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Equipping Church Members in Community: a Follow-up Strategy for Spiritual Body-Building Groups in the Brandon Seventh-day Adventist Church

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING CHURCH MEMBERS IN COMMUNITY:
A FOLLOW-UP STRATEGY FOR SPIRITUAL
BODY-BUILDING GROUPS IN THE
BRANDON SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Paull E. Dixon

Chair: Roger Dudley
This dissertation evaluates a strategy that was developed for equipping church members in the Brandon Seventh-day Adventist Church using the Spiritual Body-Building Lessons and an intentional follow-up process.

One of the greatest needs of church members is to truly experience body life in the church: having a sense of belonging and a meaningful, significant ministry in which one receives support and encouragement. Spiritual Body-Building Groups were designed as a launching pad to equip church members in how to be church as well as how to do church.

There were two phases of this project implemented in the Brandon Church:

An evaluation was made of the impact that the Spiritual Body-Building Lessons and group experience had in the lives of church members. Thirty-four members attended
one of four groups conducted between the Spring of 1997 and the Fall of 1999. They completed two surveys in August 2000.

A follow-up strategy for the *Spiritual Body Building Groups* was implemented and evaluated which included community-building and ministry-support interventions, namely: strategic planning, group leaders’ meetings, *Making Friends for God Seminar*, *Prayer Warriors Seminar*, eight-week evangelistic series, spiritual-guardian program, Bible-marking class, *Spiritual Gifts Seminar*, ministry fair, and ministry-placement process.

The research on the *Spiritual Body Building Groups* revealed that there was positive change that was statistically significant at $p < .001$ in five key areas of discipleship: (1) relationship with God, (2) pastor/member roles, (3) community, (4) spiritual gifts and, (5) ministry of nurture. The concepts and processes used in *Spiritual Body Building* are highly effective and are a powerful resource which could greatly benefit local churches.

The research on the follow-up strategy revealed a slight increase in the sense of community experienced as a result of the interventions. The data to measure the perception of ministry support resulting from the intervention were skewed but did reveal the need for more intentional work in this area. Body life is not something that can be taken for granted in a church. It requires prayer, planning, and a persistence in following biblical principles and practices.
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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April 2001
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Dedicated to my wife, Becky:
You are my soul mate, my best friend, a wholehearted partner in ministry, and the girl of all my dreams.
The best is yet to come.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal Background

The topic chosen for my D.Min. project, Equipping Church Members in Community: A Follow-Up Strategy for Spiritual Body-Building Groups in the Brandon Seventh-day Adventist Church, is important to me personally. In the early years of my pastoral ministry, I worked mostly as a "loner." I loved giving Bible studies, presenting seminars, visiting, and preaching. I only tolerated church board meetings and other committees.

In my first pastorate, I suggested to the members an every-other-Sunday outreach meeting. They seemed enthusiastic and actually voted to have the meetings every Sunday night. The first week not one church member showed up! I decided that if they would not work, I would do the work alone. The extent of their involvement was giving money.

With encouragement from me, the little church was beautifully renovated inside and out. The people in town assumed we had several hundred members, but the average attendance was more like thirty-five. In the year and a half I was in that district, I had two weekly radio programs, conducted a stop-smoking clinic, and held a major evangelistic meeting in a large auditorium. When I left the district, however, little had really changed in the church.
My next district had two churches. I continued to follow the same style of ministry. The members provided the support for “my” plans and programs. My wife and I were frequent guests on a local television talk show. The TV station ran free public service announcements for our stop-smoking programs and cooking schools. Because of our constant exposure, someone in the community asked a church member, “Do you Seventh-day Adventists own the TV station?” So many unusual opportunities opened for ministry during those three and a half years that I wrote Door to the Cities, a book about our experiences. The General Conference Health/Temperance Department published the book and sent it to every pastor and health/temperance leader in North America.

