, “This [God’s] love can be harsh and dreadful, because to be loved by God is to be forced to know ourselves truthfully.” Through the command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27), Jesus takes the follower into self, for selfishness can only be dethroned as the follower sees the self as God sees it. Yet, seeing this self, the


36. Ibid.

follower loves what they see, just as God loves His follower because God is love (1 John 4:8) and accepts them through grace.

Shane Claiborne notes, “Most good things begin with a little guilt, but they never end there. We are all bound up in the filthy system, and if you find yourself particularly bound, take courage, as you will then have more grace as you liberate others.”38 As the follower learns who their true self is, while God simultaneously reveals His love of that true self to them, the follower enters a lifetime process in which bits of self are overwhelmed by love.39 This love that overwhelms gives and receives. For the follower that is overwhelmed by God’s love for their true self has patience to love the true self of others that God loves in them.

Following Jesus flows from an inside-out relationship with God.40 As the follower allows God into their self-centeredness, their ugliness, the follower accepts mercy and shows their neighbors beauty.41 For the follower’s neighbors know the follower, especially their wife or husband, son or daughter. This love, agapao (νγαπάω, w), parallels ’ahab ( водъ) from the Shema in Deut 6:5, in that love is not dependent upon emotion. Love for the follower’s neighbor means acting with the neighbor’s good in mind regardless of feelings toward the neighbor.42 Thus, following the law of God becomes a

38Shane Claiborne, The Irresistible Revolution (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 31-32.
41Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 48.
state of being.

The follower anchors their state of being through a life of attentiveness. John Nolland observes, “Even when apparently given over to service of the kingdom of God, preoccupation with the practical affairs of life easily seduces one away from a wholehearted attention to the things of God.”⁴³ The follower must accept this lifestyle of devotion intermingled with periods of distraction without being beaten up, for this is the cycle of the Christian life. And as this process is accepted and surrendered to, deeper periods of attentiveness will come. For the God who loves us knows best how to awaken us.⁴⁴ According to Kevin Vanhoozer, “God acts to reveal himself and to save his people; there follow various tests of memory, gratitude, and obedience.”⁴⁵ Obedience to love God and love others is practiced in proportion to the follower’s recognition of the work of God in their life.

Alan Hirsch posits, “All genuine Christian movements involve at their spiritual ground zero a living encounter with the One True God ‘through whom all things came and through whom we live’ (1 Cor 8:6). A God who in the very moment of redeeming us claims us as his own through Jesus our Savior.”⁴⁶ The command of the Shema and Jesus’

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⁴⁶Hirsch, 84.
addition of Lev 19:18 completes a message of living Christianity that places Jesus at the center of being for the Christian and provides necessary teaching to live out that being in the world. The end product of Jesus’ addition to the Shema is that His followers love God and love what God loves. Scott McKnight suggests, “If we love someone, we love what they love.” Thus, the follower of Christ cannot love God without also loving themselves and loving their neighbor. Jesus’ addition to the Shema brings the follower’s entire life under God. The life lived under God is a life of primitive godliness.

In much of Christianity in the West today, primarily North America, Christians are not viewed as followers of Jesus who love God and love others. Os Guinness makes the case that the Religious Right in the United States has never expressed a clear goal for public good. As a result, Christianity is viewed as one set of values that tries to enforce itself on a pluralistic society. Just as fear of defilement hindered the Jews from showing compassion in Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan, the fear of defilement hinders much of Christianity in the West from showing compassion today. This fear of defilement and a distraction from godliness through commercialism pose a great challenge for the Church to live the Great Commandment today.

**Commercialism: A Barrier to Primitive Godliness**

A discussion of commercialism outside and inside of the church must begin

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47 McKnight, 19.

48 Hirsch, 91.


50 Ibid., 102.

51 McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 56.
within the follower through an honest look at their personal behavior. To begin with the exterior hindrances on the church—or even the interior tendencies of the church—misses the root of the problem, for the church consists of people who daily choose to follow God or follow self, at times choosing between self and God several times throughout the day consciously or subconsciously.

Many followers of Jesus in the affluent Western culture of Keller, Texas live life so scheduled and compartmentalized that the daily choice to choose God or self is far from acknowledged. In regards to this affluent life in suburbia, Will and Lisa Samson call followers of Christ to interruption.\(^{52}\) For without interruption, followers of Christ may never realize that what they sense missing in their lives is the result of a perceived perpetual need of consuming life in the Western world versus consecrating their lives to mission in secular society where they have the ability to make contacts for Christ daily.

Many followers of Jesus find themselves, in the words of Shane Claiborne, “marked by an overconsumptive but malnourished spirituality, suffocated by Christianity but thirsty for God.”\(^{53}\) Followers of Jesus today are looking for a church whose roots are spiritual not commercial,\(^{54}\) for commercialism targets people, and the spiritual malnourishment that results manifests itself through alcohol, drugs, bullying, priorities, sexually transmitted disease, and self harm.\(^{55}\) These are the same for whom Jesus described His mission: “For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost” (Luke


\(^{53}\)Claiborne, 39.


And if the follower of Jesus has been commercialized, there is no spiritual depth in which to “[l]ove the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” (Matt 22:37) and “[l]ove your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39).

As the current world economic crisis shows, consumption is crucial for capitalism. Commercialism advertises commodities to be consumed. Commodities are then used or exchanged. The challenge to the church is that commodities within the kingdom of God are free. When Jesus sends out the twelve, He gives His followers the command, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt 10:8).

Lest oversimplification is accused at this point, clearly the mission of the New Testament church required money and through the generosity of these early followers of Christ every need among them was met (Acts 4:34-37). The barrier of commercialism to primitive godliness within the church today consists in the same way that it did in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Like others past and present, they were attempting to satisfy their spiritual thirst through objects and actions. Although consumer desire leads the follower to want more, the root of the problem is the detour from the spiritual journey, which promises a destiny of fulfillment apart from God.

Herein lies the barrier of commercialism in the church, (while the church should be praised by followers of Jesus for calling Christians to excellence in worship and having the insight to strategically identify and meet felt needs of lost people, whereby

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58 Ibid., 36.

59 Ibid., 127.
leading thousands of people to Jesus Christ), if the church’s focus moves from leading lost people to Jesus Christ to drawing a crowd through promotion with an overly strong emphasis on consumption, the church commercializes spirituality through consumption which leads to commercializing resources to be consumed which may overshadow the call of Christ to be received and the command of Christ to be carried forward in daily life. Thus Christian spirituality may be reduced to attendance at the church that offers the most consumption. Whereby a church may focus a majority of attention on commercializing the consumables it offers. The echo boomer generation sees through this superficial spirituality and as a result views the church as selling out in order to maintain membership.\textsuperscript{61} This is a challenge, for if this current generation of teens and twenty-somethings sees the church as spiritually bankrupt but commercially solvent, the gospel, then perceived as the driving force of commercialism, is viewed as subculture rather than life changing.

Pagitt proposes, “Christianity has always been a living faith, one presented in hundreds, even thousands of different ways around the world and throughout the ages. It has always been the dynamic interplay between the Spirit of God and the lives and cultures of people. It is meant to be a real-life journey of discovering, wondering, answering, and questioning.”\textsuperscript{62} A question for the church today is, What makes Christianity a living faith? For many followers, it is simply to follow the perceived living faith of the church that satisfies their commercial interests but overlooks their spirituality.

Consequently, commercialism in the church may lead the follower to break the

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 128.

\textsuperscript{61}Olivia Baltazar, Interview, Tikva, 8 November 08.
Great Commandment by placing secondary interests from advertisement into a relationship with God in which God is second while the “benefits” of perceived spirituality are of first importance. God is concerned with every part of the follower’s life and yet He will not share us with false gods because idolatry fractures the follower.63 The follower must learn from the Holy Spirit to remove the duplicity in spirituality.64 The New Testament church held this duplicity in check through the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The New Testament church’s claim of “Jesus is Lord” was proclaimed and implied in the same way as the Shema.65 Alan Hirsch posits, “They knew that this [“Jesus is Lord”] was the heart of the faith, and they could not, would not surrender it.”66 Throughout history Jesus’ Lordship has remained the genuine center of Christianity.67 Only as the follower’s focus changes does the church’s, for the church is a community of followers of Jesus.

There is hope, as Dave Harvey writes: “Because of the Holy Spirit within, we have the power to resist the seduction of this fallen world.”68 Followers of Jesus can make Him Lord today and place the church’s commodities under Christ’s Lordship.

**Actions of the Church Evaluated by Christ**

The cost of discipleship to come under Christ’s Lordship may be confrontational to the follower. The barrier of commercialism, when left unchecked, may cause

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62 Pagitt, 9.
63 Hirsch, 90-91.
65 Hirsch, 91.
66 Ibid., 92.
67 Ibid., 100.
68 C. J. Mahaney, ed., *Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World* (Wheaton, IL:
compromise in which the distinctiveness of Christianity is lost.\textsuperscript{69} Following Jesus consists of much more than passive agreement with doctrine.\textsuperscript{70} In discussion of Jesus’ parable of The Sheep and The Goats in Matt 25:31-36, Will and Lisa Samson put forth, “There are consequences to not caring for those at the margins.”\textsuperscript{71} Surveying the church’s neglect of those at the margins, Brian McLaren suggests,

Even the religion we are committed to and in which we have found God and purpose and meaning and truth, can become captive to a colossal distortion. It can become a benign and passive chaplaincy to a failing and dysfunctional culture, the religious public relations department for an inadequate and destructive ideology. It can forego being a force of liberation and transformation and instead become a source of domestication, resignation, pacification, and distraction.

A right understanding of God and faith can train people to hold their heads high, to doubt the lies of a dysfunctional society and to work for its transformation. But a misguided understanding can be an opiate that keeps their heads down in submission or desperation so they continue to serve the societal system that is destroying them, believing its lies, performing according to its self-destructive script.\textsuperscript{72}

Followers of Christ who live within the confines of the commercial church may wonder, What does care for the marginalized look like? In our society of brokenness how does the follower know where they are helping or where they are hurting? Serving at the soup kitchen for an afternoon may be rewarding to followers, but is it forwarding the follower’s growth as a change agent for justice in their community? An active agent for social justice, Troy Jackson believes that “mercy ministries,” (i.e., serving at the soup kitchen for an afternoon), do more harm than good.\textsuperscript{73} A foundational form of social

\textsuperscript{69}Claiborne, 105.

\textsuperscript{70}“Matthew,” 5:513.

\textsuperscript{71}Samson and Samson, 79.


\textsuperscript{73}Troy Jackson, “Exponential Our Present Situation,” pre-conference lecture, Orlando, Florida, 20
justice would be to serve in a community development capacity in which people are taught to “fish for themselves.”

The difficulty of this thought lies in that the life of the follower is asked in service of the marginalized rather than just an afternoon. Giving in this capacity hurts. Mother Teresa declares, “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.”

Are followers of Christ willing to submit to the Lordship of Christ, thereby loving until it hurts and then finding more love?

The righteous, whom Jesus describes as sheep in the parable of The Sheep and The Goats (Matt 25:31-46), love their neighbor so deeply and humbly that they do not recognize Jesus’ commendation that in loving others they love Him. Serving Jesus in the flesh is not the action they remember carrying out. It is in living under the Lordship of Christ that they fulfill the Great Commandment. Thus the address to Jesus as “Lord” is familiar, as they have grown in relationship to the Son of Man as Lord of their lives. The unrighteous also address Jesus as “Lord,” but this address is the result of seeing the Son of Man as Judge; no form of discipleship is shown in the actions of the goats.

The fracture that idolatry brings between humanity and divinity is evident in that the goats have never known Jesus because they did not minister to Him. Jesus appears as judge to reveal to the followers their faithfulness to Him. Those who are not faithful are not followers.

April 2008.

74 Ibid.


Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus shows faithfulness to the marginalized. In the culture of the East, the people Jesus mentions—the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, prisoner, and sick—bring images in eastern thought of people without hope.\(^78\) Jesus spent the first thirty years of His life learning about and living with humanity. It was from this life experience of living with others day in and day out that showed Him where people need hope.\(^79\) If the follower of Jesus does not bring hope, the church should be locked and Christianity should be left behind.\(^80\)

Living incarnationally is not easy; however, it gives the follower fresh perspective toward God, themselves, and others.\(^81\) As the follower journeys as the hands and feet of Jesus to bring hope into places unknown, they learn to live on the faithfulness of God and are weaned from self-reliance.\(^82\) For the follower unable to live full time among the hopeless, the ministries of giving and prayer offer pathways of faithfulness.\(^83\) John Hayes observes, “One reason there are not more full-time mission workers among the poor [hopeless] is that there are not enough mission senders. And one reason there are not enough senders is that their peers have hinted that writing checks is copping out.”\(^84\)

Faithfulness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ takes all forms. Faithfulness for the


\(^{78}\)Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 212.


\(^{81}\)Scott A. Bessenecker, *The New Friars* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 76.

\(^{82}\)Ibid., 77.

\(^{83}\)Hayes, 89.
follower called to give and the follower called to pray is the same as the follower living in incarnational ministry. Does the follower give and pray in ways that wean from self-reliance so as to give liberally and pray earnestly in ways that only God can sustain? According to Basil Miller, “Mr. [George] Muller subordinated everything to the one purpose of demonstrating the fact that God still hears prayer.”  

Through this faithfulness in prayer Muller partnered with God, who through faithful followers, gave over fifteen million dollars for the Scriptural Knowledge Institution.

The faithfulness manifested through the righteous acts of the sheep are not the means through which they achieve salvation; rather, they are an indication of a relationship with Jesus. Frost and Hirsch assert,

> A living relationship with the Lord of the universe is a risky, disturbing, and demanding experience. We never get the better of him, and it is a whole lot easier, and less costly, to think than to do. It is not good enough that we just follow his teachings or a religious code developed in his wake. Discipleship requires a direct and unmediated relationship with the Lord, and the loss of this immediacy is catastrophic to the movement that claims his name.

In the most basic form, the follower of Jesus can follow Jesus as Lord by daily working responsibly and making every effort not to contribute to the suffering of others. Faithfulness to bring hope to the hopeless in the name of Jesus is the mission of His body, His church.

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84Ibid., 89-90.

85Basil Miller, *George Muller* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1941), 84.

86Ibid., 158.


Living a Life of Primitive Godliness

Living a life of primitive godliness is a journey into oneness with God. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God says, “I will bring him near and he will come close to me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?’ declares the Lord. ‘So you will be my people and I will be your God’” (Jer 30:21). This is the foundation for primitive godliness. Heb 8:10 connects this covenant promise to Israel with the Christian church, “I will be their God, and they will be my people.”90 This move towards oneness with God is not to be presumed through human effort.91 According to Jon Stock, Tim Otto, and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, “Any understanding of what it might mean for the people of God to be righteous must begin with the nature of God’s righteousness.”92 Only God can bring the follower into oneness with Himself through the person of Jesus Christ. But through Jesus the follower can come boldly (Heb 4:16). As a result, the follower lives within themselves and outside of themselves in hope, who is the person of Christ, living within the follower through His Holy Spirit (Col 1:27).

Primitive godliness is therefore an inhabitation within the follower and stemming from the follower within the church. This inhabitation is rooted in Scripture and an implementation of theology. Regarding Scripture’s role in conjunction with primitive godliness Ellen White states,

Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining


a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussion (italics mine).

Regarding implementation of theology into action Fritz Guy suggests,

To consider the role of theology in the life of the community of faith requires us to consider the role of the community in theology, which involves both its direct sharing in the task of thinking about the meaning of faith and its provision of a climate in which such thinking is appreciated and encouraged. In this way, the community receives the maximum benefit from those it has called to the ministry of theology. And at the same time, the community fulfills its essential, ongoing task of thinking creatively and constructively about the meaning of faith as a part of its mission and ministry to the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century and as a way of giving honor to God.

The follower who lives a life of primitive godliness in the twenty-first century must, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, shape a living theology that roots itself in the Great Commandment (Matt 22:37-40). Primitive godliness can be understood as justice through the parable of The Sheep and The Goats where the actions of the follower have demonstrated love to God and love to others and the actions of the perceived follower have not. McKnight posits, “Justice is also structural at some level: it refers to the establishment of conditions that promote loving God and loving others or living in the Spirit.” Consequently, the church community gives indication of spiritual life as it discerns truth and lives that truth to those in need of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Thus the church is led into mission. For it is not as much the church has a mission as mission

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94 Fritz Guy, Thinking Theologically (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999), 46.
95 McKnight, A Community Called Atonement, 125.
has a church; mission is something God does and the church joins in it.\textsuperscript{96}

The structure of justice leads to a strategy of justice as understood in a life of primitive godliness which, in the follower, primarily works responsibly, making every effort not to contribute to the suffering of others, thereby actively offering hope in Jesus. This strategy engages the moving parts of the church (i.e. weekly programs, Sabbath worship, service to the community, children’s ministry, mission trips, etc.).\textsuperscript{97}

Commitment to and consistency in the strategy of primitive godliness within the members of the church is important. Approximately eighty percent of not-yet-Christians take four years to move into a relationship with Christ.\textsuperscript{98} Thus the life of primitive godliness in the twenty-first century is ideal in that the spiritual depth the follower gains from such a life equips the follower to be a whisperer that brings hope to the soul of the not-yet-Christian.\textsuperscript{99} Furthermore, the authenticity of the follower brings credibility.\textsuperscript{100}

Through sitting with God the follower discovers their role as they live out a life of primitive godliness through the means of God’s church. The action to be taken by the follower must come from time made to receive the follower’s mission from God. Mission that carries out a focused God-given vision flows from a church in which the majority of the followers live lives of primitive godliness. The life of primitive godliness is life-in-

\textsuperscript{96}Alan Hirsch, “Exponential Lord Jesus . . . It All Begins Here,” seminar lecture, Orlando, Florida, 22 April 2008.

\textsuperscript{97}Will Mancini, Church Unique (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 203.


\textsuperscript{99}Frost and Hirsch, The Shape of Things to Come, 95-107.

\textsuperscript{100}Frost, 99.
Again, the follower is led back to the Great Commandment, which centers the follower in relationship to God and to others.

Living a life of primitive godliness is not something the follower can achieve on his or her own. The oneness of God into which the follower enters through the life of primitive godliness unites the follower’s heart and God’s heart. Only then is kingdom-focus truly first place in the follower’s life.

Conclusion

The Shema Yisrael is God’s invitation to move His follower from a relationship based on belief into experiences of everyday life. This life continually lives within the grace of God. Perceived obedience exists only within the grace of God whose grace covers the imperfections of human obedience.

Jesus’ addition of Lev 19:18 to the Shema, forms the Great Commandment of Scripture. Jesus requires His followers to love God and love others. The second commandment of loving others is equal in importance to the first. Love for God cannot exist without love for humanity. The Great Commandment completes a message of living Christianity that places Jesus at the center of being for the Christian and provides the teaching necessary to live out that being in the world.