During our time in that district, I conducted outreach programs non-stop but put very little emphasis on equipping. I did mentor one elder who had an unusual commitment to work for the Lord. He went on to become a dynamic leader in the church and a recognized leader in the community. He conducted anti-smoking activities in the surrounding towns. A few youth I mentored in the temperance work also caught the vision of working for God and went on to become leaders in the church. Other than that, this church, too, was largely unchanged.

Unfortunately, five years of pushing myself almost seven days a week took its toll on my marriage, my children, and my health. I was burned out. However, the Lord is merciful. When I was close to hitting bottom, I received an invitation to go overseas as a pilot/pastor coordinator. A year to pilot an airplane and wander around the jungles with native pastors was good medicine for me and my family. During that time, I was introduced to Wong Yew Chong, a teacher at Southeast Asia Union College in Singapore.
He introduced me to the concept of participatory leadership and small groups. He also gave me a biblical vision for the local church. Being appointed as president of the mission gave me an opportunity to put into practice some of these concepts. Plans and programs were developed and implemented as a team working together.

When I returned to the United States, I began teaching these principles in the churches where I served as pastor. I felt overwhelmed by having to make things happen and trying to motivate people to do what they could not or would not do. After six years of serving in a local church in New England, I considered leaving the pastoral ministry. The constant need to meet conflicting expectations and the demand to make things happen weighed heavily on me.

About this time, Kim Johnson, former pastor turned treasurer and author, was experimenting with Discovery, now called *Spiritual Body Building Lessons*, a set of lessons he had written on how “to be” church. These lessons are relevant, stimulating, honest, biblical, and thoroughly Adventist. Formatted for small-group discussions, the lessons give people permission to talk about the church with honesty and openness. Five pastors in the conference, including myself, field tested these lessons in our churches. Members only casually acquainted with each other began to bond. They came to an understanding of the biblical perspectives on spiritual gifts, the priesthood of believers, the role of the pastor, and the fact that every member is ordained a minister.

I stayed in that church two and a half more years and used this approach to ministry with three different groups. When I left, 60 percent of the members were involved in some kind of ministry. The Sabbath school program had been redesigned, the
worship service was revitalized, and the entire church building was renovated. I marvel at how the Lord works through team ministry.

I have been in my current district four and a half years. Four series of *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* have been presented, two of them by our local elders. A ministry-management team is in place, helping people discover God's calling in their lives. Approximately 70 percent of our active membership is involved in some ministry or is holding a church office. The emphasis is definitely on team ministry as opposed to "solo" ministry.

I feel more fulfilled now than ever before as pastor of a local church and have turned down numerous offers for administrative positions at the conference level to remain in pastoral ministry. The work of pastoring is demanding, sometimes unappreciated, but full of satisfying rewards when doing it God's way. It is my fervent burden to share the *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* with pastors and their churches wherever and whenever possible. I have had numerous opportunities to do this one-on-one and at a union-wide pastors' conference.

This doctoral project is another step in my personal growth. It is also an opportunity to give wider exposure to *Spiritual Body Building Lessons*. I appreciate the opportunity to study under the guidance of the teaching staff at Andrews University.
Statement of the Problem

The core leadership team of the Brandon Seventh-day Adventist church and other members less involved in church leadership participated in one of four small groups known as *Spiritual Body Building* (SBB). These were conducted between 1997-1999. The group experience includes sixteen weekly meetings designed to implant a new vision in church members' hearts of how “to be” church. The ultimate goal of the group experience is “to develop a nurturing, spiritual community that produces maturing disciples for Christ.” The response of the participating members in each series was very positive. Most of the members discovered their spiritual gifts or were confirmed in their previous understanding of their gifts. Currently, they are involved in ministry. However, only a few have ongoing support for their ministry or are part of a nurturing group. The lack of ongoing ministry support and genuine community, known as “body life,” is a major challenge facing the Brandon church, as well as many other Adventist churches in North America.

Statement of the Task

The task of this dissertation is to evaluate the SBB groups in the Brandon Church and to develop a follow-up strategy so that those who participate in a group can continue the “body life” experience and receive ongoing support for their ministries.