A distraction from godliness through commercialism poses a great challenge for the church to live the Great Commandment today. Spiritual malnourishment results from faith that is based on commodities withdrawn from the spiritual life. The echo boomer

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101 Chan, 103.

generation sees through this superficial spirituality and sees this type of faith as grounded in the church meeting their needs instead of meeting the needs of the world. Hope for the church to move past the barrier of commercialism is found in placing the commodities of the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

According to the parable of the sheep and the goats, following Jesus is more than passive agreement with doctrine. The life of the follower is asked for in serving the broken in society. Through whatever means the follower is called the follower must give liberally. The follower must learn to love others so deeply that they do not even recognize the depth of love that has flowed through them. Thus they find that Christ within has been ministering to the brokenness of humanity. The follower leans on the faithfulness of God rather than on their own ability to serve others.

Living a life of primitive godliness is a journey into oneness with God. This cannot come about through human effort. Only God can bring the follower into oneness with him through the person of Jesus Christ. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit the follower who lives a life of primitive godliness in the twenty-first century must shape a living theology that roots itself in the Great Commandment.

This theology lays a foundation for mission within the life of the Christian. As the Christian is transformed by Christ beginning with the inner life the result will be the heart of sinful man replaced with the heart of God which seeks to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). Effective mission is practiced out of a life that has encountered the missional heart of Christ. In order to enter the broken places of society and effectively share the gospel, the missionary’s actions follow an inner life that has been transformed.

\[103\text{Ibid., 16.}\]
This transformation is foundational for sharing the gospel at the margin of society which is the place the church in North America currently holds. As a result, external attraction is now secondary to the inner life of church members being transformed. We will now turn our attention to literature reviewed over the last ten years in which this change begins to be revealed.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For the purpose of following chronological thought throughout this review the
dates of the works reviewed are placed in parentheses following the author’s name.

The dawn of the 21st century brings question to the church attempting to function
at the center of secular North American society. Twenty years prior, the mega church
model marked by “seeker” services sought to adapt to the changes brought on by
increased secularism in secular society through establishing large churches in the suburbs
that creatively told the story of the gospel in an ever-growing secular culture.

The call to excellence was given and within a short matter of time churches had
music that appealed to the culture that was as high quality as that on the radio. Excellence
was championed and programming increased that spoke to the felt needs of the
community in which the church was located. As a result, thousands came to faith in
Christ as they found a church that was tailored to their needs in the North American
culture of the 1980s and 1990s.

While this model of church should be praised by followers of Jesus for calling
Christians to excellence in worship, urging Christians to meet the needs of their
neighbors, and leading thousands of people to Jesus Christ it has also caused an
increasing secular North American society to question the church’s attempt to maintain
its place in the center of society. To the secular suburbanite living in Keller, Texas, church is on the map. Sunday morning traffic jams, large budgets, extensive church campuses, and political influence give cause to the church as maintaining centrality in the North American culture. However, church attendance continually decreases. Eddie Gibbs suggests, “Indeed we may find that the most helpful models might be drawn from the first 150 years of the Christian church, when it began as a movement with neither political power nor social influence within a pluralist environment.”¹ The church must recognize that success for sharing the gospel in the 21st century will come from moving out of the center of society and into the margin to live as Christ within this pluralist environment.

This chapter will begin to lay a foundation for this transition through a review of current literature from 1999-2009 that calls for incarnation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the 21st century missionary to North America. The majority of literature written during this time period focuses on one of three primary subtopics. Therefore, this chapter will be structured around a review of literature on recommitment to Jesus Christ as the center of the spiritual life, missional focus for the church, and the birth of the church as community.

Recommitment to Jesus Christ as the Center of the Spiritual Life

The turn of the 21st century finds writers calling the church to recommit to Jesus Christ. Neil Cole (1999) asserts that only Jesus can teach His followers to know Jesus. Since the church is built on Jesus, when the church moves away from Jesus, the church

¹Eddie Gibbs, ChurchNext (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
ceases to be the church as Jesus intends it to be. The heart of the Christian leader, according to Reggie McNeal (2000), must be sensitized again to God’s activity within the leader’s life. John Ortberg (2001) reminds the church that Jesus is not finished using her yet to accomplish His purposes, but the call to be used is a call to trust. These writers discuss how this trust can only be developed as the disciple in the church becomes aware of God’s activity in life and consciously commits to allowing God activity within the heart through time spent with Jesus through spiritual disciplines. John MacArthur (2002) compares the twelve disciples to Christians today when he points out that the disciples were spiritually dense at times, yet they were personally called by Jesus to live with Him even with their faults.

The concept of the Christian that God calls His beloved, even in the degradation of humanity, woos the follower to surrender to the love of God. David Benner (2003) suggests that a shift in thinking from a God whose wrath is the principal component to call humanity to surrender versus a God whose love is primary makes the difference in the willingness of humanity to daily surrender self to God. The spiritual disciplines, according to Jim Herrington, Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor (2003), create fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to change the human heart. Pete Greig and Dave Roberts

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3McNeal, *A Work of Heart*.
6Benner, *Surrender to Love*.
(2003) agree with Cole, that only a hunger for God can be developed from God working in the heart.8

Recommitment to spiritual disciplines does not allow the church to live only within the walls of the church or of self. Peter Scazzero (2003) argues, “The church is to be known, above all else, as a community that radically and powerfully loves others. Sadly, this is not generally our reputation . . . unless we integrate emotional maturity with a focus of loving well into our discipleship, we are in danger of missing God’s point completely—love.”9 David Benner (2004) agrees as he reminds the follower that knowing themselves as God knows them leads the follower to live their experience with God daily.10

The fact that God has always been at work in the heart is the foundation for the spiritual discipline of prayer, according to Jane Vennard (2005).11 Russell Burrill (1999) states, “People are reached by prayer, and churches are started by intense, earnest prayer.”12 Pete Greig and David Blackwell (2005) call the church to be in prayer so that the real world can experience the Incarnation of Jesus Christ through the praying Christian that is actively moving in their community to reach the lost.13 The concept of Christ calling the heart of the Christian to himself and moving in the heart of the

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8Greig and Roberts, Red Moon Rising.
9Peter Scazzero, The Emotionally Healthy Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 18-19.
10Benner, The Gift of Being Yourself.
11Jane E. Vennard, A Praying Congregation (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005).
12Russell Burrill, Rekindling a Lost Passion (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1999), 182.
Christian to discover God’s will is a theme that David Benner (2005) again brings to the forefront of the Christian’s call to commitment to a deeper spirituality.\(^\text{14}\) This commitment to a deeper spirituality George Barna (2005) points out is leading some Christians away from weekly church attendance in order to discover the activity of God outside the walls of the church.\(^\text{15}\) Although unfortunate, it is of little wonder that this trend is taking place when there is so much to do in church in order to operate the institution that spirituality is taken for granted. Philip Yancey (2006) points out that although prayer is an opportunity from God to interact with Him many Christians, including pastors, find prayer frustrating.\(^\text{16}\)

The disciplines of prayer and Sabbath invite the follower to slow down and move onto God’s agenda for life both inside and outside of the church. Mark Buchanan (2006) points out that the Sabbath asks us to place our confidence in the person of Jesus Christ.\(^\text{17}\) This confidence in Jesus is the only remedy for the Christian’s spiritual hunger. Erwin McManus (2006) describes humanity’s spiritual hunger as struggling to figure self out while afraid that self will be discovered and judged.\(^\text{18}\)

This fear permeates through the grace that Christianity offers so much so that many Christians, hungry for spirituality, lack instruction from the church in order to discover, through the Holy Spirit, their spiritual need and through the same Spirit allow

\(^\text{14}\)Benner, Desiring God’s Will.
\(^\text{15}\)George Barna, Revolution (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005).
\(^\text{16}\)Philip Yancey, Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference? (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).
the need to be met. In carrying out the Great Commission to make disciples, Dallas Willard’s (2006) challenge for Christians is to first convert themselves.¹⁹

Peter Scazzero (2006) agrees with Willard for the Christian’s need to begin by changing self, for although the Christian faith is supposed to produce change in the follower of Jesus it rarely does because of a lack of emotional growth that perceived spiritual growth often covers up. Christians only begin growing as disciples when they are able to honestly lay their true self before God so that He can heal them emotionally as He grows them spiritually.²⁰ Chris Blake (2007) attempts to answer the Christian’s question of “What’s next?” in regards to the first steps they take in discipleship through Micah 6:8, “To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”²¹ While emotional health and following Scripture’s commands for discipleship are important, Mike Tucker (2007) again moves the conversation back to Cole’s argument that Jesus is central when Tucker writes, “When Jesus alone is our food and our drink, we will have our souls’ longings fulfilled.”²² Emotional health and biblical commands have no life changing power apart from Jesus being the center of the spiritual life.

As evidenced from this conversation, followers of Jesus who comprise His church in the first decade of the 21st century are seeking to find what Jon Dybdahl (2008) expounds on as the double longing—humanity’s longing to be with God and God’s

¹⁹Willard, *The Great Omission*.


²²Mike Tucker, *Every Good Thing* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2007), 9.
longing to be with humanity.\textsuperscript{23} John Burke (2008) asserts that God specializes in taking imperfect people who are willing and through a gradual process making them more of who He intends them to be by satisfying their deepest longings for Him and in return makes them into people who love others.\textsuperscript{24} The Holy Spirit’s transformative work, according to Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch (2009) requires Jesus to be reinstated in the center of the spiritual life of His followers and His church.\textsuperscript{25}

**Missional Focus for the Church**

The church of the 21st century finds itself in a world whose culture is in a state of flux. Constantly changing, Thomas Bandy (1999) asserts that change will not go away and as a result the church must focus itself around the concept of mission teams.\textsuperscript{26} In the midst of this chaos, Leonard Sweet (2000) calls for the church to embrace a biblical pattern of mission that takes the church back in order to move into the future.\textsuperscript{27} George Hunter (2000) joins the conversation by taking the idea of moving into the past, although stopping in the middle ages, to explore Celtic Christianity as a possible model to rebirth the Christian church as a missionary movement once again.\textsuperscript{28} In order for the church to function with a missional focus Erwin McManus (2001) suggests that the church must

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\textsuperscript{23}Jon L. Dybdahl, *Hunger* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2008).

\textsuperscript{24}John Burke, *Soul Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).


\textsuperscript{26}Thomas G. Bandy, *Christian Chaos* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999).


operate within the belief that the life of the church is inseparable from the life of the world surrounding the church.\textsuperscript{29}

Through a comparative study of the New Testament church and the church of today, Frank Viola and George Barna (2002) reveal that much of what church going North Americans consider church comes not from the Bible but instead from traditions that have made their way into the church over the last 2,000 years.\textsuperscript{30} These traditions have shaped church culture so that it is no longer mission focused. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch (2003) argue from the perspective of missionaries to Western culture, that the church has lost credibility and therefore must reinvent itself.\textsuperscript{31} Reggie McNeal (2003) urges the church to ask tough questions in regards to kingdom growth, disciple making, and spiritual formation in order to discover where God is at work in the culture of today.\textsuperscript{32} Kester Brewin (2004) posits that the church must take Christ’s example of the Incarnation to heart and be reincarnated to specific places and cultures of the 21st century.\textsuperscript{33}

Although the church struggles to convey the message of the gospel in relevancy, the gospel has not lost any relevancy to humanity. John Burke (2005) reminds the church of the culture in which the churches of the New Testament were planted and likens it to the culture of today while urging the church to recognize that the Holy Spirit specializes

\textsuperscript{29}Erwin Raphael McManus, \textit{An Unstoppable Force} (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001).

\textsuperscript{30}Barna and Viola, \textit{Pagan Christianity}.

\textsuperscript{31}Frost and Hirsch, \textit{The Shaping of Things to Come}.


\textsuperscript{33}Kester Brewin, \textit{Signs of Emergence} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004).
in transformation of lost people into committed followers of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{34} It is the call of the church to journey with these new followers and disciple them in the midst of their brokenness. This discipleship is only something that Jesus can do. While urging the church to move away from institutionalism to become a movement once again, Neil Cole (2005) reminds followers of Jesus that the church is not theirs, Jesus owns it. He adds, “You will be amazed what people do for Jesus that they will not do for your vision statement.”\textsuperscript{35}

This idea of movement is further encouraged as Michael Frost (2006) challenges Christians to brave the culture of the world in which they find themselves living, in order to relearn how to live their faith.\textsuperscript{36} While describing twelve congregations that have taken this challenge to heart, Bob Whitesel (2006) defines the church as becoming organic, growing out of its parts which creates a synergetic relationship with the culture it is born out of.\textsuperscript{37} Bill Hybels (2006) argues that every Christian living in community with lost people who learns to share how the gospel changed them has the opportunity to create a movement for God’s Kingdom.\textsuperscript{38}

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk (2006) assert that leaders must become learners of the missional process through awareness, understanding, evaluation, and experimentation in order to move church leaders into commitment to do church as

\textsuperscript{34}John Burke, \textit{No Perfect People Allowed: Creating a Come As You Are Culture in the Church} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).


\textsuperscript{36}Frost, \textit{Exiles}.


\textsuperscript{38}Bill Hybels, \textit{Just Walk Across the Room} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).
mission. Alan Hirsch (2006) affirms that this can take place through his argument that innate missional desires exist in the person of Jesus Christ through His body, the local church. Unfortunately, according to David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons (2007) the church’s reputation in secular society does not embody the life principles of Jesus. Brian McLaren (2007) calls for God’s creative power to be brought into the church through faith so that Jesus can change His church. And change it He must, for Bruxy Cavey (2007) argues that although people have grown tired of religion they are hungry for God.

Neil Cole (2008) posits that when Jesus comes into the life of someone who is lost He brings eternal life and change to their life in this world as well. Doug Pagitt (2008) argues that as part of Christ’s body we are the work of God in the world here and now. Helen Lee (2008) agrees when she states, “The Christian life has to be demonstrated, not just explained . . . The Kingdom isn’t a program, but men and women radically living for Christ.” Will Mancini (2008) urges missional leaders to find

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42 McLaren, *Everything Must Change*.

43 Cavey, *The End of Religion*.


45 Pagitt, *A Christianity Worth Believing*.

their vision from God and discover how they can incarnate Jesus Christ to lost people around them.\textsuperscript{47}

Julia Duin (2008) carries Kinnaman and Lyons’ research of skepticism outside of the church further in her discovery of skeptics within the church who are looking for a church to connect spirituality with its members as well.\textsuperscript{48} Through her study of history, Phyllis Tickle (2008) argues that every 500 years the church goes through a major transition which is what is currently in process.\textsuperscript{49} A possible view of this picture is the conversation to which we now turn.

**The Birth of the Church as Community**

The idea of the church as community, defined by Randy Frazee (2001) as common purpose, common place, and common possessions, runs countercultural to North American culture in the 21st century.\textsuperscript{50} In contrast, Donald Miller (2003) describes Christian community that is authentic and hip.\textsuperscript{51} While Frazee lives in the Bible Belt and Miller lives in the Northwest both ideas are present in both places. It is possible that both extremes polarize the church and render it ineffective in establishing Christian community today. However community is paramount for faith to grow. Russell Mancini, *Church Unique*.\textsuperscript{47}

Julia Duin, *Quitting Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008).\textsuperscript{48}

Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008).\textsuperscript{49}

Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).\textsuperscript{50}

Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003).\textsuperscript{51}
Burrill (2003) asserts that in order for faith to develop in people’s lives regular contact with one another is essential.  

Community is confusing. Joseph Myers (2003) acknowledges this as he writes from the premise of, “when it comes to belonging, we’re confused. And our culture is confused. We are together, all alone.” Churches live within a culture of consumerism which according to Vincent Miller (2003) poses opportunities and challenges. The call for Christians, according to Scott McKnight (2004), to love God and love others forms the basis of Christian community. A challenge for the church today is for community to develop in the midst of consumerism. In spite of the challenges, Rob Bell (2005) calls followers of Jesus to believe meaningful Christian community can exist.

The basis of this rebirth of Christian community John Hayes (2006) proposes consists of missionaries who have a holistic understanding of mission and self. Scott Bessenecker (2006) asserts that the call for Christians to live in community is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and to act like it no matter what their occupation. Mike Erre (2006) expounds on Bessenecker’s request by asking Christians to ask Jesus to reveal himself outside of church culture and outside of North American culture as the

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54Miller, *Consuming Religion*.

55McKnight, *The Jesus Creed*.


57Hayes, *Sub-merge*.

58Bessenecker, *The New Friars*.
biblical Jesus. The biblical picture of Jesus is the basis for community. He is who Christians gather for and gather around. Shane Claiborne (2006) asks, “What if a fragile world is more attracted to God’s vision of interdependence and sacrificial sharing than to the mirage of independence and materialism? What do we do when we are the ones who have gone sane in a crazy world?”

A trend in recognizing the Christian’s call to community is a renewed discovery of the first command given to humankind by God to be stewards of the earth. Matthew Sleeth (2006) argues that part of Jesus’ commission is to do loving acts on earth for God in faith. A lifestyle of simplicity calls the Christian to consume less, have more to share with others, and focus on loving others more deeply. Tri Robinson (2006) points out that over the last 100 years the church has neglected environmental stewardship and urges the church to join together in championing the cause of environmental stewardship immediately so that Christians in various communities around the globe may lead the way in creating a better environment.

Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger (2006) argue that the simple message of the gospel must be shared in a structure of church life that is simple and intentional. This simple message of the gospel must be proclaimed until Christ comes. While we wait, however, Will Samson and Lisa Samson (2007) call Christians to enter into living within their

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communities through a life of justice and in so doing incarnating the gospel. It is possible that the incarnation of the gospel creates fertile ground for receptivity of the gospel. The hope of Jon Stock, Tim Otto, and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (2007) is that the church in community might point to the true Gospel in a world of false gospels. Scot McKnight (2007) challenges the church to live in their community while sharing the message of Jesus by dying to self, being reborn in Jesus, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. In this way the church brings atonement to their community through the Christian incarnated as the person of Jesus Christ.

Nelson Searcy (2007) reminds the church of its spiritual responsibility of establishing community immediately with first time guests. He argues that a person who walks through the door of a church meeting is responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Joseph Myers (2007) encourages the church to create an environment in which community emerges naturally. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay (2008) describe their experience of church happening naturally through their development of community with non-churched acquaintances and living among them. Seth Godin (2008) argues that the new communal model is a group of people who are connected to one another, a leader, and an idea. Craig Groeschel (2008) applies this concept of connectedness to encourage

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64 Samson and Samson, *Justice in the Burbs.*
66 McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement.*
the church to rally around the work that God wants to do in it.\footnote{Craig Groeschel, \textit{It} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).}

Cole (2009) paints a picture of the church as a community that is a healthy spiritual family while drawing attention to the “one another” texts in the New Testament.\footnote{Neil Cole, \textit{Organic Leadership} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009).} Alan Hirsch (2009) views community as \textit{communitas}. His definition is “the type of community that develops in the context of danger, an ordeal, or an overwhelming task.”\footnote{Alan Hirsch, \textit{The Forgotten Ways Handbook} (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 169.} Potentially this is the challenge for the church today, to develop community centered on Jesus that offers simplicity in a world of complexity. Dave Browning (2009) agrees with Rainer and Geiger that simplicity is the key for the church to operate with effectiveness in the fast paced culture of the 21st century.\footnote{Dave Browning, \textit{Deliberate Simplicity} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).} Anne Jackson (2009) asserts that the church must create a culture within the church community in which health and responsibility are aligned with the mission of the church.\footnote{Anne Jackson, \textit{Mad Church Disease} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).}

\section*{Conclusion}

I originally approached this review with the idea that the literature over the last ten years would break down into the following categories: (1) The Challenge of the Church in North America to Become a Mission, (2) The Church’s Need of Spiritual Giants, and (3) The Open Mindedness of Post Modernism as Fertile Ground for the Gospel. Through the review the reading reordered itself into the following categories:
(1) Recommitment to Jesus Christ as the Center of the Spiritual Life, (2) Missional Focus for the Church, and (3) The Birth of the Church as Community. Although all three points parallel one another, that is, The Challenge of the Church in North America to become a Mission corresponds with Missional Focus for the Church; The Church’s Need of Spiritual Giants matches with Recommitment to Jesus Christ as the Center of the Spiritual Life; and The Open Mindedness of Post Modernism as Fertile Ground for the Gospel is similar to The Birth of the Church as Community, the reordering of the points and rewording signify an important find.

The literature written over the last ten years places Jesus Christ as the foundation for mission. The church must reorient itself to the person of Jesus Christ and surrender to His Lordship. Once the church recalibrates on Jesus Christ Jesus leads the church into mission. The mission of sharing the Gospel in the 21st century is a call for the church to live with lost people and earn the right to share Jesus with them.

Additional research is needed in terms of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church can approach North America as a mission field and learn to live in community with lost people in order to earn the right to share the gospel. Only a few Seventh-day Adventists are writing on such topics. Such exploration forms the basis of this study.

Most Seventh-day Adventists are no longer indigenous to their cities; instead, many are outsiders. They must, therefore, function as missionaries within their own cities to cross the cultural boundary between church and world. At the turn of the 21st century the echo boomers are driving business and the economy and the church must learn their culture not only to reach them, but to lead them in a movement of authentic Christianity,
to become an apostolic church. A foundation for an indigenous church in North America in the 21st century led by missionaries will now be explored.
CHAPTER IV

MISSIONS IN NORTH AMERICA: CROSSING THE CULTURAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN CHURCH AND WORLD

Introduction

At the age of sixteen, I began to sense a disconnect between the traditional approach to life that I had been taught as a Seventh-day Adventist and the realities of the needs of the world in which I lived. As I sought answers from the leaders in my church to the questions that gnawed at my mind, I became more discouraged. The responses I received did not adequately meet my needs. Today, as a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I examine the Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America and the realities of the communities in which they exist, and I ask some of those same questions: Why are so many of my peers choosing to leave the church of their childhood? Why does there appear to be a greater emphasis on rules and lifestyle over relationship? This time, however, I hope to find answers.

There is a detachment between the spiritual needs of the echo boomers in Keller, Texas, in the 21st century and the solutions currently offered by the majority of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the surrounding area. I intend to expose the root of this detachment and its subsequent results. The culture of the Seventh-day Adventist churches surrounding Keller appears to be a subset of a subset. Undoubtedly, there are
Seventh-day Adventist churches in the North American Division that have moved past the cultural period of the 1950s, but the majority of the Seventh-day Adventist churches surrounding Keller predominantly minister within this cultural frame of mind. It is possible that this ministry mindset does not take into account that Seventh-day Adventists in Keller, Texas, are no longer indigenous to their cities; many have become or are becoming outsiders. My observation is that they must function as missionaries within their own cities to cross the cultural boundary between church and world. The question that will be answered in this study is: How can Seventh-day Adventists in Keller, Texas, recognize that they are missionaries to a culture different from their own?

As a result of this research, an indigenous Seventh-day Adventist church will be planted in Keller, Texas, in which the members accept that they are missionaries to a culture different from their own and unselfishly sacrifice their fears and comforts in order to lovingly show lost people “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Eph 3:18).

We will begin with the discovery that North America is now a mission field. A discussion of the largest generation in North America, the echo boomers,¹ and the potential they possess for becoming an apostolic church will lead into a discussion of the church’s challenge in reaching this young generation of the 21st century. From there we will take an honest look at why the church in North America has lost potency and identify a possible hindrance to sharing the gospel today. A probable solution to this problem will be prescribed and described followed by a discussion of what the body of Christ might become in order to be an effective witness to the echo boomer culture in the 21st century.

¹Steve Kroft, Echo Boomers, 60 Minutes, 13 min., CBS News, 4 September 2005, videocassette.
A New Mission Field

As a new mission field in North America unfolds in the beginning of the 21st century, it is important to understand the echo boomers and the church’s challenge in reaching them with the gospel.

The Echo Boomers

The world is changing, and culture changes with each generation that comes of age and influences society. The words of the Teacher in Eccl 1:9 show that times and ideas are cyclical, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” It is not enough to do ministry in a static way while waiting for ministry that once was dynamic to become fresh again.

The church is not called to a simple work. Ellen G. White identifies this fact when she writes about missionary training, “The highest of all sciences is the science of soul saving.” Just as science requires study, experimentation, and reflection, so does the church’s work of reaching the lost. For this reason the church’s members must study the people and the culture in which they live to understand the complexity of the challenges they undertake as they live the gospel in the culture of the lost.

Secular Statistics

Born between 1982 and 2001, there are nearly 80 million echo boomers living in the United States. They comprise nearly one third of the U.S. population and spend $170 billion dollars a year. In Keller, Texas, approximately 85 percent of the population

consists of echo boomers and their families.³

While the oldest are entering the job market and the youngest are learning their ABCs, they are already making a significant economic and cultural impact on the automobile, electronic, and entertainment industries. Toyota has invested hundreds of millions to create Scion, a car line developed and marketed specifically for echo boomers. Apple has revolutionized the music and handheld electronic industry with the iPod, one of which nearly every echo boomer owns. And the CW (formerly the WB) television network builds their airtime around programming with the echo boomer audience in mind.⁴ In the world’s eyes the echo boomer’s potential rests in spending greater amounts of money than any previous generation.

Spiritual Possibilities

In God’s eyes the echo boomers are a generation who, when trained and equipped, will finish proclaiming the Great Commission. Ellen G. White has shared the following vision, applicable to all generations of young people, and equally valid for the present: “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin!”⁵ The Seventh-day Adventist Church must continue equipping young generations for ministry.

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⁴Echo Boomers.

Although the desire to train the youth is present in most churches, the knowledge in methods of training that connect with the youth and are seen as of benefit to the church’s current program often miss one another. Ritchie Pruehs, pastor of YG—a church service designed for Generation X in the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church, describes the feelings of his daughter’s involvement in Seventh-day Adventist churches he pastored previously as compared with her involvement in YG. “My daughter grew up singing special music after my sermons from time to time, but it was still ‘Dad’s church.’ YG is her church.”\(^6\) It is this feeling of ownership of ministry that churches must learn to create in the hearts of their youth.

CBS news correspondent David Kroft describes the echo boomers as “a generation in which rules seem to have replaced rebellion, convention is winning out over individualism, and values are very traditional.”\(^7\) Unlike the generations of their parents, late baby boomers and early Gen Xers, echo boomers desire structure, are team players, and value the habitual. They want substance. They see the results of the indulgence of self that have taken place during the past thirty years and the havoc that it is wreaking on society.\(^8\) Structure, teams, and tradition are boundaries echo boomers have set in order to survive the disorder into which they have been born.

According to Bob Whitesel, associate professor on Church Management and Growth at Indiana Wesleyan University, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has much to

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\(^6\)Ritchie Pruehs, interview by author, Arlington SDA Church, 28 November 06.

\(^7\)Echo Boomers.

\(^8\)Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed*, 32.
offer a generation that values the devout. I am hopeful that a generation that desires substance will accept and proclaim the gospel with the same fervor that the early pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church accepted and proclaimed the message.

Out of the three founding members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Joseph Bates and James and Ellen White, two were the age of today’s echo boomers when they committed their lives to proclaiming the gospel. James White was 21 when he committed his life to preaching the Advent doctrine and Ellen White was 17 when God gave her, her first vision. Other young pioneers include J. N. Andrews, who at 22 was one of a publishing committee of three and 21 year old Uriah Smith who joined the publishing work.

The youth of James and Ellen White along with the wisdom of Joseph Bates enabled the Seventh-day Adventist Church to develop deep scriptural doctrine based on their concept of “present truth.” As the Seventh-day Adventist Church began organizing James White wrote, “In Peter’s time there was present truth, or truth applicable to that present time. The Church [has] ever had a present truth. The present truth now, is that which shows present duty.” Two years earlier, in January of 1847, Joseph Bates had begun shaping Seventh-day Adventist doctrine through “present truth” as well. Today the church must call upon the old and the young to work together for a deeper understanding


11George R. Knight, A Search for Identit, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 19.

of “present truth” in the twenty-first century.

The Church’s Challenge

Herein lies the church’s challenge, to equip a generation who values the experience of tradition through ancient rites in the culture of the 21st century. Echo boomers desire to do ministry in what Leonard Sweet describes as an “ancientfuture mode.”13 Their involvement in ministry in an Adventist context will find substance by returning to the practices of the early Adventist pioneers as well as traditions found in early Christianity, but their message will be wrapped in the language, thought, and practice of the 21st century.

Echo boomers engage in ministry through reflection on God as well as reflection on the world. John R. W. Stott describes this process as “double listening.”14 “The faculty of listening to two voices at the same time, the voice of God through Scripture and the voices of men and women around us. These voices will often contradict one another, but our purpose in listening to them both is to discover how they relate to each other. Double listening is indispensable to Christian fellowship and Christian mission.”15 The church must listen to the needs of the world in order to administer the grace of God. If the church chooses to neglect “double listening” the question must be asked, How much does the church want deliverance from this sinful world? Could not God be more accommodating


15 Ibid., 29.
in the methods He asks His church to employ?\textsuperscript{16}

What we as the church are in need of discovering is that “there is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world.”\textsuperscript{17} Leslie Newbigin affirms that the Christian church, of which the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a part, must come to an understanding that “with the radical secularization of Western culture, the churches are in a missionary situation in what once was Christendom.”\textsuperscript{18}

Mission is not a new concept to Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America. Most Sabbaths, during Sabbath School, a mission offering is taken to further the work in some other part of the globe. But the idea of a mission at home is a radical concept to most members. This is in spite of the fact that the need for mission in North America became a reality as early as 1966 when \textit{Time} magazine’s cover story asked the question, “Is God Dead?”\textsuperscript{19} Although the article concluded by calling Christians to repeat the prayer in Mark 9:24 of the father whose son was demon possessed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” The idea of the plurality of God in the minds of Americans was recognized nationally.

The church in North America must embark on a journey it has not faced since its inception, a crossing that will lead to the discovery of the heart of a missional church.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{17}Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council. Willingen, Germany, 5-17 July 1952; see special issue of \textit{International Review of Mission} 92, no. 367 (2003): 464.
\bibitem{18}Leslie Newbigin, \textit{The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 2.
\bibitem{20}Newbigin, 5.
\end{thebibliography}
Discovering this heart is the goal of the journey, but the journey begins by taking an honest look at reality.

An Honest Look at Reality

According to George Hunter, the church of Christendom was the center of society. While some church leaders had become corrupt there were many local priests who were devoted and continued to positively effect the towns in which they ministered.\(^{21}\) Not until the secularization of the Renaissance did the church begin to lose influence. However, it was not the actions in the world that caused the church to lose touch as much as it was the reactions that came from the church.\(^{22}\) The consequence of action, reaction continues today. In his article, *Culture War Casualties*, John Woodbridge discusses the fact that the church’s reactions to the world’s actions today are once again causing the church to lose touch with the world.\(^{23}\) This begs the question: If the world is in the 21st century, where is the church?

Stuck in the 1950s

According to Eddie Gibbs, “Sociologists of religion have continued to affirm the observation Alexis de Tocqueville made in the 1830s that the United States is an anomaly in Western societies. The United States is one of the most technologically advanced countries, yet with the single exception of Ireland it has the highest percentage of its


\(^{22}\)Ibid., 25-31.

population going to church.”

Gibbs claims that while Europe began to see a visible decline in church attendance and influence shortly after World War I, the church in the United States continued to enjoy a culturally relevant ministry through the 1950s. One factor in determining the relevancy of the church is youth attendance. It was after the 1950s that the sharp decline in youth attendance occurred with youth attendance today less than half of what it was in most mainline denominations in the 1950s. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church today the average age of a church member in North America is 51, while the average age of a North American is 36.

Peter Wagner proposes three models for evangelism that began shortly after World War II and have had significant impact on church growth and evangelism strategies: crusade evangelism, saturation evangelism, and body evangelism. Although crusade evangelism began in the nineteenth century with D. L. Moody and later Bill Sunday, Billy Graham set the stage for crusade evangelism in the 1950s.

Although proclamation of the gospel through crusade evangelism, evangelistic meetings in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, dates prior to the decade of the 1950s, its cultural relevance in North America began in 1949 when Baptist evangelist Billy Graham

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24Gibbs, 10.

25Ibid., 13-14.


held his Los Angeles crusade. In the 1950s this was considered a first-rate method of evangelism. An evangelist would work with local churches to secure a location, bring in Bible workers, find a choir, begin a prayer ministry, and enlist the local media. The excitement in the town would build as the anticipation for the evangelist grew, and a large crowd would gather for the arrival of the evangelist on opening night. At the end of each meeting a call would be given to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Names would be written on cards and the cards would be left for the members to follow up as the evangelist moved on.29 (My purpose in evaluating public evangelistic meetings in the decade of the 1950s is not to discount the importance of the public evangelistic effort. It is instead an attempt to shed light on my observation that the Seventh-day Adventist Church identified with the North American culture through the evangelistic effort in the decade of the 1950s so well that some have continued to pursue this methodology sixty years later with hope of the same results.)

The success of crusade evangelism resulted from the fact that church culture and secular culture in North America were similar. The anomaly that de Tocqueville observed was holding true. The United States was still a “churched” nation. The values held by those outside of the church and those inside of the church were similar. Culturally, the United States was a Christian nation. As a result of the success in the 1950s, it is possible that the church set a methodology of ministry based on the 1950s. That methodology has turned into a culture that has permeated the last six decades of ministry in the United States and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church created a culture that is a subset of a subset.

In his article entitled “Cultural Adventists,” Clifford Goldstein affirms that many

29Ibid., 134-36.
Seventh-day Adventists in North America today have chosen Adventism based on culture rather than belief.30 For some it was, in a sense, automatic. They were raised as cultural Seventh-day Adventists. The story of Adventists Alison and Alan is a common one for many young Adventists.

On Friday evening before sundown, Adventist Alison’s and Alan’s parents would turn off the television, if they owned one, and gather the family for worship. After eating dinner they would play with “Sabbath” toys or color “Sabbath” coloring books. On Sabbath (Saturday) morning they would wake up, have their hair combed and teeth brushed, and don their “best”—in North American culture in the 1950s a suit for boys and a dress for girls. The family would pile in one car and off to church they would go.

Upon entering the church they would be ushered off to their respective children’s Sabbath Schools where they would receive a prize for reciting their memory verse and would give their money to help missionaries in other countries where people did not know about Jesus. Their parents would give money for those same missionaries in their adult Sabbath Schools and then the family would sit together for church.

After listening to the sermon and again giving an offering to help God’s work move forward, they would gather in the church’s fellowship hall for a vegetarian potluck. After eating they would head home, and return to church on Wednesday evening for “prayer meeting” if their parents weren’t too tired during the week.

Their culture rose from their beliefs of the Sabbath, vegetarianism, Christian behavior (dress), stewardship, and biblical authority, to name a few. While the beliefs previously mentioned have their place in the life of a Seventh-day Adventist, choosing

membership in the Body of Christ based on the culture that the beliefs have created may lead to a condition of self-centeredness.

As Alison and Alan mature into adulthood, they too want the “safety” of the environment that comes from cultural Adventism in the lives of their respective children. They embrace the status quo because of their affinity to the church’s culture. As a result, they are drastically opposed to anything that “enters” the church that would disrupt their culture, and so the defensive strategy of the local church is born. They gather other conventional members around them who also remember the way things were, and they plan ministry as if the church has not developed in the last 60 years. Unbeknown to them, their condition of self-centeredness has turned into a sickness of selfishness.

The Sickness of Selfishness

The sickness of selfishness that results from choosing beliefs based on the culture of the beliefs is not new to God’s chosen people. In Matt 23:15 Jesus says, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”

Jesus was aware of the great evangelistic work that the Jews were doing throughout the Roman Empire, converting thousands to their faith. This was God’s purpose in setting the nation of Israel apart and placing them at the crossroads of the then


33 "Matthew,” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 5:489.
known world to be witnesses for Him. But the Jews, indoctrinated by the culture of their beliefs, made converts of culture first and converts of God second. They were fully taught, but the fruit of their conversion was found through baptism, sacrificial offerings, and circumcision, rather than a life of obedience in carrying out the mission God had given them to tell more people about Him.

The core of the sickness of selfishness for the teachers of the law and Pharisees was that they were more concerned with their salvation than the salvation of others. The Gospels include at least six accounts of questions directed to Jesus by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees regarding the personal attainment of eternal life (Matt 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18; John 3; John 5:39), and yet the answer to their question is given to the Greeks who come to Philip and ask to see Jesus. “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25).

It is the missional nature of this text that unveils God’s passion for lost people. While Jesus shares the secret of attaining eternal life through belief in the Son of God with Nicodemus, a Pharisee (John 3:16), He shares the fruit that comes from a life that will enter eternity with the Greeks. This fruit is a life that is more dedicated to God than to self. The fruit is not a culture created from beliefs, but rather missional action to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the lost.

Many times the culture of Adventism is equated with safety and culture outside of Adventism is viewed as destructive. This is a probable reason that the church is afraid to cross the cultural boundary between church and world. Many in the church are more

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concerned with attaining eternal life than sharing eternal life with others. What the church
fails to remember is that Jesus Christ willingly risked giving up eternal life to give us
eternal life. Jimmy Long compares this challenge in the monastic communities with the
church’s challenge today. “The tension, generated by uncertainty over whether to be a
protected, closed community or a mission-minded, open community, is the same tension
we face today. The culture around the church is decaying. We in the church feel
vulnerable, afraid and hopeless. We need, however, to identify our primary problem: Is it
the secularistic culture around us or is it our lack of faith in a sovereign God?”35
(emphasis added).