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2Information from a survey conducted August 1999 (see Appendix A).
Justification for the Dissertation

The experiences of members who participated in SBB groups suggest five reasons to justify this dissertation.

1. Members, locally and in other areas, will have greater confidence in SBB knowing that it has been evaluated for effectiveness.

2. Members who complete SBB Lessons want the sense of community experienced in the initial small group to continue after the lessons are concluded.

3. Members who complete SBB Lessons are disappointed when their expectations for on-going community are not realized.

4. Members who complete SBB Lessons need orientation and training for ministry and collaboration with ministry team leaders.

5. Members need the ongoing process of equipping which will build up the body of Christ and lead to spiritual maturity (Eph 4:11-13).¹

Definition of the Terms

*Spiritual Body Building Lessons.* A series of sixteen small-group lessons written by Kim Johnson, associate treasurer in the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It was published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association. The lessons are designed to help church members to understand God’s plan for His church and how they can become a part of that plan. The lessons are studied during the week before the group meets. Participants come prepared to discuss

¹Unless otherwise stated, all Bible references are from the New King James Version.
the concepts presented in the lesson. Ten to twelve people are prayerfully selected to be a part of the group and are asked to make a high level of commitment to attend every meeting. Open-ended questions and hands-on group exercises encourage active participation. Within the context of the small-group community, members discover their spiritual gifts.

**Body Life.** A term used to describe the dynamics of interpersonal and interdependent relationships in the community of believers based on the Apostle Paul's analogy of the church as a body. Body life includes listening, caring, encouraging, sharing, supporting, praying for one another, planning, and working together.

**Overview of the Dissertation Process**

A description is given of the town of Brandon, Florida, and the Brandon Seventh-day Adventist Church. It includes a brief history of the church and an overview of an equipping ministry implemented over the past four years.

A study of the biblical and theological framework for equipping members for ministry in community is presented. It includes an examination of the major characters, movements, and principles presented in Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White, one of the early pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church whose prolific counsels helped shape our understanding and practice of an equipping ministry.

An investigation of select current literature deals with the principles, processes, and strategies for organizing an effective process for equipping and supporting church members in community. Several successful models are presented.
An analysis is made of three surveys completed by thirty-four people who have
finished the SBB Lessons in the Brandon Church. These were designed to assess the
benefits they received from the group experience in terms of community, spiritual gifts,
relationship to God, pastor/member roles, ministry, training, and ministry support.

An evaluation of the follow-up strategy for *Spiritual Body Building Groups*
implemented in the Brandon Church was conducted. This evaluation includes an analysis
of three surveys that measure the effectiveness of the strategy in terms of ongoing ministry
support and the experience of community.

A summary provides recommendations that stem from *SBB Lessons* strategy held
in Brandon.

**Limitation of the Dissertation**

This dissertation does not include the formal organization and evaluation of a
ministry-placement system. Originally, my plan was to include this in the project and
dissertation process. However, developing and implementing the equipping strategy,
which included community building, planning, training for ministry, leadership training,
evangelism, and the nurture of new members, was so intense that the project had to be
limited to ensure needed focus and excellence.

**The Town of Brandon**

Greater Brandon is located on the west central coast of Florida, twelve miles east
of Tampa, Florida's fourth largest city. Serving as a bedroom community, it has
experienced rapid commercial and residential growth in recent years. The current
population of 170,000 has an average household income of $62,991.

Situated at the intersection of Interstate 4 and Interstate 75, Brandon has an ideal location for commerce which provides a strong economic base for the area and has contributed to rapid commercial and residential growth in recent years. The Brandon Town Center Mall is the largest in Florida. It has close to a million square feet of retail space.

The subtropical weather averages 62.5 F during the winter and has a summer temperature of 81.4 F. Yearly rainfall is 46.7 inches. This contributes to the lush foliage around the community. Two of the nation’s top ten beaches are within a short drive of the greater Brandon area.