Has our mission of attaining eternal life become more important than sharing the
One who gives eternal life with others? Is the church’s sickness of selfishness caused by
the fear of losing eternal life if it steps out of its culture? Is the church’s faith so weak
that it does not believe God can use it as His witness in a culture that is contrary to its
own? Or worse, is the church living out an unknown realization of its lack of faith when
it refuses to cross the cultural boundary between church and world because the members
of the church fear losing eternal life in the process? The selfishness of wanting eternal
life causes the church to continue to do ministry in a culture of the past. A culture that is
not as contrary to the culture of the church as is the culture of today. The problem is that
the ministry of the church’s past has not sufficiently prepared it for ministry in the world
today.36

35Jimmy Long, Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching The Postmodern Generation (Downers

36William M. Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere By
A Strategy from Within

The church can no longer afford the comfort of doing ministry within its established culture. Nor can it continue to do ministry within the culture of six decades past. Ion Bria emphasizes that the world is dynamic and continues to expand and grow according to its requirements and reason. Because the church is not of the world and the world does not know the body of Christ, it does not consider the contributions the church can make in society today.  

The church must “faith-fully” take the leap to design biblically-based ministry placed in the culture of today. The church in North America must enter the mission field of North America in the 21st century, the mission field that does not know the church and does not believe that the church has anything to offer. This is not a new challenge for the church. It is the challenge that the apostolic church embraced. The church must move past institutionalism in order to minister in the vernacular. Only then will the secret of selflessness be understood and fruit from eternal lives begin to ripen.

Ministry in the Vernacular

The churches in North America that accept God’s call to the mission fields in which they live must learn to listen and speak in the language of the 21st century. In his book, Missions Have Come Home to America, Jerry Appleby relates the tragic story of a young woman who cannot find anyone to listen, understand, and speak with her.

It was a winter night in New York City when a young Puerto Rican woman hurried to use the pay phone in the neighborhood bar. She ignored the slurred comments from the half-drunken patrons and went straight to the bartender to ask for

37 Bria, 417.
change. But there was an immediate communication problem—she spoke only Spanish, and he spoke only English.

In her effort to transmit her need she became upset; her voice rose with emotion as she shouted her words, hoping to be understood. The busy bartender, not understanding her outburst, shouted back in the only language he knew. Finally, infuriated, he called the police.

When the police arrived, the uncontrolled woman continued to gesture and explain her situation in Spanish. But the police understood only English. Not knowing what to do to calm the now hysterical woman, they called an ambulance.

The ambulance attendants rushed to the bar and tried in vain to talk to the Puerto Rican woman. But they spoke only English. Feeling trapped by all the uniformed men, the woman became more frightened and outraged. In frustration, the attendants forceably wheeled her away to the psychiatric unit of a nearby urban hospital. For three long days she lay strapped in her bed before a Spanish-speaking social worker was called in. The resulting conversation sent the social worker dashing to the Puerto Rican woman’s small apartment. But she was too late—for there lay three small children, dead from thirst!

The young mother had only wanted correct change to make a phone call to her doctor. But she did not speak the language in which help was available. 

_How many people on this continent die each day totally unprepared to meet their God because they don’t speak the language in which salvation is available?_38 (emphasis added).

This true story found in a newspaper in the early 1980s is a metaphor of the cultural language barrier between church and world in the 21st century: a barrier ensuing from a world that has changed culturally and a church that is continuing to do ministry in the culture of the church’s heyday. As a result of the church’s negligence to address the changes in the culture to which it is called to minister, a mission field has been created in the communities in which churches exist. Kennon Callahan asserts, “The day of the churched culture is over. The day of the mission field has come.”39

If the church is to become effective missionally, the church must change the way

38Jerry L. Appleby, _Missions Have Come Home to America_ (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1986), 9-10.

it views itself and its purpose. Callahan emphasizes that the local church can no longer consider itself the local church; instead it must become a “mission outpost,” of which he paints the following picture.

Imagine you are in mission work somewhere—in southern China, central India, northern Africa, or somewhere in Central or South America. Consider the radically different setting in which you would find yourself. Consider how many of the practices and principles that used to work in local churches during the 1940s and 1950s in the United States would not work on that foreign mission field. Recall your earlier longings and yearnings to be a missionary somewhere on our planet. Relive the spirit of affinity and kinship you once felt with the missionaries who have gone out to strange, new places. Now see your present community as your mission field. Do well here the same mission work you would do somewhere else on the planet. . . . Leadership of a mission outpost does not have a goal of becoming a churched-culture local church. Mission outposts may be of any size—small, medium, or large. What counts is not their size but their spirit. The spirit of a mission outpost is one of mission, whereas the spirit of a churched-culture local church is one of maintenance.

Easier said than done. The greatest hindrance to the church doing ministry in the vernacular, in the language of the 21st century, is the church itself. Regardless of the enormity of the task it must be done, and the first step is for the church to discover the secret of selflessness.

The Secret of Selflessness

The heart of mission is the calling of the body of Christ to be converted and follow Jesus by living as His church. One cannot live as a member of Christ’s church, however, without laying self aside. For what self wants is not necessarily what the Holy

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40Ibid., 22.

41Ibid., 22-23.

42As previously discussed in chapter 2: The Sickness of Selfishness.

43Newbigin, 121.
Spirit desires or where He is leading. The church must learn the secret of crossing the cultural boundary between church and world: selfless surrender to Jesus Christ. The body of Christ must surrender to the supreme authority of Jesus Christ in order to be aware of the cultural challenge we face in presenting Jesus to a lost world.44

The church must embrace John 3:17 with the same fervor in which John 3:16 is clutched. “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him” (John 3:17). Why did God send His Son into the world? To save the world. Was the world worthy of being saved? No. Should the world have been condemned? Yes. Why was the world not condemned? Because Jesus is about saving, not condemning. Did Jesus save the world in the culture it was in? Yes. How do we know that? Because the world should have been condemned which means its culture was contrary to God’s. Why was the world not condemned? Because Jesus is about saving, not condemning. As Jesus’ church, should we follow His example by reaching into the culture of the world and bringing the lost to Him? Yes.45

The church, however, must understand that simply focusing on the need to change the church’s culture in order to cross the cultural boundary between church and world is only a beginning. Acknowledging and acting are two far removed processes. Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk state that the church will begin to change culturally when the body of Christ removes their attention from themselves and focuses their attention on “listening to Scripture; dialoguing with one another; learning to listen; and becoming

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44Ibid., 159.

aware of and understanding what is happening in their neighborhood, community, and the places of their everyday lives.\textsuperscript{46}

The church must begin by reencountering the cross. For when one enters into eternal life through Jesus Christ, he or she also enters into His mission to save a lost and dying world.\textsuperscript{47} In John 12:32 Jesus says, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” It was this verse that Paul, Silas, and Timothy claimed as they told the story of Jesus in the mission field of Corinth.\textsuperscript{48} A mission field of the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, people filled with greed, drunks, slanderers, and swindlers, a mission field that became the church once they encountered the cross, a mission field that resembles North America in the 21st century.\textsuperscript{49}

The secret of selflessness is each member of the reconverted church living in daily submission to God. While the church may not understand the culture of the world in the 21st century, God does. And God desires to enter it through His body, His church. Only He can open the eyes of His body to see “the church in, with, and among the people and places where we live, rather than in a specific building with a certain kind of people.”\textsuperscript{50} Only God can see an indigenous church.

\textsuperscript{46} Roxburgh and Romanuk, 63-64.


\textsuperscript{49} Burke, \textit{No Perfect People Allowed}, 15.

\textsuperscript{50} Roxburgh and Romanuk, 64.
An Indigenous Church

In the quest for a workable structure of the church in the 21st century, Brian McLaren suggests that the only perfect structure “is flexible enough to become a better structure tomorrow.” The indigenous church must make this flexible structure a core value, for there is no purpose in meeting the culture where it is if the church does not continue to grow with it. In addition, this body must come to the realization that it is more than a multi-purpose room with a band, padded chairs, and multi-media equipment. The body must move past the externals, for it is the focus on the externals that has placed the current church outside of cultural relevancy today.

An indigenous church consists of disciples of Christ who have mobilized themselves for mission as active members of the body of Christ in the culture in which they live. Bob Whitesel describes the indigenous church as “organic.” This organic church, indigenous church, is the hope for communicating the gospel to a world that sees the church as having nothing to offer humanity in the 21st century.

In order for the gospel to be comprehended for what it is, the power to change lives (Rom 1:16), it must be presented in the culture of the people in which it is offered by people who have experienced it in the culture in which they relay it and have stories to tell of the relevance it has had on their lives. How is this carried out in North America?

52Spencer Burke, Making Sense of Church: Eavesdropping on Emerging Conversations about God, Community, and Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 25.
53Whitesel, Inside the Organic Church, xxiv-xxviii.
54Ibid., xxiv.
Tom Wolf, former senior pastor of The Church on Brady, now Mosaic, in East Los Angeles, answers this question in an interview with George G. Hunter III. “You do it here like on any other mission field in the world. Indigenous Christianity engages the population you want to reach. That means using language they understand, and adapting to their cultural style in all the ways you can.”

An important caveat in regards to engaging the culture is the awareness that the missionary has to the sinfulness that is present in their inner life. For this reason, it is paramount that mission begin with inward transformation within the follower of Jesus so that they will not be lured into sin by the culture in which they are trying to reach others for Jesus Christ. For the majority of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the vicinity of Keller, Texas, this answer brings fear: Adapt to the world’s culture? Then the church will become like the world! That is not the intention of the adaptation that is needed to take place. The church must adapt the gospel in understandable terms but not water down the gospel. An initial negative response towards adaptation reveals that the majority of these churches “have assumed that their Christian existence is the cultural norm.”

Consciously or unconsciously they realize that the world has changed and the church’s programs and traditions provide them with stability. As a result they set a goal of survival, and with survival as their supreme goal, their church begins to die.

References:


56Hunter, 55.


If, however, church members accept the loss between then and now, and resist the urge to try to make things the way they used to be, they will find the open-ended possibility of liminality. Roxburgh suggests, “For the church, experiencing its life as marginality, it is critical to understand that this is a passage with distinct phases, one of which is the potential for transformation.” It is through this potential for transformation that the indigenous church can be developed. Transformation must begin by taking into account where they are in their culture as a church and where they are culturally in the world.

It is paramount to understand that the culture of the indigenous church must be developed out of the culture of the church, as well as the culture of today. To believe that one can simply start over is unrealistic. Even when planting a church with a cold start the leader must still contend with the culture brought to him or her from the churches that the core group members were once a part of. For this reason it is important for the leader of the indigenous church to understand the development of the church from yesterday to today. Thankfully, the roots of early Seventh-day Adventism dig deep into mission. As one can see from the description of the chart in appendix A, the early Seventh-day Adventist church was a missional church and could be placed in the Laser Targeted category. There is no doubt that the majority of Seventh-day Adventist churches today no longer fall within the Laser Targeted category, but our history is there.

Tom Bandy suggests three levels of development for churches from yesterday into today: Heritage, Culturally Normative, and Laser Targeted. Within each level are

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60Roxburgh, 32.

61Thomas G. Bandy, “Developmental Chart,” Florida Conference seminar, 7 November 2006. See
two categories for a total of six churches: The Chaplaincy Church and The Family Church comprise the Heritage category; The Program Church and The Discipling Church comprise the Culturally Normative category; and The Heartburst Church and The Apostolic Church comprise the Laser Targeted category.  

According to Bandy, 80 percent of churches in North America are Heritage churches which distinguish the Chaplaincy and Family churches as churches of the past. Fifteen percent of churches in North America are Culturally Normative churches which indicate a ministry that caught-up culturally, but has not continued to keep up culturally and is now being left behind. And five percent of churches in North America are Laser Targeted churches, indigenous churches past the cutting edge. The Laser Targeted churches, Heartburst and Apostolic, embrace change, promote productivity, and possess a passionate missiology. In the words of C. T. Studd these churches “wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell.” This body of Christ has surrendered to something greater than themselves, they recognize the need for and rely on cross-cultural relationships between church and world, and they completely trust God. This is the indigenous church, a church born out of the apostolic church and into the 21st century. Roxburgh affirms that this body of Christ recognizes that they are “commissioned by Christ for missionary proclamation and strategy in the world.”  

The description of this missional church is not unlike the churches that were

\[\text{ appendix A for Developmental Chart.}\]

\[\text{62} \text{Ibid.}\]

\[\text{63} \text{Ibid.}\]

\[\text{64} \text{Ibid.}\]

\[\text{65} \text{Roxburgh, 62.}\]
created by early Seventh-day Adventists. According to Russell Burrill early Adventist mission embraced Matt 24:14 as their basis for the missional movement they created, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”\(^{66}\) It is therefore apparent that early Adventists were willing to venture beyond the cultural norms they knew and into the cross cultural mission field of the world in order to preach the gospel to all nations.

This willingness to transcend culture must be brought back into the Adventist Church in North America with recognition that the culture in North America is now a mission field. At the time the Seventh-day Adventist Church began in North America, North America was not a mission field. However, the changes in culture over the last century have created a new mission field in North America in the 21st century.

Those who are fearful of becoming like the world as a result of crossing the cultural boundary of church and world in order to share the gospel should be reminded of the strong accountability in a small group setting which was a foundational piece of early Adventism. Burrill suggests that this spiritual (social) foundation of early Adventism has disappeared.\(^{67}\) A relationally missional church is part of our Seventh-day Adventist heritage, but with the disappearance of the spiritual (social) meeting we have been left with entering the mission field with what Burrill describes as only two legs of a three legged stool: (1) our health message, and (2) our strong educational emphasis through Bible studies and Sabbath school.\(^{68}\) Reinstating the spiritual (social) meeting appears to


\(^{67}\)Ibid., 231.

\(^{68}\)Ibid.
be paramount for engaging in incarnational mission to North America. Through this spiritual (social) meeting, missionaries (members of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church) are held accountable to one another to live as Christ in the world just like Jesus did, therefore taking away the personal fear of becoming like the world when ministering to it.

A church shaped by mission willingly lays self aside so that its members may enter a culture swirling about them in a world of stability they once knew. They do this not to grow their church, but instead to become the church. For the church is nothing less than the body of Christ, and that body must follow the example of Jesus Christ’s incarnation by taking on humanity in the form in which they live.

**Summary and Conclusions**

The amount of time between the culture in which the church ministered relevantly in society and when the church became marginal culturally has been over the past six decades, a relatively short amount of time. During this time, however, new generations have come on the horizon suddenly and have begun to change the world rapidly. As a result, the church in North America was placed on the margins of society and North America became a mission field.

We discussed how the echo boomers are driving business and the economy and that the church must learn their culture not only to reach them, but to lead them in a movement of authentic Christianity, to become an apostolic church. This led us into a frank discussion of why the church in North America has become ineffective and we identified one of the church’s hindrances to sharing the gospel in the culture of today as selfishness rooted in the fears of church members who cling to church programs and
traditions to find personal stability in a rapidly changing world.

We introduced a missional strategy as a solution to the problem of the church’s irrelevancy and proposed a plan of action in which church members would recognize themselves as missionaries in their daily lives to their communities. We then began laying a foundation of the value system for an indigenous church in North America in the 21st century.

One of the first steps for church members to recognize themselves as missionaries to their community begins with transformation. Mission begins with a discovery of the missional heart of God through the development of the spiritual life; many Seventh-day Adventist churches in America are spiritually malnourished. Spiritual renewal is needed. Jesus must be acknowledged as Lord once again. This is where the New Testament church began and this is where this century church must begin as well. We now turn our attention to the development of the spiritual life as the foundation for mission.
CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR MISSION

Introduction

Spiritual renewal in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is needed. Jesus must be acknowledged as Lord once again. This acknowledgement must come from an intimate connection with the Word daily as revealed through spending time with Jesus. As the church, we need to hear a word from our Lord and that word is readily available to be spoken daily. The challenge is that many of us are unable to receive it.

We have created a religion that is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. We are no longer in need of miracles and handle our work through the proper channels. Structure increasingly serves the sustenance of the institution rather than mission. As a result, we are structured and organized, but ineffective in carrying out our mission of spreading the gospel in the West. This is not the church’s intent, but it is the reality that the church is facing. The mission of Jesus was grounded in His relationship with His Father. The same must be true for the church (John 15).

The development of the spiritual life as the foundation for mission is a relatively new concept for me. Much of it makes sense, but it is largely trial and error at this point. Throughout this journey Come and See\(^1\) has made some discoveries however, and my

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hope is that some of these discoveries will lead to answer the following question: How can Come and See in Keller, Texas, develop as a Body of Christ spiritually so that a foundation for mission is birthed?

As a result of this research, Come and See’s mission-mindedness and action will further develop out of listening to the Holy Spirit and obediently following His agenda for Come and See. The foundation for mission at Come and See must be the person of Jesus Christ as recognized daily in the lives of those associated with Come and See as they live in community with God and others.

The church’s mission must be grounded in the spiritual life of each member. This foundation for mission stemming from the spiritual life cannot be mandated from the top down. Instead it must be a grass-roots movement that begins small and grows proportionately to the growth of its rootedness in Jesus Christ. The deeper the movement’s roots are in Jesus, the greater the impact for the Kingdom the movement will have. My greatest limitation is the early stages of growth that Come and See currently finds themselves in. After two and a half years of modeling the spiritual life and teaching the members of Come and See spiritual disciplines such as study, prayer, fasting, silence, solitude, and guidance Come and See is just beginning to understand the connection between the spiritual life and mission. This chapter reveals the discovery up to this point in time with implications for the future.

We will begin with the acknowledgment that local church leadership must

1Come and See, chosen from reading and reflection on John 1:45-51, is the name of the Keller Seventh-day Adventist church plant which is this doctoral project.
surrender to the love of God. This is a miracle that cannot be manufactured, but must be given through the grace of the Holy Spirit. From there we will attempt to understand the practice of the spiritual disciplines in a Seventh-day Adventist context. From a discovery of and implementation of these disciplines it is proposed that the church is able to *be* the church and discover the heart of God that leads the church into mission. This discovery of God must begin with an honest discovery of self.

**Surrender of the Heart of Local Church Leadership to the Love of God**

*Pray for a Miracle*

The miracle that is needed is transformation. Not simply restructuring of one part or revitalization of another but transformation of the whole. The body of Christ must be willing to be broken for brokenness is the seed of new faith. John Burke posits, “I now believe that only a church full of imperfect people, acting as His Body, can bring the hope and healing needed to change our postmodern world for the better—one life at a time.”2 The church in Corinth was constructed through transformation of broken people. The apostle Paul writes,

> Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunckards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:9-11, italics added).

The church in Corinth began with broken people who were transformed.

John Burke asks, “What do a Buddhist, a biker couple, a gay rights activist, a

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transient, a high-tech engineer, a Muslim, a twenty-something single mom, a Jew, an unmarried couple living together, and an atheist all have in common? They are the future church in America!” This is the church that God is constructing in the post Christian culture of the 21st century. William Easum and Thomas Bandy suggest that broken people are engaging in spiritual conversation about the fullness in Christ everywhere but church: restaurants, sporting events, parks, block parties, and anywhere else the public gathers. When spiritual conversation with the lost has moved beyond the church building, the church must move out of the church building. For the Holy Spirit’s will is to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10) and He goes where lost people are.

An ancient Chinese proverb states, “If your vision is for a year, plant wheat. If your vision is for ten years, plant trees. If your vision is for a lifetime, plant people.” In order for the church to last another lifetime she must plant people. Not perfect people, but people who are broken and are being transformed by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. This is the miracle to pray for, that we as individuals within the body of Christ, His church, would be transformed.

Perhaps this is the reason that Ellen G. White suggests that a team of seven that are from the city or move to the city form the initial core group of a church plant to study the needs of the city and prayerfully decide how to reach the city. Our prayer must be for God to move the church out of our control while giving him permission to move us out of our control as well.

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3Ibid., 15.


5Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1973), 37.
Pete Greig and Dave Roberts identify the following symptoms of brokenness in Western society: alcohol and drugs, bullying, priorities, sexually transmitted disease, and self harm. Through prayer-filled hearts they ask and affirm, “But for how many is sex a search for intimacy, drugs a way of escape, and self-harm a demonic self-loathing? Only a prophetic community can help people discover the wisdom that will heal these wounds.” This community can only be developed through prayer. Throughout this journey of transformation from brokenness we must “relearn what it means to have prayer at the center of our mission and mission at the center of our prayer.” Christ is calling forth a church in the 21st century that dances with the chaos of brokenness and transformation. This dance into surrender on the part of local church leadership in response to God’s loving call to local church leadership in their brokenness must stem from a deep conviction that what appears as disorderly and is overwhelmingly independent of our control is in fact the will of God.

As Come and See begins prayer leads into chaos. The plan is to pray and ask God for His plan to reach Keller, Texas. This prayer begins in a hotel room in August 2006 when Michael, Ashley, and Ella Cauley through sponsorship from Global Mission in partnership with the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, The Southwestern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and The Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists move to Keller with no other resources for ministry but

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7 Ibid., 13.

8 Ibid., 174.

prayer. Through faithful prayer on Wednesdays nights this group grew from three to five people asking God how to reach Keller and then from five to twelve people asking God how to reach Keller and the group praying on Wednesday nights is still growing.

Wednesday night prayer meetings extend into all night prayer sessions on Friday nights in the front room of an auto body shop on Main Street in Keller. Friday night prayer sessions extend into a week of 24 hour prayer at Tikva. A Gathering Place, Come and See’s Prayer House in the heart of Old Town Keller. Tikva is where the community of Old Town Keller knows that Come and See is praying for a miracle.

Become the Miracle

Sitting with God in prayer leads to sitting with people in person. The mission of Tikva is: Living deeply with God and others. While a Christian environment is evident through symbolism, books, Bibles, poetry, painting, sculpture, and prayers written on walls the purpose of Tikva is to invite the community to gather. This invitation leads the members of Come and See to walk out of the doors of Tikva and into the businesses located in Old Town Keller.

This is something the members of Come and See are learning to do. Like many Seventh-day Adventist churches we do not know how to live with people who are not Seventh-day Adventist. Seventh-day Adventists are not alone in this challenge however; the majority of evangelical Christians find themselves in the same predicament. Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove observe, “There is a danger in being a peculiar

10This is the name of Come and See’s Prayer House. The Hebrew word for hope was chosen because it is an uncommon word that sparks question and gives opportunity to talk about hope in Jesus Christ.
people, especially if we have the privilege of choosing. . . Things can begin to look pretty separatist and insular when the people of God becomes the organizing principle for our lives.”

Easum and Bandy agree,

On the one hand, Christians can become a *righteous remnant*. They can follow the Essenes to form a distinct society, retreating into fortresses and caves of institutional elitism, self-righteously preserving what they understand to be “good” worship, “pure” doctrine, or “correct” ideology. They can initiate decreasing numbers of like-minded believers into the secrets of the society, and store their wealth in clay jars and certified bank deposits. They can shut themselves within a spiritual “Masada,” besieged by culture round about, and eventually choose to die rather than “surrender.”

On the other hand, Christians can become an *apostolic witness*. They can follow Paul, Silas, Lydia, and Priscilla into a mission to the Gentiles, advancing into public places and personal conversations, joyously sharing a relationship with Jesus that bears the fruits of abundant life. They can bring increasing numbers of spiritual seekers into a companionship that deepens faith, builds awareness of destiny, and equips mission. They can surrender their certificates of deposit and ecclesiastical fortresses, and transform the surrounding culture one conversation at a time, one day at a time.

As a result of sitting with God in prayer for two and a half years, Tikva is transforming Old Town Keller one conversation at a time. Through prayer the leaders of Come and See are willing to ask the following question posed by Ed Schmidt, “What if you’re church were to make a substantial impact in the community. What would it look like?” This question leads Come and See into mission.

Through prayer Come and See realizes that they must become the miracle. God must transform them personally so that they can transform their community socially. Services that benefit the community lead into relationships that lead broken people to

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12 Easum and Bandy, 11-12.

Jesus so that he can transform them spiritually.\textsuperscript{14}

As Tikva opened in September 2008, the idea unconsciously held by Come and See was to bring people into Tikva. Ten stations were set up to lead people into prayer and intimacy with God through music, painting, reading, journaling, reflecting, writing prayers on walls, and praying for the world. An entire room was dedicated to children so that they could also write on walls, paint, and listen to stories. From September 7 through September 14 Tikva was opened twenty-four hours a day for seven days. The week was a success, but it was only a beginning and the hours at Tikva became sporadic because there was little more to offer than spiritual nourishment. In this format volunteers are hard to find and people have no desire to come in the door.

After a month, the reality of offering something in addition to spiritual nourishment begins to be explored. The idea of offering hot drinks in the morning from eight to eleven Monday thru Friday is decided upon and volunteers come forward to make this happen. After five months of offering physical nourishment in addition to spiritual nourishment the weekly traffic through Tikva increases and word of mouth about Tikva begins to spread throughout the cities of Keller, Fort Worth, and Watauga. The greatest step forward however is through the ministry of taking hot drinks to the business owners on Olive Street, the street that Tikva is located on. Through the offer of a hot drink and friendship hearts begin to be softened.

Although Keller is located in the Bible-Belt sixty percent of the population does not attend church.\textsuperscript{15} That statistic more than holds true for Olive Street on which Tikva is

\textsuperscript{14}Bandy, \textit{Christian Chaos}, 40.

\textsuperscript{15}“Ten Generational Facts.”
located. Only one shop keeper of the seven shops on the street attends church regularly which means eighty-six percent of the merchants on Olive Street are unchurched. The spiritual interests of the shop keepers appear to fall between the lines of secularism, the New Age Movement and spiritualism. They are skeptical of churches and are leery of forming friendships with Christians for fear of the superficiality of Christians wanting to “convert” them, however they are willing to enter into relationships with a broken person, who is in the process of transformation through Jesus, who serves them. Broken people are empowered through the adjective “servant.”

It is through serving outside of the doors of Tikva that Come and See begins living the full spiritual life. Jesus does not just want our life in church; He wants our life outside of church too. This life begins with brokenness, surrenders to transformation by the Holy Spirit, and serves the lost.

The Practice of Spiritual Disciplines as Applied in a Seventh-day Adventist Context

Spiritual Thirstiness

I am thirsty for Jesus. A focus on doctrine apart from Jesus has left me dry; I need Jesus to quench my thirst and for doctrine to stem from him. The thirstiness of the Christian resulting on doctrinal focus apart from Christ is unfortunately not uncommon. According to Jon Dybdahl Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, “view religion much more as a devotional or spiritual experience than as a philosophy or idea” Most of Christian

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16 Steve Sjogren, 101 Ways to Reach Your Community (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 11.

17 Erre, 98-99.

18 Dybdahl, Hunger, 14.
theology today focuses on doctrines or beliefs apart from the devotional life in relationship to Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{19} Subconsciously these doctrines and beliefs dictate the church’s methodology and leave Christians feeling thirsty. The church must refocus doctrine on Jesus Christ.

Craig Groeschel reveals that as his church was beginning he did not feel like it was a real church. He says,

In my warped mind, I believed we needed our own building and all the other things real churches have—like a sports ministry, concerts, conferences, and our own church van. I thought those important elements would give us \textit{it}. Then we’d be a real church. Little did I realize, we already had \textit{it}. God was doing something very special. Lost people were being found. Found people were growing. The church was spiritually vibrant. All without any of the things I thought necessary.\textsuperscript{20}

What was necessary for the apostles who turned the world upside down? What dictated their methodology? Ben Johnson suggests, “The awareness of the living Christ present in the lives of disciples, and the conviction that these disciples participate with Christ in his mission to the world, would release enormous energy. This fiery enthusiasm would become concrete in sacrificial service for Christ.”\textsuperscript{21} The awareness of the living Christ in the life of a broken person leads the Christian to follow Jesus as Lord. This growing relationship in brokenness alone and wholeness in Jesus quenches spiritual thirst. How do Seventh-day Adventists move from predominant cerebral thought into a relationship with Jesus that quenches their thirst?

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20}Groeschel, 61-62.

The Boundary of Chaos

Doing church differently falls short of the boundaries that must be set to satisfy spiritual thirst. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay write, “We must realize that slight tweaks, new music, creative lighting, wearing hula shirts, shorts, and flip-flops won’t make doing church more attractive. Church must not be the goal of the gospel anymore. Church should not be the focus of our efforts or the banner we hold up to explain what we’re about. *Church should be what ends up happening as a natural response to people wanting to follow us, be with us, and be like us as we are following the way of Christ.***

Our methodology rooted in doctrinal theology is not enough to satisfy even the craving of the theologian. How then can it satisfy the craving of the spiritual thirsty seeker?

The Christian of the 21st century must take with them the knowledge that entering into the spiritual life as they quench their thirst and lead others to drink deeply of Jesus does not begin a new work within, but builds on the work already present in themselves and in lost people through the Holy Spirit. As previously mentioned, the Holy Spirit appears to do his greatest work in the midst of perceived chaos. Therefore a willingness to embrace this chaos must be the boundary the church of the 21st century sets. Thomas Bandy posits, “When congregations simply list what can or should be done, they limit the power of the Holy Spirit to interrupt the strategic plan and carry congregational energy in new directions. However, when congregations concentrate on broad policies which shape the congregational way of life, activities can flow in unexpected directions from the

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22Halter and Smay, 30.
24Johnson, 95.
spiritual formation discipline of the participants.”

At Come and See I have seen spiritual formation lead into chaos which the Holy Spirit builds into effective ministry that engages lost people for the Kingdom of God. Spiritual success has come not as a result of talent, but through gut-wrenching and fear inducing obedience. The only way for the church to embrace chaos is to wean herself from fear and control while following in obedience the Holy Spirit no matter what the cost. This is the seed of collaborative genius through a partnership in obedience to God through the artistry He has placed in humanity.

Gordon MacKenzie speaks to the idea of this genius lost, “Genius is an innocent casualty in society’s efforts to train children away from natural-born foolishness.” The apostle Paul writes, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength” (1 Cor 1:25). In order for spiritual thirst to be quenched the church may need to surrender doctrine to the creativity of the Holy Spirit in a culture of chaos while maintaining biblical authority so that the Holy Spirit may rebirth doctrine that is lived through the follower of Jesus in the 21st century. It is possible that this idea is what Adventism’s pioneer’s concept of present truth came from.

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25 Bandy, 41.


The Disciplines Are Obedience

One of the greatest fears in Adventism is failure in obedience. This is in part due to a one-sided understanding of Ellen G. White’s contribution as founder and prophet within Adventism. Jon Dybdahl points out,

A complete religious reformer, she took a prominent role in the doctrinal reform relating to the literal return of Jesus, the immutability of God’s law, and the wholistic view of humanity. Extensively preaching, teaching, and writing, she led in the founding of schools and the establishment of medical institutions. She had powerful experiences of communion with God, was deeply devotional, and spoke and wrote extensively on the spiritual life in all its aspects.

An examination of the scholarly work on her writings will reveal that after her death Adventists have studied her mostly for what she has to say about doctrinal belief and Christian lifestyle. She has become for most Seventh-day Adventists an arbiter of theological questions and a champion of conservative lifestyle. What I am saying is not to belittle such contributions, but to point out how one-sided they are. You will find almost nothing written about her spirituality and teachings on the devotional life. . . . The amount she wrote in this area is staggering, yet the denomination has done little or nothing with this material, because its scholarly interests lie in other subject areas.²⁸

This one sided understanding has left many Seventh-day Adventists thirsty for God due to a neglect of the spiritual life stemming from teaching that only doctrine is necessary for a relationship with Jesus.

A Seventh-day Adventist begins understanding obedience through a renewed commitment to Jesus through the spiritual disciplines by beginning with as much of the spiritual disciplines as they understand. Johnson points out, “Persons can only respond to the information they have. More, they cannot do.”²⁹

The leader of the church must first take an inventory of their spiritual thirstiness. It is highly likely that while the pastor leader has attained more information theologically

²⁸Dybdahl, Hunger, 16-17.

²⁹Johnson, 115.
than their congregation, they are on equal ground in their grasp of a life of obedience devoted to Jesus through the spiritual disciplines. The good news is that because they and their congregation are on the same page spiritually they can therefore grow together from relatively the same starting point. They begin by responding to the relationship with God they currently have. Henry and Richard Blackaby assert, “There is no greater source of influence for spiritual leaders than the manifest presence of God in their lives.”30 As the spiritual leader draws freedom to enter the spiritual life through a recognition that the spiritual disciplines lead into deeper obedience to Jesus, evidence of the Spirit of God confirms to the congregation that the leader is obedient to God. Healing in the spiritual life leads to change in the life of the person which transforms the person into a bold witness who increases in faith in Jesus Christ.31

Come and See began experiencing this idea of obedience through living a life devoted to Jesus through the spiritual discipline of meditation on Scripture. For Seventh-day Adventists the disciplines that are rooted in study of the Bible appear to be the best place to begin due to our church’s vast knowledge of Scripture and commitment to sola scriptoria. The apostle John identifies Jesus as the Word (John 1:1, 2, 14) and the author of Hebrews says, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Through these texts the idea of drawing closer to Jesus through the “active life” of the Bible becomes an experience that Come and See feels comfortable learning. This is where we began.

30Blackaby and Blackaby, 96.
During Wednesday night prayer meetings as Come and See asks God to change us to meet the needs he sees in Keller I share that God has a message for us this evening through meditation on the Bible. Through a renewed discovery of God’s love for me I lead Come and See to meditate on Jeremiah 31:3, “The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’” Following the example of Jon Dybdahl, I pause after each phrase and ask for a word from God that those present are hearing from the Holy Spirit. The experience is received as refreshing, which means that spiritual thirst has been quenched for that evening.

The second discipline that Come and See began living is the discipline of prayer. As a child growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church my prayer experience consisted of speaking prayers at meals, bedtime and when a need arose throughout my day. Listening in prayer was limited to listening to the elder give the pastoral prayer on Sabbath morning and intercessory prayer was learned from requesting prayer from my parents. Although three elements of prayer were present in my life: speaking, listening, and intercession, I discovered that I did not know how to pray in ways that lead me into direct communion with God.

Sharing this need of intimate communion with God in my life led Come and See to establish Tikva, where people who are thirsty for God gather. Prayer is an art that has been lost in the fast-paced world of the 21st century. Silence is hard to find and discipline to sit in silence is even harder to muster. Study is limited to the page of a devotional or a quick reading of a few verses of Scripture without time made to hear the Holy Spirit speak. Through the popularity of The Purpose Driven Life and The Shack many have
been fed through another person’s encounter with God, but in order for each person to know God they must personally hear what Papa tells Mack, “We are especially fond of you, you know.” At Tikva, Come and See experiences direct communication with God face to face. Regarding the role of a prayer house through following in obedience through a renewed commitment to Jesus through the spiritual disciplines Greig and Roberts affirm, “It’s time to dialogue directly with God face to face without a middleman.”

**Learning to Be the Church versus Doing Church**

The Discipline of Community

The Discipline of Community disrupts the consumer mentality which is prevalent in doing church. Dan Kimball asserts, “If we don’t build everything on the biblical definition of what church is, then we will simply be fueling the consumer mindset.” The basis of church today consists of doing a worship service once a week. This idea of “doing” church hinders relational interaction within the church during the week which leads away from the development of community within the church. Although many churches provide and suggest involvement in small group communities these groups are often considered optional. Neil Cole strongly states,

The truth is that the New Testament clearly makes mandatory participating in the spiritual family, the small group. The larger gathering is optional. This is the very opposite of contemporary practice. There are many mandates in the New Testament directing people to come together as a church, but it is for service to one another, not a worship service that includes preaching. We are so immersed in the current forms of ministry that when we read these verses, we read into them an understanding of church that is not contextually accurate.

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33Greig and Roberts, 130.

34Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 97.
Our persistence in attributing spiritual authority to religious practices not taught in Scripture is not far removed from that of the Roman Church and its observance of mass and the sacraments or the legalism of the religious leaders that Jesus confronted.

Let me just state it clearly: attending a church service is not the same as being a church family. The church, according to the New Testament, means being involved with one another in an open, vulnerable, and interactive relationship. . . . According to the New Testament people in a church need to:

Love one another. (Joh 13:34)
Be devoted to one another and give preference to one another. (Rom 12:10)
Be of the same mind with one another. (Rom 15:5)
Accept one another. (Rom 15:7)
Wait for one another before eating. (1 Cor 11:33)
Care for one another. (1 Cor 12:25)
Greet one another with a holy kiss. (2 Cor 13:12)
Bear one another’s burdens. (Gal 6:2)
Tolerate one another. (Eph 4:20)
Be kind to one another and forgive each other. (Eph 4:32)
Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. (Eph 5:19)
Submit to one another. (Eph 5:21)
Regard one another as more important than oneself. (Phi 2:3)
Share God’s message and admonish one another. (Col 3:16)
Comfort one another. (1 The 4:18)
Encourage and build up one another. (1 The 5:11)
Live in peace with one another. (1 The 5:13)
Confess sins to one another and pray for one another. (Jam 5:16)
Be hospitable to one another. (1 Pet 4:9)
Serve one another. (1 Pet 4:10)
Fellowship with one another. (1 John 1:7)
And yes, gather together (Heb 10:25), but not in the form of a worship service but rather
in such a way that we can challenge one another to love and good deeds (v. 24). In other words, to live out together all the other mandates given above.35

A gathering once a week of a church in the New Testament would not have been enough. Transformation in the lives of these new Christians would not have been possible without daily discipleship because the early church was born from a culture of brokenness in search for meaning in everything but Jesus. It was a culture of witchcraft,

35Cole, Organic Leadership, 64-65.
pagan gods, and religious cults. New followers of Jesus needed the support of living in community in order to stay in communion with Jesus. The same is true today. The true expression of a church takes place in the “one another” texts of the New Testament. Through living life with one another transformation takes places in the lives of disciples. This transformation is the key to movement within Christ’s body and this transformation begins with people who are estranged from God outside of His church. Through community the church builds relationships with people who need transformation, introduces them to Jesus who can transform them and leads them into the world to build more friendships with broken people who when transformed, turn the world upside down.