Brandon’s location and demographics make it an ideal place for growing a church. Many older Adventists come to the area seeking a warmer climate. Often their relatives follow them looking for employment. These new family members, many of whom are not Adventist, are usually quite receptive and open to the church. The large influx of people moving to this area is recognized by most churches as a particularly productive group for evangelizing. Of course, many inactive and former members also live in the area.

**The Brandon Seventh-day Adventist Church**

**Early History**

The Brandon Adventist Church was established in December 1967. A number of church leaders from the Tampa Southside Church joined with others to organize the church with 77 charter members. A lot was purchased on Victoria Street in June 1968.
At that time the church had 97 members. Groundbreaking took place on August 14, 1969, and the new facility was finished and ready for the first service on January 31, 1970, under the leadership of Wayne Coulter.

When I accepted the call to pastor the Brandon Church in July 1996, I returned to my roots. A. J. Skender, the second pastor of the mother church, Tampa Southside, had baptized me. Shortly after, I began dating his daughter, Becky, now my wife. It has been a great privilege to work with the Brandon Church for the past four years, and God has abundantly blessed my ministry here.

Through the years, the Brandon Church has been an enthusiastic congregation with an emphasis upon children, youth, and families. At one time it boasted a large, active Pathfinder Club. As the youth grew up and interest in Pathfinders waned nationwide in the 80s, the club was disbanded. The church is a strong supporter of Tampa Adventist Academy, a ten-grade consolidated school approximately thirty minutes from the church. Though the school is housed in a mediocre facility, it enjoys a positive reputation and offers quality Christian education. Two teachers have taught there for more than fourteen years and are much loved. Besides their regular classes, these teachers offer a top-notch gymnastics team and a choir for all ages from K-10. Both groups have opportunities to travel. However, fewer and fewer students from the Brandon Church attend the Academy.

Today the church membership hovers around 330, with a church attendance of 160-185. Hence, the Brandon Church has not experienced sustained growth except during the very early years of its existence. The past ten years membership has fluctuated
up and down but remained basically static (see Appendix B).

Several factors may have hindered growth in the past. These include:

1. A leadership structure that was pastor dependent: When a pastor projects the image of an over-involved or controlling father or mother, the people view themselves as dependent children. If the church is to be a dynamic, ministering community, the pastor must be an equiper who empowers God's people for service.¹

2. The lack of lay involvement in systematic member care in community: God expects the church to take care of its own new family members. On the other hand, in our haste to bring more people to Christ and the church, it is easy to overlook the existing members. The use of small groups is one of the most effective ways of meeting member needs (Acts 2:43-47). The Bible speaks repeatedly of the church providing quality pastoral care, pastoral care carried out by the members themselves² (Acts 20:28; Rom 12:10; Gal 6:10).

3. The lack of a clear vision for involving every member in ministry, ministry that reaches beyond the church walls: Kim Johnson described this need in a simple word picture, “God has chosen us for service. God commissions His followers to get out of the saltshaker and mingle, like salt, with the world.”³

¹Greg Ogden, The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 85.


³Johnson, 14.
Conflict in the Church

In 1995, severe conflict arose between two factions in the church. One faction involved the pastor and his recent converts. The other was made up of some of the established, long-time members. As the conflict escalated, the pastor spoke of the issues publicly from the pulpit. Unfortunately, inappropriate words were spoken, un-Christian attitudes were displayed, and destructive behaviors were exhibited. Many members, not wanting to take either side, were thrown into confusion. Pleas to the conference office for help were largely unheeded. This left the church leaders quite disillusioned.

Shortly before I began my work in Brandon in 1996, approximately fifty members left the church, and the pastor involved was transferred. When I accepted the call to Brandon, I explained that I needed four months to finish my current work and then move to the area. An experienced, retired pastor was brought to Brandon to serve during the interim. He was able to bring about a degree of stability and order.