This community is further developed through service. Richard Foster points out, “True service builds community.” Through service to one another, community where transformation through the Holy Spirit takes place is born and the words of Jesus are fulfilled, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matt 16:25).

In August of 2007, Come and See opened a prayer room in Old Town Keller with the intention of leading people into a deeper relationship with God. Regarding the power of prayer to lead people into community with God Ellen G. White writes,

A true minister does the work of the Master. He feels the importance of his work, realizing that he sustains to the church and to the world a relation similar to that which Christ sustained. He works untiringly to lead sinners to a nobler, higher life, that they may obtain the reward of the overcomer. His lips are touched with a live coal from the altar, and he uplifts Jesus as the sinner’s only hope. Those who hear him know that he has drawn near to God in fervent, effectual prayer. (Italics added)

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36 Kimball, 88.
The Holy Spirit has rested upon him, his soul has felt the vital, heavenly fire, and he is able to compare spiritual things with spiritual. Power is given him to tear down the strongholds of Satan. Hearts are broken by his presentation of the love of God, and many are led to inquire, “What must I do to be saved?” Believing that all who follow Christ are ministers, Come and See’s belief of fervent, effectual prayer was put into practice through twelve hour prayer sessions every other Friday night so that Satan’s strongholds would be torn down, God’s love would be presented, and many would ask, “What must I do to be saved?”

In the *Contemporary Christian*, British evangelical theologian John R. W. Stott mentions the concept of “double listening,” one ear listening to God’s Word and one ear listening to God’s World. Tikva provides that opportunity, a safe place for God’s World to hear God’s Word on a daily basis.

Since its birth Come and See’s mission statement has been, “Progressive Mission, Vintage Faith.” Mission that flows from the Way, the Truth, and the Life must be rooted in faith that models the faith that Jesus taught. Prayer was at the foundation of the faith of the Apostles. Following Christ’s ascension His followers joined together constantly for prayer in a specific location dedicated to prayer (Act 1:13, 14). This foundation of gathering in a specific location for food and prayer continues into the organization of the early church (Act 2:42). The goal of Tikva, Come and See’s prayer house, is to “be absolutely firm in our insistence that smack in the middle of everyday life is precisely where prayer and intimacy with God need to be developed.”

Tikva is designed to create and sustain holy space in a secular world. It is not a

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40 Stott, 24.

church building, but rather a mission outpost. Very much like a Seventh-day Adventist Community Services building in a downtown location it offers a specific function. Whereas a Community Services building offers clothing and social service needs, Tikva offers hope through holy space that is enhanced with the addition of food and welcoming people. As Come and See moves outside of the doors of Tikva to engage the community, offers hope in friendship, and brings the community to Tikva so that they may join our community and go out and bring others into our community, Come and See fulfills their mission by teaching people to live deeply with God through prayer. Through this process God’s church becomes “a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa 56:7).

This discipline of community with God through prayer extends into living in community with others. The mission of Tikva is: Living deeply with God and others. Living deeply with God only becomes complete when we live deeply with others. This Great Commandment given by Jesus (Matt 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:26-28) is the basis of community in the Christian life. Come and See begins living the Great Commandment daily through patient, consistent, and active listening to the community of Keller and the Holy Spirit.

The Art of Listening

As God begins to move in the community of Keller through the community of His body, Come and See is called to faithfulness to Him and to the community of Keller through a ministry of presence at Tikva. This faithfulness is the foundation for success. As Come and See practices listening, self-awareness of what the Holy Spirit is doing, and how needs in the community are being met is given. Through this encouragement, Come

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42Cole, Organic Leadership, 154.
and See seeks to listen at deeper levels through increased commitment to mission as a body. This increased commitment is a result of developing spiritual self-awareness of the leadership team. Reggie McNeal states, “Self-awareness touches all the other disciplines because it is foundational to every other element of greatness.”43 This self awareness reveals the need in the follower’s heart of dependence on Christ to remove self daily. Eddie Gibbs writes, “Unless and until we are prepared to die to self, we will never be in a position to live for Christ.”44

As Come and See listens, the Holy Spirit leads the movement. As Come and See moves throughout Keller, the presence of Jesus is brought to the community for all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus (Mat 28:18). As a result, where Jesus’ body moves His power moves.45 Through His moving power Jesus builds His kingdom. Neil Cole says, “Where you go, the King goes, and where the King goes, people bow.”46 Seth Godin defines movement as: “The work of many people, all connected, all seeking something better.”47 Through the art of listening the body of Christ and the Holy Spirit connect, seek something better, and the Kingdom of God increases. Movement led through listening to the Holy Spirit is a partnership between God and humanity that is limitless for accomplishing God’s purposes in a church in the city in which they live.

In order to fully follow, Come and See must “give your [their] entire attention to

44Gibbs, 45.
45Cole, Organic Church, 177.
46Ibid.
what God is doing right now” (Matt 6:34).\textsuperscript{48} To live in this awareness “is an art that requires practicing.”\textsuperscript{49} Through listening mission is not developed from ground zero, but grounded through the mission of Jesus in Scripture.\textsuperscript{50} This mission may appear marginal, but that is what is needed. Tim Keel asserts, “We need a church from the margins, drawn from the places and filled with people and shaped by competencies formerly thought to be of little account. . . . We need a wild vine to be grafted into the branch. We need a church from the margins—a minority report that sees the unseen.”\textsuperscript{51} This unseen is only revealed through the art of listening to the Holy Spirit. Ministry on this level is frightening; the only things that are certain are Jesus and intentional effort to reach people that are lost. In order for this marginal ministry that stems from listening to be effective it must be intentional.\textsuperscript{52} In addition it must be persistent.\textsuperscript{53}

### The Discovery of the Heart of God That Compels the Church to Join Christ in His Mission to Seek and to Save the Lost

**Spirituality Before Religion**

Many followers of Jesus think they have to do it all.\textsuperscript{54} This ideology has infected Adventism to the extent that a non-Adventist (This wording alone is an indication of

\textsuperscript{47}Godin, 5.

\textsuperscript{48}Peterson, 1338.

\textsuperscript{49}Ford, 38.

\textsuperscript{50}Mancini, 120.

\textsuperscript{51}Tim Keel, *Intuitive Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 138-139.

\textsuperscript{52}Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 153.

\textsuperscript{53}Godin, 77.

\textsuperscript{54}Rick Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 55.
religion before spirituality.) is traditionally led to be an Adventist from scratch through the study of an Adventist perspective of the Christian religion. While this approach was effective during Christendom its results are diminishing in the growing post-Christian culture of North America. Rick Richardson posits, “The Judeo-Christian language and worldview can no longer be assumed. Therefore, the conversion process takes longer and requires learning the language, concepts and identity of being Christian. This kind of learning can take place only in community.”

Come and See’s methodology through participation in Keller through the Old Town Merchant’s Association and the ministry of presence that takes place daily at Tikva requires spirituality to be placed before religion. The mission of Tikva: Living deeply with God and others, is more important than the traditional structure of Christendom which centered religion in society. Saving lives is more important than organizational structure. Therefore structure must serve mission. Through Come and See’s developing relationships with shopkeepers in Old Town Keller we are discovering that spirituality opens the door to salvation in Jesus while religion is suspect. Truth taught from a religious perspective leaves truth in religion while truth discipled into the spiritual life of a person places truth inside of that person. When the individual encounters truth outside of the Christian perspective such as in science or history they are able to further develop their view of truth with Christian spirituality at the center ground in the person of Jesus Christ, The Way, The Truth, and The Life (John 14:6).

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55 Ibid., 51.
57 Bell, 80-81.
Love meets needs.\textsuperscript{58} In order for Come and See to develop broken people spiritually, Jesus and the gospel must be central.\textsuperscript{59} Religion, traditional or contemporary, does not heal people and transform them into fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ. Donald Miller writes, “If the supposed new church believes in trendy music and cool Web pages, then it is not relevant to culture either. It is just another tool of Satan to get people to be passionate about nothing.”\textsuperscript{60} Methodology alone leads to religion while methodology grounded in spirituality leads to a relationship with Jesus. The spiritual work is not ours but God’s, the Holy Spirit authors this work in human beings and continues it.\textsuperscript{61} Regarding Jesus’ approach to ministry Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin write, “Jesus never would have impacted their lives if He had not known how to relate to their lives. He never majored on the minors, insisting on “appropriate dress,” or mandating a “high-church” vocabulary. Jesus was ‘all things to all people.’”\textsuperscript{62} Jesus invested in people in order to bring them into a relationship with God. He did not invest in them in order to make them religious persons. In the past, the church invested in people once they came into the church, now the church must invest in people in order to get them to come into the church. A follower of Jesus living spiritually through service offers an experience while religion proposes information.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{58}W. Oscar Thompson, Jr., \textit{Concentric Circles of Concern} (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 107.

\textsuperscript{59}Miller, 111.

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{61}Steve Sjogren, \textit{Conspiracy of Kindness} (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 87.


\textsuperscript{63}Sjogren, \textit{101 Ways to Reach Your Community}, 18.
Brokenness as a Foundation for Relevant Ministry

Followers of Jesus are called, equipped, and expected to share Jesus with others. Most followers of Jesus do not disagree with this statement they just do not know how to share Jesus. Through Tikva, Come and See has the unique opportunity of having people walk in off of the street daily to come and see what Tikva is. In order to engage people when they walk in we began offering lunch on a daily basis. For several months the merchants in our community had been requesting that Tikva begin offering lunch daily. The addition of food meant the addition of two things. The first is that it met a felt need that is shared by those who follow Jesus and those who do not, hunger. The second is that the addition of food brought more traffic in to Tikva so we became more comfortable interacting with guests because of the increase in traffic.

One afternoon a gentleman entered Tikva who was extremely angry. He saw the sign for hot drinks and free WiFi and walked in. Upon entering he was shown around and invited to make himself comfortable. He asked if he could use the space to set up a temporary office and with the welcome invitation began unpacking his things. He sat in a corner working for over three hours. When he was finished, he asked for a prayer request card on which he wrote a prayer asking for God to help him forgive a specific individual. He left in peace. Our volunteers invited him to come in when he was hurting. He laid his brokenness in prayer with Jesus and he left in peace.

I believe the biggest challenge to engage lost people is that we want everything neat and tidy in our spiritual life and in our churches. Bill Hybels states, “Spotless and

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64 Hybels, 61.
65 Ibid., 60.
uncluttered’ had no place in the task of embracing a dying, broken, weary world with radical forgiveness and actionable love.”  

Peter Scazzero writes, “The church is to be known, above all else, as a community that radically and powerfully loves others. Sadly, this is not generally our reputation.”  

Broken people cannot be ministered to by neat and tidy self-reliant people. Broken people must be engaged by broken people who are being transformed daily by Jesus Christ.

Whether we follow Christ or not we are broken. Many times in the Christian life our brokenness has taken root in obeying the command of Jesus to die to self: “The problem was that we had died to the wrong things.”  

Listening to stories of devout parents whose children no longer attend church is all too often an indication that they died to the wrong things. An emotionally healthy church will not exist unless the leadership addresses their personal brokenness. The church must realize that spiritual health and emotional health reflect a balanced Christian life. Neglecting one of the two causes the follower of Jesus to remain immature.

We begin with our brokenness. This honest look at our hang-ups is not news to God. Paul writes, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ

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66 Ibid., 64.
67 Scazzero, The Emotionally Healthy Church, 18.
68 Ibid., 22.
69 Ibid., 46.
70 Ibid., 50.
71 Ibid., 59.
died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:6-8). As Come and See realizes that the God who loves us in our brokenness restores us in Christ to spiritually and emotionally healthy people, disciples are born. These disciples minister from their brokenness and are therefore more easily able to identify with the brokenness they see in lost people. This is part of the mingling that Ellen G. White speaks of, “Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.'”72

Summary and Conclusions

The miracle that God must work is transforming the lives of broken people into disciples of Jesus who engage in mission out of their brokenness. This is where the New Testament church began and this is where the church of the 21st century must begin as well. Through prayer the church discovers the need for this miracle and identifies this miracle as beginning individually in the lives of followers of Jesus.

This growing relationship in brokenness alone and wholeness in Jesus quenches spiritual thirst. The action that the Holy Spirit takes through His follower appears chaotic, however the Holy Spirit moves through the chaos and establishes mission in the heart of His follower. The follower then recognizes the spiritual disciplines as obedience which

leads them deeper into a relationship with God which manifests itself through the Lordship of Christ in their daily life.

As a result of this spiritual awakening the church focuses on being versus the traditional focus of doing. The church learns to live in community with God and one another throughout the week instead of doing church worship once a week. This community is further developed as God speaks and the church listens to what he is doing in the church and the community the church exists to serve.

The church must first seek to connect to the community through spirituality because religion in the 21st century is suspect. This spirituality leads into a ministry of presence in the community. It is developed as members honestly identify their brokenness, already known by God, and become wounded healers through Jesus Christ.

Admittedly, some could argue on the theoretical basis with which this journey has been described. However, this theory has become a part of me and my life has changed as a result. I began this journey with an empty cup, but through reading, surrender to Christ through spiritual disciplines, and the work of the Holy Spirit in my life my cup is full. I have been transformed and am now leading a growing community of echo boomers who are following Jesus daily. The next chapter tells my story.
CHAPTER VI

COMMENTARY ON THE LIFE OF A MISSIONARY

TO NORTH AMERICA

My Story

During the last four years we have planted an indigenous Seventh-day Adventist Church in Keller, Texas, Come and See. Although we have not arrived, our members are accepting that they are missionaries to a culture different from their own and are unselfishly sacrificing their fears and comforts in order to lovingly show lost people “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Eph 3:18).

I believe the greatest work that God has done over the last four years has been in me. My way of life has changed dramatically and my leadership ability has grown tremendously which I believe is the result of God pouring Himself into me as I have sought Him. As He has poured Himself into me I have poured myself into others. Although I know more now than I did four years ago about living as a missionary in North America within the echo boomer culture of Keller, Texas I still have a lot to learn and even more to accomplish for God’s glory.

What follows is my experience of the last four years, the joys and heartbreaks, the successes and failures, the changes in me, the growth of our faith community, Come and See, and the beginnings of a missional movement to North America, Sent Movement. It has without a doubt been the greatest experience of my life, none of which would have
been possible without the support of my wife, Ashley, and the understanding of my children, Ella and Anna. My greatest hope is that this journey has brought us closer to Jesus and to one another as a family. My oldest child, Ella became a missionary when she was seven months old and my youngest Anna was born into a missionary family. Neither of them chose this way of life, Ashley and I chose it for them; through it they have experienced miracles, but have also been exposed to a depth of depravity within the human race that I would have liked to have kept from them longer. My hope is that in all they see clearly Jesus’ grace replace the depravity of those with whom we live as they begin following Jesus as Lord and grow as His disciples. This is our story.

In November 2005 I was pastoring in Shelton, Washington and had just finished my first evangelistic series. I had baptized eleven and was preparing four more for baptism when I scheduled an elder’s meeting to further develop our church structure of working together as a team. I was not prepared for the leadership backlash that I was to experience during that meeting. My elders laid into me for forty-five minutes about all of the problems in our church that I had caused. When the meeting ended I came home and told Ashley that I was done with that job! Ashley told me she believed it was best to stay where we were and wait on God. We did not have to wait long.

The next day the ministerial secretary for the Washington Conference e-mailed me congratulating me on the success of our evangelistic meeting and offered to send me to the West Point Evangelism conference in Simi Valley. That night as I was going through my mail I found information about the Church Growth and Evangelism Cohort from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University that was forming in February 2006. At that time God rebirthed a desire in me to reach Generation
I went to the West Point Evangelism Conference looking for work that was being done to reach Generation X in North America. I did not find any in that context. At that time Bill McClendon mentioned to me that I should try church planting but I was not interested. I wanted to revitalize a dead church not plant a new one.

Upon returning home I wrote a letter to the Washington Conference Administrative Committee requesting sponsorship to the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University so that I could study and implement a project to reach Generation X. The Washington Conference approved my request and I was accepted into the Doctor of Ministry program in December and began reading for the first intensive.

Within the first two days in Portland, Oregon at the first intensive Dr. Skip Bell showed a 60 Minutes episode about echo boomers. He then offered the challenge to Doctor of Ministry students to reach the echo boomers. Although I had intended to develop a project to reach Generation X, by this time the oldest member of Generation X was approximately forty one; I realized that a project directed towards echo boomers would be most beneficial for me and I hoped it would make a contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

Among the members of my cohort was Tom Evans, the church planting director for the Texas Conference. On the way to lunch one day after class I mentioned to Tom my idea of a project to echo boomers. Tom suggested church planting as a method of accomplishing the project. That afternoon Skip Bell mentioned the need to stay five years in the location in which you would conduct your doctoral project. At that moment I realized that I could not stay in the church I was in and do the work that God had called me to do.
Ashley and I took Tom Evans out to lunch and spoke with him about the work to echo boomers that we believed we were called to. Tom shared with us that there may be the possibility for the Texas Conference to be interested in such a project that was a church plant. At this point I became under conviction that I was called to plant an echo boomer church.

Upon returning home I began putting together a plan to plant an echo boomer church. At this point I must emphasize that I began by relying heavily on prayer. During my reading of Ellen G. White’s book Evangelism I came across instructions on beginning new work in a “dark area,” a location in which there are not any Seventh-day Adventist Churches. In this instruction, Ellen White mentions that such work must begin with a team of seven seeking God to show them how to reach the needs of the community in which they hope to begin a church. I adopted this counsel as my plan. Nothing more nothing less and I began to pray that God would open the doors for me to reach echo boomers.

As I prayed I began writing a plan I entitled “Prayerful Planning.” I did not know what else to call it. I knew nothing about church planting so I began reading and praying and developing a theory on what it would take to plant an echo boomer church. A week after I put this plan together there was a Sabbath School Council in the Washington Conference at which Elder Don Schneider was present. I brought my echo boomer church plant proposal to the conference and asked Elder Schneider for his thoughts. In his counsel he encouraged me to begin praying with a group of people even if I did not have seven. My initial thoughts were, pray with less than seven? How could you have any less than seven? I did not realize how small God was going to begin. Elder Schneider’s advice
of not being afraid to start small was what I leaned on six months into this journey.

On March 25, 2006 I received a phone call from Tom Evans asking if I had a proposal to submit to Global Mission for the Echo Boomer Church Plant. I sent Tom the Prayerful Planning Proposal (see appendix B). Tom added demographic information to the proposal for the city of Keller, Texas, and forwarded the proposal to Global Mission. On May 27, 2006 I received an official call from the Texas Conference to plant a church for echo boomers in the city of Keller. This project has received a commitment for five years and my salary was to come from a three-way match from Global Mission, the Southwestern Union, and the Texas Conference. I was grateful for the opportunity.

Keller was chosen for two primary reasons: (1) eighty-five percent of the population of Keller consists of echo boomers and their families, (2) there is not another Adventist church within a thirty minute drive radius which represents a large dark area for Adventism in the metroplex of Dallas-Fort Worth.

On August 21, 2006 my family and I moved into a hotel in Keller. We had no core group and although we were told we would receive ten thousand dollars a year for the first five years for funding for ministry we did not receive that first disbursement for fourteen months until October 2007. This posed a tremendous difficulty. No people, no money. Elder Schneider’s advice of starting with fewer than seven came back to me and I began praying with my wife Ashley when Ella who was seven months old at that time was asleep.

It was in our hotel room while I was studying John chapter one that God placed on my heart to name our church, Come and See. I reasoned that if Jesus appealed to the curiosity of those who were skeptical of Him that a church reaching out to a skeptical
generation in the 21st century could use the same method in its name.

Tom Evans began promoting Come and See within the Texas Conference office and I received a handful of phone calls with leads of individuals who lived near Keller who may be interested in being involved in a church plant. I was hopeful as I followed up on the leads, but quickly found no interest from any of them. Each lead I received I followed and each lead was a dead end. Several times individuals committed to attending our core group meeting (at this time our core group consisted of Ashley, Ella, and myself) but did not show. This was extremely discouraging and at times I wondered if I had heard God’s call correctly or if planting this church had simply stemmed from a selfish desire to be somebody important.

My Prayerful Planning had focused on planting a church out of a mother church, not a cold start that I found myself in. I tried a different strategy for recruitment and went to several churches meeting with their boards and asking for a small group of people to help form a core group and for five thousand dollars seed money to start. Initially, none of the churches I visited were willing to give people or money towards planting a church in Keller. I struggled with having patience for the gap in time between an appeal to new work in a mission field and the response from God moving upon the hearts of His people to give and serve. At this time I felt as though there was no support because each appeal seemed to lead to a dead end. What I did not know was that during this time God was building support for Come and See in the hearts of those I was visiting.

I visited with Adventist businessmen asking for support but received the response that people give when they see something succeeding. I was trying to get something off the ground. I did not have any resources to succeed with except prayer. My faith faltered.
It was at this point that I made my first mistake. I remembered the old adage it takes money to make money so I began using my credit card to begin developing marketing materials to recruit a core group. Before this I had always paid my credit cards off at the end of the month. I knew of the ten thousand dollars that was committed to me the first year so I decided I would turn in my receipts at that time. I did not know that I would not receive that money for fourteen months. This lead to a bad habit and at its worst I was twenty thousand dollars in debt from ministry purchases and living expenses from a high cost of living area that I was not compensated for. I sold my car and my motorcycle (thankful that I had those to sell) and am still in the process of digging out of that debt three and a half years later.

This challenge taught me that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is not structured to support new work financially in dark areas. While my salary was covered (for which I was extremely grateful), money for ministry that was committed did not come through. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is challenged to fund mission projects within North America due to what I have experienced is an institutional church focus. Money comes from the institution and therefore is primarily set aside to fund the institution. I realize that this is an extremely complex issue and I do not want to sound negative, however, from my experience over the last three and a half years it is an issue that in part is hindering mission work from moving forward in North America.

On Sabbaths I visited Adventist churches in order to garner support for my work in Keller but none of the churches I visited would let me address the church. I mingled with people after church and at people’s homes for lunch, but what I found were church
members who were comfortable and unwilling to leave that comfort to enter the mission field in North America. I was discouraged, but I kept going. Ashley and I kept praying and began teaching Ella to pray too.

After six weeks I was contacted by a woman who called the conference office to look for a church in Keller. Tom Evans gave her my name and phone number. She and her husband began attending our weekly prayer meetings and our core group grew from three to five. Three weeks later another core group member was added from a conversation Tom had with a church planter in Houston, Texas whose niece, an echo boomer, lived near Keller. Our core group now had six. Two weeks later our first two core group members dropped out and our core group shrunk down to four. The next week our only remaining core member brought her boyfriend who was not a Seventh-day Adventist and we grew to five. This was November 2006.

In December I was invited to preach at a church forty-five minutes south of Keller and met a man in his fifties who had left the Adventist church thirty-five years prior and had felt a call from God to begin attending church in July of 2006. He lived in Keller. He had been driving forty-five minutes south of Keller to attend church and the pastor was studying with him for baptism. During one of their visits the pastor mentioned to him that there was a church plant in Keller. He was a successful businessman, and although he was not yet a member of the Adventist Church I was impressed that he should be our church treasurer. I took him out to lunch the following week and told him I needed his help and asked him to be my treasurer. He said yes. Our core group then grew to six.

A week prior I had read an article on the front page of the Keller newspaper about a Skate Church in Keller. That week I received a call from the children’s ministry pastor
of the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church who shared with me that one of their
members had started a skate ministry in Keller. I met with the leader of this ministry from
the Arlington Church who was the same person the article in the Keller paper was about.

As a result of beginning this project with prayer and praying weekly with my core
group I believe that God began putting the pieces together to do the work in Keller that
He wants to do. I saw what God was doing through Skate Disciples, the skate ministry,
and I began wholehearted support of it. Our core group grew from six to eleven and
Come and See overnight had a ministry to skateboarders (echo boomers) numbering
between twenty and forty weekly. We kept praying.

In addition to praying I began resourcing my core group with books to begin
leading us towards a collective vision. The book I began with was *No Perfect People
Allowed* by John Burke. Throughout the last three and a half years I have discovered the
importance of resourcing to grow collective vision and to lead mission work that is
breaking uncharted ground. One of the challenges I found from my experience was that
there is not much literature written from the Seventh-day Adventist perspective when it
comes to reaching the echo boomer culture in North America as a mission field.

In December I received a list of Seventh-day Adventists from the conference for
members who lived in the Keller area. Of the list of 220 I found 26 who were currently
living at the address the conference had on file. I contacted all 26 and invited them to our
first core group meeting on the first Sabbath afternoon of January 2007. Three of the 26
families came. One family stayed and our core group grew to 16. We kept praying and
continued to meet together on Wednesday evenings and at 3:00 pm on Sabbath afternoon
for church in my home.
After six weeks in my home in February 2007 we moved our core group meeting on Sabbath afternoons to a Daycare in an affluent area of Keller. I had driven past the Daycare in October 2006 while praying for God to lead me to a place for our core group to meet on Sabbaths once we needed more space. I felt God leading me to this facility so I went inside and spoke with the owner. She graciously offered to rent her facility to us for fifty dollars a week.

Our next challenge was finding a sound system because the Daycare was not set up with one. Our core group began praying for God to provide a sound system for us. A church I had visited in September of 2006 called me with an invitation to collect an offering for a sound system. That Sabbath God provided $3,900 for us to purchase a small sound system.

We continued meeting with our core group on Sabbath afternoons, but the most meaningful and productive meeting time was on Wednesday nights every week when we gathered together to pray and share ideas from the books we were reading for how to meet the needs of Keller. I was reading extensively to discover methodology that may lend itself to developing a church for the echo boomer culture. At this point I realized that I would be reaching more than an age group; I would be reaching a secular post modern way of life which spans an age group. The books that I found most helpful I purchased for my core group and they began reading as well.

In May 2007 I spent three weeks at Andrews for my second intensive and my project seminar. During that time I went on a spiritual retreat that changed me and built on the spiritual discipline of prayer that Come and See’s foundation was already set on. I spent thirty hours in silence and solitude at the Still Waters Retreat Center in a cabin
called Tikva. God made me more aware of His presence than I had ever been before and I discovered the depth and necessity of implementing spiritual disciplines into my life. I began reading *Surrender to Love* by David Benner and surrendered to God’s love for me as His beloved son in a deeper way than I had ever done before. When I returned following my strategy of getting my core group to read in order to grow our vision collectively I purchased copies of *Surrender to Love* and they began living with a deeper awareness of God’s love for them than they ever had before.

At this time our Skate Disciples ministry began planning a mission trip to California to minister at skate parks and to do mission work at the Holbrook Indian School. At this point we had still not received any of the ten thousand dollar funding that was promised, but what God did was amazing. As the Skate Disciple ministry grew churches from other denominations, primarily Baptists, began donating to Skate Disciples to support our ministry. One of the largest and fastest growing mega-churches in the metroplex made an informal offer to support Skate Disciples by taking it into their ministry, but I declined. This greatly disheartened me because I felt that the church that was supporting me was not supporting the ministry that I was doing, but churches from other denominations were embracing it.

In July 2007, while on the mission trip to California and the Holbrook Indian School with Skate Disciples, I began reading *Red Moon Rising* by Pete Greig. I became inspired by the stories of what God does in cities and faith communities when people pray. I knew that we needed to enter into a community in which we could make a difference. When I returned from the mission trip I purchased *Red Moon Rising* for my core group and they began reading about the power of prayer. God was continuing to
build on the foundation of prayer that He had already laid.

I began driving around Keller again looking for the place that God had called us to where we could develop a prayer room. God led me to the original settlement area of Keller by the railroad tracks, Old Town. While driving through Old Town Keller I saw a for lease sign in front of an auto body shop. I went inside and spoke with the owner who showed me a front corner office in the front of the auto body shop that was approximately four hundred sixty square feet for five hundred fifty dollars a month. I was convicted by the Holy Spirit that this is where God wanted us but I did not have the money for rent. I called my church treasurer and shared the possibility of settling in Old Town. He and I began praying for the money to lease the space.

The next week I visited with the mayor of Keller and asked him what the needs of Keller were. He mentioned the Old Town Keller Merchants Association (OTKMA). I began attending the OTKMA meetings. This was interesting because I had never spent time with people while they were drinking and speaking profanity as a part of normal conversation. I realized more than ever before that I was a missionary. Most of the members of OTKMA were not Christians and several did not want anything to do with God or with me. I realized at this point that while I had planned to plant a church, God wanted me to begin a mission and plant a church out of that mission. Although the environment was at times hostile towards us we paid our one hundred dollar dues and joined OTKMA. At the first meeting I was elected membership chairman which meant I was asked to visit all of the businesses in Old Town Keller and invite them to be a part of OTKMA.

In August 2007 we began twelve hour prayer meetings from Friday night at
6:00 pm to Sabbath morning at 6:00 am every other week. Our core group members would take one hour shifts through the night confessing sins, praying to be changed, and to reach Keller.

In January 2008 our core group had grown to the mid twenties and we began praying for and raising money for a Prayer House where we could expand our prayer room and further our influence in Keller. We did not have any idea of how much spiritual warfare was taking place in Keller, especially the Old Town area at this time. My treasurer and I began putting together proposals for the conference for purchasing a prayer house. At first this idea was met with staunch resistance. We did not have Company status so we were not allowed to own property and a prayer house did not sound effective for reaching lost people. However our core group believed that this is what God wanted so we began fasting for forty days in order to ask God to open the doors for us to establish a prayer house in Old Town Keller.

In February 2008 OTKMA began planning their first annual Keller Crawfish Krawl in which they would serve large amounts of crawfish and alcohol on a Saturday to the community in order to promote the businesses in this part of Keller. At February’s OTKMA meeting the need was mentioned to provide transportation for people who were too inebriated to drive home. I immediately said that our church would rent a van and take care of that, I also volunteered to supply volunteers to pick up trash. Immediately one of the most antagonistic people towards Come and See’s involvement with OTKMA snapped, “Why would you do that?” I said, “Because I believe that Jesus would.” She replied, “Well Hallelujah!”

The second Sabbath of April 2008 we canceled our core group meeting, set up our
sound system for this community event and began serving as security, transportation, and clean up for the Keller Crawfish Krawl. At the end of the day, the president of OTKMA, an agnostic who very strongly disliked Come and See’s involvement, told me thank you with tears in his eyes. That day we began earning the right to someday share Jesus with our community in Old Town Keller.

Prior to the Keller Crawfish Krawl I volunteered our treasurer who enjoys yard work to mow the yard of a vacant business which was for sale on Olive Street, the street the Keller Crawfish Krawl was held on. While he was mowing he began looking through the windows of the vacant business and was convicted that this was supposed to be our prayer house. He called me and the listing agent and we began to look through what would become Tikva, our prayer house. Through fasting and prayer God moved upon the heart of the conference to support us in the purchase of Tikva although we were still not a company. God also brought $25,000 to us for renovations to Tikva. We opened our doors on September 7, 2008 and spent the first week in Tikva praying in one hour shifts for twenty-four hours a day for seven days through September 14.

After our twenty four seven week of prayer we realized that we needed something to offer at Tikva that would draw people in. We began a ministry of offering hot drinks to the community in October. Nadyne began serving at Tikva and keeping the doors open for 8 hours a day. The first day we began our hot drink ministry I walked behind Tikva to the Day Care located behind our prayer house and offered the ladies there something to drink. They accepted my offer and as a result of my example Nadyne began delivering hot drinks to the business owners on Olive Street daily. It was at this time that walls
began to come down in our community. People began to realize that we were there to stay and that we loved them.

By December 2008 I was burned out. I was exhausted and deeply in debt from supporting ministry on my credit card with money that was not mine. I began speaking with a leadership coach on a regular basis and made arrangements to spend three days in solitude and silence with God in the desert at Joshua Tree National Park. During that time with God I realized that I was striving for greatness because I was afraid of being alone. And yet through my striving for greatness I was pushing those closest to me away. At that time I began giving my need for greatness away to God.

In February 2009, we held our second evangelistic series which was the first we mailed. Out of the fifteen thousand brochures we sent we had one non-Adventist visitor. I struggled through those meetings preaching to seven to eleven people. Our only non-Adventist visitor left half-way through the first meeting and did not return. A positive outcome from the meeting was that some Adventists who were not aware of us in Keller found us and began meeting with us on Sabbath.

At this point we were meeting for worship on Sabbath afternoons at Tikva because we still had not found an adequate place to meet for a traditional church worship format. Worshipping in this café style grew our weekly attendance to the high twenties, low thirties. I was not too concerned about the slow growth at this time because I was only two and a half years into this project and had been promised five years for the project. A letter I received from the Southwestern Union the first week of April 2009 broke the news to me that 2008 was the last fully funded year of my project and I was done as of now.
This hurt me deeply. Not only was the Seventh-day Adventist Church not following through on a commitment that they had made to ministry, I did not know how I was going to support my family. I called Tom Evans at the conference and he told me that he would be working on it and the Texas conference would keep me on payroll until more was decided. I began trying to figure out how I could continue the work that I believed God was calling me to without being employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. God led my wife and I to begin a missional movement targeting North America called Sent Movement.

In June 2009 I traveled to Miami, Florida while on vacation and met with a couple who wanted to begin ministry to post moderns but did not have a network of support to encourage them. Within a week and a half of meeting with them God opened the doors of a prayer house for them and Sent Movement had just doubled in size. We are currently in the process of helping another group in Mississippi begin a prayer house as well. The group in Miami is planting a church out of their prayer house and those are the same plans for the group in Mississippi.

In July I received a phone call from Tom Evans telling me that the Union had recommitted to sponsoring my project and the North American Division recommitted for 2009 as well. I began praying that God would “establish the work of my hands” (Psalm 90:17). I knew that in order to continue this project that I would have to begin reaching numerical goals in attendance on Sabbath morning, baptisms, and tithe.

For three years I had struggled to find a meeting place for Sabbath worship. I had spoken with local pastors and churches and the only public meeting hall in town. None of those options had worked. The second week of July a local pastor from the Vineyard
denomination came to Tikva. I showed him around and he told me that his church was in the process of relocation. I asked him where he was relocating and if it would be possible to rent his new space from him on Saturdays. He gave me the name of the owner of the building. Within a month we had signed a lease for worship space that held 100 with two classrooms and a nursery.

At this point we decided to relaunch our church plant. Dr. Joe Kidder agreed to come down from the Seminary for a weekend to evaluate us. This was extremely positive. Dr. Kidder was able to lead my people to realize the necessity of doing ministry together as a team. To this point I was primarily leading ministry on my own. The last day of Dr. Kidder’s time with us he asked for someone to step up and lead ministry so that my time would be freed up to develop leaders and teach on Sabbath morning. The first echo boomer that had joined our core group almost three years prior stood up and committed.

To this point we had put organization on hold, but could not put it on hold any longer. We ordained an elder (our first echo boomer to join our group) and a deacon. On October 24, 2009 we relaunched our church service and had 64 in attendance. We are currently averaging fifty a week with seventy-four people that are involved with Come and See regularly. In October we also developed our leadership team (Church Board). We are now in the process of developing structure to put in place combining missional concepts with family ministry using Alan Hirsch’s *Forgotten Ways* and Reggie Joiner’s *Think Orange*.

**Statistics**

1. Currently seventy-four people are involved with Come and See through regular
church attendance and/or involvement with Tikva during the week.

2. Our average church attendance has grown numerically within the last three months from the low thirties to the mid fifties; 51 percent are echo boomers, 19 percent are in their thirties, 16 percent are in their forties, 7 percent are in their fifties, 4 percent are in their sixties, 3 percent are in their seventies.

3. Our core group of three grew to seventy-four through the following methods: conference recruitment—three, phone calls from conference membership list to Adventists living in Keller—five, conference quarterly magazine article—twelve, website—thirteen, direct mail—seven, Bible studies—one, recruited by other Seventh-day Adventist Churches—one, friendship and family—thirty two. Thirty-seven percent are under the age of twenty-five.

4. Previous church attendance is as follows, 28 attended the Seventh day Adventist Church regularly, 22 are reclaimed Seventh-day Adventists, 19 are formerly unchurched, 5 came from another denomination.

5. Nineteen are regularly involved in ministry, eight of those involved regularly are echo boomers.

6. To date we have had one baptism and five professions of faith.

Lessons Learned

Not unusually the lessons that I have learned over the last three years have primarily come from the challenges that I have faced. They are as follows:

1. Prayer is the key to seeking God’s will and being led by Him.

2. Patience is necessary to move mission forward. It takes time for people to buy into an unknown idea and commit to it by placing their energy and resources behind it.
3. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is not financially structured to support mission. This is an extremely complex issue, but from my experience I see giving coming from institutional churches and primarily returning to institutional churches for ministries that are not targeting the mission field of North America. This is undoubtedly necessary on some level, but needs to be addressed.

4. Not enough literature has been written from the Seventh-day Adventist perspective when it comes to reaching the echo boomer culture in North America as a mission field.

5. God honors faithfulness with fruitfulness. I have learned that when God calls me to a task bigger than me, he begins by growing me first. My faithfulness to follow him even when my work is not fruitful is the key to fruitfulness in his time.

6. God has called me to lead and has empowered me to grow disciples as I have poured my life into people that were not fully surrendered to Jesus, are now serving him, and becoming leaders in our local faith community, Come and See.