My Pastoral Interview

It was evident during my pastoral interview process that the church was still divided and in conflict, though the conflict was not openly discussed. A small group had strong feelings that the conference should not have moved the former pastor. Other members inwardly sighed with relief, hoping that new leadership would heal the hurts of the past and get the church back on track. Somewhat surprisingly, at the conclusion of the interview, the conference official leading out in the interview process suggested that we adjourn so the two factions could discuss the issues. As my wife and I ate supper in the
fellowship hall with one of the members, we could hear shouting in the sanctuary.

Members, embarrassed and perplexed by the loud, out-of-control behavior of two people in particular, one who thereafter left the church, expressed surprise later on that we had accepted the call after hearing about all of the problems.

**Purpose of Pastoral Interview**

The pastoral interview is the ideal time to remind or educate a church that the pastor's main responsibility is equipping members for ministry. *The Adventist Minister*, a helpful book prepared and published by the Adventist Theological Seminary states, “Tradition and repetition lay a heavy hand on pastors and congregations alike. When a pastor comes to a new district the best opportunity is presented to talk about role expectations of the pastor and the people.”¹ Thus when I was given the opportunity to explain my understanding of pastoral ministry, I made clear my opinions on such topics as the priesthood of all believers, spiritual gifts, and the role of the pastor. Though my ideas were not put in writing, the church leadership understood that, if I came, my emphasis would be on involving the laity in both pastoral care and the outreach ministries of the church.

**First Steps in Healing**

One of my first tasks after coming to the church was to hear the frustration, pain, and anger of the leaders. I made appointments to visit the elders and their wives in their

homes. It was interesting how quickly the word spread: “The pastor and his wife are visiting the elders.” These really were get-acquainted visits, but a little questioning brought out the difficulties of the recent conflict. None of the leaders wanted to cast blame or bring up old issues, yet I sensed that they needed someone to hear their “story” of pain and confusion. One teenage girl, the daughter of one of our elders, wept openly and sobbed, “I still can’t believe that this happened in our church. We’ve always been so close and loving, like a big family.”

Repeatedly, when visiting these church leaders I was impressed that these were intelligent, committed, and loving members who, at one time were part of the planning, goal setting, and problem-solving process of the church. Now they felt isolated—some even felt victimized—by the previous pastor. All felt let down by the conference. It would take open communication, affirmation, prayer, and the making and keeping of commitments to rebuild trust in pastoral leadership and respect for conference administration.

Organizational Renewal

At this point, the church needed far more than just someone to hear its pain and anger. While listening to them in a non-judgmental manner could establish a degree of confidence, I had to address them next with spiritual and organizational leadership. Unfortunately, like most pastors, I am not naturally gifted in the area of leadership. By giftedness and training, most pastors are teachers and preachers.¹ Leadership is thrust

upon pastors by their position, but making a spiritual impact in the local church is in direct relationship to one’s ability to lead.

The purpose of leadership in the local church is “to make possible a preferred future,”¹ a future that reflects the mission and values of the church. So I began looking for members with the gift of organizational leadership, people with whom I could “partner” in leadership. This type of partnership is essential if pastors expect to provide spiritual leadership to the families in the congregation and to reach out to the community in meaningful ways.

The Intentional Process to Revitalize and Equip the Brandon Church

The following is a description of the Brandon Church and its intentional process of revitalizing and equipping the church system. A rationale is included for each step. This background is essential so one can understand the context of my D.Min. project.

Church demographics. The Brandon Church has a rich cultural diversity. Though predominately Caucasian (75%), the church has African Americans (11%), Hispanics (11%), and others (3%) including Asians and those from the Carribean islands and eastern Europe. The total church membership as of December 2000 was 333. Active members including out-of-town students total 211. Average weekly attendance is 185.

¹Sarah Jane Rehnborg, The Starter Kit for Mobilizing Ministry (Tyler, TX: Leadership Network, 1994), Section 1, 11.
The composition of the church by age and gender is covered in Appendix C.