7. The Seventh-day Adventist Church needs leaders who like the men of Issachar understand the times and know what to do. The missional leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America in the 21st century must be willing to go against institutional church culture, if necessary, in order to follow the wisdom from God that they are hearing and the call to engage secular society in order to share the gospel in light of the Three Angels’ Message. In order to accomplish this, leaders must listen to the voice of God and the needs of the culture in which they are living.

8. New work in “dark areas” for the Seventh-day Adventist Church must begin with mission and a church must be planted out of that mission. Our ministry began to
grow once we began developing Tikva as our “missionary hut” in Old Town Keller. The church grows best out of a foundation based on mission.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations that follow I have arrived at as a result of my experience of living as a missionary to the echo boomer culture of Keller, Texas in the 21st century. They are as follows:

1. Spiritual disciplines must be modeled by the leader of the church and taught to the local church body in order to move the church into God’s ways of accomplishing His mission.

2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America must retune or restructure itself in order to provide resources for mission work in new areas. Until this issue is addressed most mission work will be funded by the missionary personally as was my case. This sets the missionary up for financial hardship. Those who want to enter the mission field of the United States must be aware of this challenge and the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America must figure out a way to fund mission work in North America.

3. More writing must take place by people on the front lines of mission work in North America in the 21st century. The missionary on the front lines must be one part practitioner and one part theologian in order to make the necessary contribution. Mission extends from the heart of God not simply from His actions alone.

4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church must place emphasis on growing disciples above simply baptizing numbers.
5. The Seventh-day Adventist Church must be open to any missional idea that remains within the confines of Scripture.

**Evaluation, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

Our conversation began with discovering what it means to be the church in the 21st century and live a life of primitive godliness. The Shema Yisrael found in Deut 6:4-9 invites the Christian to move from a relationship based on belief into a relationship lived through daily experience. This life continually lives within the grace of God. Perceived obedience exists only within the grace of God whose grace covers the imperfections of human obedience.

Jesus’ addition of Lev 19:18 to the Shema, forms the Great Commandment of Scripture as discussed here in Mark 12:30, 31, and completes a message of living Christianity that lays a foundation for mission in the life of the Christian because Jesus is at the center of being for the Christian. Jesus requires His followers to love God and love others. The second commandment of loving others is equal in importance to the first. Love for God cannot exist without love for humanity. A distraction from godliness through commercialism poses a great challenge for the Church to live the Great Commandment today. Spiritual malnourishment results from faith that is based on commodities withdrawn from the spiritual life. The echo boomer generation sees through this superficial spirituality and sees this type of faith as grounded in the church meeting their needs instead of meeting the needs of the world. Hope for the church to move past the barrier of commercialism is found in placing the commodities of the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt 25:31-46, reveals the fruit of the
life lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The life of primitive godliness does not even recognize the depth of love that has flowed through the true follower of Jesus. The follower must lean on the faithfulness of God rather than on their own ability to serve others and in so doing earn the right to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost; thus, they find that Christ within has been ministering to the brokenness of humanity.

Living a life of primitive godliness is a journey into oneness with God. This cannot come about through human effort. Only God can bring the follower into oneness with Him through the person of Jesus Christ. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit the follower who lives a life of primitive godliness in the 21st century must shape a living theology that roots itself in the Great Commandment.

The literature written over the last ten years places Jesus Christ as the foundation for mission. The church must reorient itself to the person of Jesus Christ and surrender to His Lordship. Once the church recalibrates on Jesus Christ, Jesus leads the church into mission. The mission of sharing the Gospel in the 21st century is a call for the church to live with lost people and earn the right to share Jesus with them. I found that research is lacking in terms of how the Seventh-day Adventist church can approach North America as a mission field and learn to live in community with lost people in order to earn the right to share the Gospel with them. Such exploration formed the basis of this study.

Over the last six decades culture in North America has changed dramatically as new generations have brought dramatic cultural changes with them. The amount of time between the culture in which the church ministered relevantly in society and when the church became marginal culturally has been over the past six decades, a relatively short amount of time. During this time, however, new generations have come on the horizon
suddenly and have begun to change the world rapidly. As a result, the church in North America was placed on the margins of society and North America became a mission field. The church must be restructured to involve echo boomers, including leadership roles, so that they may take ownership to live and lead as followers of Jesus within the echo boomer culture of Keller, Texas, while offering hope in the person of Jesus Christ.

Echo boomers are driving business and the economy and the church must learn their culture not only to reach them, but to lead them in a movement of authentic Christianity, to become an apostolic church. As a church plant for echo boomers Come and See must risk living an incarnational missional life by laying aside selfishness rooted in the fear that causes church members to cling to church programs and traditions to find personal stability in a rapidly changing world. We introduced a missional strategy as a solution to the problem of the church’s irrelevancy and proposed a plan of action in which church members would recognize themselves as missionaries in their daily lives to their communities. We then began laying a foundation of the value system for an indigenous church in North America in the 21st century through the development of the spiritual life.

This study finds that the development of the spiritual life is the foundation for mission. Through the founding of the prayer house, Tikva . . . A Gathering Place, community has been created in which not yet churched people and followers of Jesus together discover spiritual disciplines that in part lead into prayer and intimacy with God through music, painting, reading, journaling, reflecting, writing prayers on walls, and praying for the world. At Tikva echo boomers and their families connect with members
of Come and See and are introduced into a discovery of spiritual disciplines that lead them into the presence of God.

The miracle that God must work is transforming the lives of broken people into disciples of Jesus who engage in mission out of their brokenness. This is where the New Testament church began and this is where the church of the 21st century must begin as well. Through prayer the church discovers the need for this miracle and identifies this miracle as beginning individually in the lives of followers of Jesus.

This growing relationship in brokenness alone and wholeness in Jesus quenches spiritual thirst. The action that the Holy Spirit takes through His follower appears chaotic, however the Holy Spirit moves through the chaos and establishes mission in the heart of His follower. The follower then recognizes the spiritual disciplines as obedience which leads them deeper into a relationship with God which manifests itself through the Lordship of Christ in their daily life.

As a result of this spiritual awakening the church focuses on being versus the traditional focus of doing. The church learns to live in community with God and one another throughout the week instead of doing church worship once a week. This community is further developed as God speaks and the church listens to what He is doing in the church and the community the church exists to serve.

The church must first seek to connect to the community through spirituality because religion in the 21st century is suspect. This spirituality leads into a ministry of presence in the community. This presence is further developed as members honestly identify their brokenness, which is already known by God, and become wounded healers through Jesus Christ.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage Churches</th>
<th>Culturally Normative Church</th>
<th>Laser Targeted Pilgrim Bands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“In the Box”</td>
<td>“Out of the Box”</td>
<td>“Beyond the Box”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Church</td>
<td>Faith Community</td>
<td>Pilgrim Bands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chaplaincy Church**

- Nature: Maintenance
- Care Giving
- Privilege
- Tradition
- Loyalty
- Information

- Nature: Mercy
- Visitation
- Consensus
- Heritage
- Control
- Taste/Opinion

**Family Church**

- Desires: Renew
- Survive
- Comfort
- Teach
- children

- Needs: Break
- Control
- Renew
- Clergy
- Enliven
- Worship

- Leadership: One Pastor
- Chaplain

**Program Church**

- Nature: Philanthropy
- Projects
- Task Groups
- Ideology
- Permission
- Style Options

- Nature: Transformation
- Leadership
- Teams
- DNA
- Empowerment
- Mission Targets

**Discipling Church**

- Desires: Reach Out
- Perpetuate
- Find Purpose
- Reaching
- Growth

- Needs: Streamline
- Manage Time
- Increase
- Stewardship
- Maximize Trust

- Leadership: Career Clergy
- Task Masters
- Call Disciples

**Heartburst Church**

- Nature: Innovation
- Servanthood
- Opportunism
- Rigorous DNA
- Partnerships
- Micro-Accuracy

**Apostolic Church**

- Nature: Radical
- Pragmatism,
- Mentoring,
- “Monastic”
- Cells,
- Christian
- Lifestyle,
- Ancient
- Continuity,
- Macro-Expandability

- Desires: Transform
- Cross Cultures
- Indigenous
- Tech
- Multiply teams

**Leadership:**

- One Pastor
- Chaplain

**Resist Change Accountability Systematic Theology**

**Comfortable with Change Incarnational Theology**

**Embrace Change Productivity Passionate Missiology**

**Learning Curve:**

- Learn and apply new skills
  
- a) Spirit-Filled Conversation with Culture
  
- b) Motivational Faith Sharing
  
- c) Small Group Adult Spiritual Growth
  
- d) Equipping Lay Initiative

- a) Overcoming Failure, Healing and Being Healed
  
- b) Spiritual Life and Calling
  
- c) Mentoring to Recover Joy and Discern Call
  
- d) Embedding DNA Boundaries

- a) See Hidden Potential in Persons,
  
- Situations, and Self
  
- b) Total Surrender to Larger Purpose
  
- c) Reliance on a Cross-Cultural and Cross Sector Web of Relationships
  
- d) Courage to Endure and Persist

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APPENDIX B

Prayerful Planning

What It Is Going to Take to Plant an Echo Boomer Church.

Compiled by Michael R. Cauley

1. A team of seven that are from the city or move to the city to form the initial core group of the church plant to study the needs of the city and prayerfully decide how to reach the city (Evangelism, p. 37).

2. Devote ourselves to prayer and study on how to reach the Echo Boomers in the city.

3. From the start plan to plant a daughter lay-lead church plant three years after the Echo Boomer church is planted.

   a. With this value as part of our DNA we will not be focusing on building a kingdom, but beginning a movement that builds God’s kingdom. Church Growth expert Bob Whitesel states that the optimum congregation size today is 180 to 200 in attendance. With this in mind once our church reaches 200 we will plant, we estimate that this will initially take three years. When we plant we will send 25 – 40 of our best people with a lay leader to begin the daughter church. Because of our continual aggressive evangelistic efforts we see God replacing these 25 – 40 quality people within a year and will therefore plant one church every following year. The daughter churches will be planted with the same value of church planting in their DNA and after 10 years it is estimated that there will be 12 lay-lead churches as a result of the first conference sponsored (FTE Lead Pastor) church plant which brings the total number of churches to 13 after 10 years.

4. Ministry Development Plan for the Echo Boomer Church Plant

   a. The Mission

   Many church plants in Adventism today appear to begin by trying to reinvent the distinctives of the Seventh-day Adventist church. These churches are at times distinguished by the pastor or the members saying things like, “We are about ‘this’ at our church, or We believe that ‘this’ is more important than ‘that.’” While the importance of emphasizing certain beliefs for different communities is important, as was recognized at the 2005 General Conference Session in St. Louis with the addition of our 28th Fundamental belief, the throwing off of biblical principles that are fundamental to Adventism in an effort to reach the lost cannot be done.

   In a 60 Minutes special that aired on September 4, 2005 correspondent Steve Kroft reported that the Echo Boomer generation is the largest generation in the
United States. A generation born between 1982 and 1995 that spend $170 billion dollars a year of their own and their parents’ money. They are a generation that corporate America, Hollywood, Madison Avenue and the media all seem to be going nuts over because even now when the oldest have just recently graduated from college and the youngest are still in grade school they hold the largest potential for consumerism in the United States. They are the post-modern generation. A generation that is the most reachable of any in the United States. “A generation in which rules seem to have replaced rebellion, convention is winning out over individualism, and values are very traditional.” A generation that wants substance, a generation that is searching for something, a generation that will accept the gospel in light of the Three Angels’ Message with the same fervor that the early pioneers of our church accepted the message. After all, our church was founded by God-fearing youth and young adults that were the age of today’s Echo Boomers.

A generation that wants substance and structure cannot be reached by the “throwing off” of Biblical Fundamentals, instead those Fundamentals must be embraced and integrated into the Echo Boomer culture. (The title of the project that God has called me to undertake through the Doctor of Ministry program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University is, A Movement of Authentic Christianity: An Embrace and Integration of Biblical Fundamentals in a Seventh-day Adventist Church Plant In the Echo Boomer Culture of SomeCity, SomeState.)

b. The Strategy

In Ministry of Healing page 399 Ellen G. White states, “The highest of all sciences is the science of soul saving . . . For the accomplishment of this work, a broad foundation must be laid.” Planning for reaching the lost requires prayer, guidance from the Holy Spirit, and implementation of the insights received by the Holy Spirit through a strategic plan.

How do we reach a generation that largely consists of youth and young children? Mrs. White answers that question in her next sentence on page 399 of Ministry of Healing, “A comprehensive education is needed – an education that will demand from parents and teachers such thought and effort as mere instruction in the sciences does not require. . . . It is a duty to cultivate and to exercise every power that will render us more efficient workers for God.”

The first step in reaching the Echo Boomers is to reach their parents. In the 60 minutes interview with four Echo Boomers they were asked the question of how they felt about their parents, the response, “They’re our best friends.” Unlike previous generations that looked to their friends for guidance, Echo Boomers are looking to their parents for guidance. While the oldest Echo Boomers may be reached individually, the majority of the Echo Boomers will need to be reached through their parents’ involvement in the church plant that
teaches their children that our duty is “to cultivate and to exercise every power that will render us more efficient workers for God.” (MH 399)

It is through this effort that the generation that society has crossed out, Generation X, will be reached. Generation X can be described as the children of the earliest baby boomers who exhibit a mixture of the qualities of their boomer parents and the Echo Boomers. The oldest of who are the parents of the youngest Echo Boomers. This generation must become the leaders of this Echo Boomer church plant for two reasons:

1. They have the finances to fund the plant, while the youngest of the Echo Boomers in grade school do not.

2. The have the ability to influence and train the youngest of the Echo Boomers “to exercise every power that will render [them] more efficient workers for God.” (MH 399)

c. The Demographics
In order for this church to have the best possible start it should be planted out of a vibrant, healthy church located on the edge of or in a growing community. The daughter church (Echo Boomer Church Plant) can either locate in the heart of the growing community if the mother church is located on the edge of that community, or locate on the opposite side of town if the mother church is located in the heart of the growing community.

i. Community Characteristics of the Echo Boomer Church Plant.
   1. Growing Community.
   2. Average age of 30-32.
   3. High projected population growth percentage within the next 5 years.

ii. Mother Church Characteristics of the Echo Boomer Church Plant.
   1. Growing, Vibrant and Healthy
   2. A heart for the lost, outreach oriented.
   3. Large number of Xers, and older Echo Boomers that are willing to become the core group of the church plant (25-40 people that will be added to the seven people that formed the initial core group who spent 6-9 months in prayer asking God how to reach the Echo Boomers in the city.)

d. The Plan
Many steps will need to be taken in order to make this church plant a reality. According to Aubrey Malphurs in *Planting Growing Church for the 21st Century* there at least six steps that are essential:

i. Prayer
“Precede the birthing of any church with much prayer. Prayer must permeate the entire process, because the prayer of faith is the most effective and powerful (James 5:13-18).” (257, 3rd ed.)

1. Prayer must begin with the leadership team but must filter down to the entire congregation that takes on the task of planting this Echo Boomer church by faith in a God-given vision.

2. Special daughter church prayer teams will be formed to help accomplish this.

ii. Casting the Vision for Planting Churches
The pastor of the mother church must begin or preferably already have begun to cast the vision for planting churches, because if the vision isn’t cast, chances are the plant won’t get off the ground.

iii. Identifying a Focus Group
This has already been done to an extent, because this project’s focus group is Echo Boomers. However, in the culture that we live in today each part of the United States is different so the following steps will be taken to figure out what an Echo Boomer looks like in Somecity, Somestate.

1. Information on Echo Boomers in that area will be gathered.

2. A “profile person” will be constructed.

3. The kind of church necessary to reach this focus group will be determined.

iv. Selecting and Equipping a Leadership Team
“The right person in the right position with God’s blessing usually gets the right results.” (259, 3rd ed.) The team will be selected and recruited from the mother church congregation by a minister serving in full-time capacity for the mother church. The leadership team will consist of the seven who are formed to pray for the Holy Spirit to show them how to reach the Echo Boomers in their city.

v. Recruiting a Committed Core Group
A committed group of 25 – 40 people must be formed to join the leadership team of seven that will launch the church plant. These people will be recruited through the following two steps:
1. The vision of planting the Echo Boomer church will be cast in the mother church so that people will be eager and willing to be involved with the church plant.

2. Requests will be made for volunteers from the mother church.

vi. Financing the Future Church

How much money it will take to finance the Echo Boomer church plant depends a lot on its location. In a Leadership survey Dean Merrill asked the following question to successful church plants, “How long was the road to self-supporting status, and thus an independent existence?” The average answer was 20 months.

e. The Timeline

i. Months 1 – 4 Before Arrival At Mother Church

Senior pastor of mother church begins casting the vision for the Echo Boomer church plant.

ii. Month 5

Arrive at mother church and begin prayerfully searching for God to bring six people to form the initial core group of the Echo Boomer church plant.

iii. Month 7

Group of seven is formed.

Begin praying for the Holy Spirit to show us how to reach the Echo Boomers in the city.

Begin meeting once a week as a small group to pray corporately for the city.

iv. Months 8 – 11

Begin recruitment of committed core group of 25 – 40 for the church plant.

v. Month 11

Committed Core Group is formed.

Begin meeting in three to four small groups weekly.

vi. Month 12

Launch Echo Boomer Church Plant.
Questions to ask as we continue to develop the ministry plan:
1. What kind of program are we going to run? Lay Ministry Model (Check out Malphurs Mobilizing laity appendix)

2. How are we going to get people to this thing?

3. Pastor centered/Program centered or Relational centered/Based on small group evangelism. Building community. Every member having a ministry?

4. What are the principles/values?

5. How will we disciple people?

6. What will be our overarching framework?

7. How are we going to start?

8. Small groups in homes and meet on Sabbath?

9. Not program based but discipleship based/relational based/lay ministry based?

10. How are we going to do it? Is every member going to have a ministry? Is it going to be developed through small groups?

11. Ask what kind of church will this be?

12. Relational, Biblical community, Small groups?

13. How will we go about planting a church like this to reach Echo Boomers?

   1. Etc.???

More money, $100,000 (Figure out budget and add $10,000. You can always come down, but you can't go up.

100 people before launching
Don't limit core to 7

Plan for burnout, its hard to stay balanced.
VITA

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Church Planter Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Areas of Expertise:

✓ Discipleship       ✓ Missions       ✓ Leadership

Experience

Church Planter, Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Keller, TX, 2006 to Present

- Planted a church for echo boomers.
- Developed a prayer house discipleship model.
- Began a mission organization to North America, Sent Movement.

Pastor, Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Shelton, WA, 2004 to 2006

- Revitalized church and school.
- Served as President of the Mason County Ministerial Association.
- Increased the influence of the Seventh-day Adventist church within the city of Shelton.
- Began annual outreach hot rod and motorcycle show, Shelton Valley Christian Show and Shine.

Associate Pastor, Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Kirkland, WA, 2003 to 2004

- Baptized 27 people.
- Led church through twelve month transition period for search of senior pastor.
- Church membership increased from 540 to over 600.

Education

Andrews University, Master of Divinity
Southern Adventist University, Bachelor of Arts