**Church finances.** The church is experiencing strong financial growth in both tithe and church budget funds. The total tithe in 1999 was $238,720. As of September 2000, tithe is up 26 percent (see Appendix D). According to church leaders, 1999 was the first fiscal year that they can remember the church budget closing in the black. This is despite the fact that the church hired a half-time Bible worker, sponsored a major evangelistic meeting, purchased a computer as well as a projection system for the sanctuary, and gave heavily to missions.

**The worship committee.** Shortly after I started my work as pastor, the church board appointed a worship committee comprised of the pastor, head elder, head deacon, two members from the music committee, and several lay members. Its first task was to study carefully what the Bible and the writings of Ellen White say about worship. The committee was encouraged to find so much helpful counsel and noted that current trends in numerous churches reflect a more biblical style of worship. "Worship is shifting from a setting of performance with only the 'actors' participating, to a setting of participation, where all God's people direct their hearts to God."\(^1\) It would appear that has always been God's idea of worship (see John 4:23; Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 14:26), but somehow churches have gotten away from it.

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When my wife and I arrived at the Brandon Church, the worship style could be described as quite traditional. The hymnal was used for the worship service, but praise singing from the screen preceded the worship service. Special music was a mix of contemporary, southern gospel, and traditional songs. The congregation as a whole seemed to have respect and tolerance for those who preferred different kinds of music, but it did not appreciate “Christian rock.”

The worship committee made recommendations which included a change in the order of service. It suggested more members, including singles and families, to be up front during the service (for example, four or five people praying during the “Circle of Prayer” as the pastoral prayer), more personal testimonies during “Words of Praise,” and a blessing/commission to replace the benediction. These changes were an attempt to make the service a more “vertical” experience (Rev 14:6-7).

Greg Ogden described a genuine worship experience in these words:

In contrast, there is found in many places today a people alive in Christ who come together ready to pour out their hearts to God. It matters little whether the worship is highly structured or spontaneous. The difference is that people are prepared to give themselves in song, prayer, praise, and response to the Word of God. Worship is an expression of the community, not something done to the people by worship leaders.¹

Søren Kierkegaard described worship as a theater in which the people are “the actors, the worship leaders are the prompters, and God is the audience.”² This is quite the opposite from what most people seem to experience who attend services to be “fed.”

The open, flexible worship style of the Brandon Church appears to be casual, but

¹Ogden, 24.

²Ibid.
in reality is well-planned, biblical, and spiritual. Technology can be incorporated in worship with good taste, and variety in format is important to maintain interest. Recently, a video projector was installed in the sanctuary of the church for use with PowerPoint illustrations for sermons and special programs. One seemingly unending challenge in the church is the PA (public address) system. The church has invested in a very complex sound system which is seldom adjusted properly for an entire service. More worship services than I care to remember have been interrupted by dead microphones, squeaking, or constant need of adjustment.

Sermon series. An eight-part sermon series was prepared and presented over a three-month period. This series was designed to acquaint the church as a whole with the importance of the biblical qualities of a healthy church, a church that puts a major emphasis on equipping church members for ministry. It would have been preferable for the sake of continuity to present the series on eight consecutive Sabbaths, but other activities interfered.

The eight biblical qualities presented in the series were adapted from the Natural Church Development concept promoted by Christian Schwarz.1 It is important that the church leadership makes sure that each of these areas of church life presented is a part of the process for equipping members. To create interest and to provide a memory aid for the members, I developed an acronym for the series: REAL FIRE.

\[\text{Christian Schwarz, Natural Church Development (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), 15-48.}\]
The first sermon based on Acts 2 provided the introduction for the series and the role of the Holy Spirit in the church from the time of Pentecost to the present. Here “R” is for “Relationships of Love,” the foremost characteristic of a church whose members are connected to Christ. “E” is for “Empowering Leadership.” Leaders must be equipped and supported in ministry. “A” stands for “Authentic Spirituality.” This is an essential quality not only for the pastor and church leaders but for every member. “L” is for “Lay-based, Gift-oriented Ministries.” Any ministry that is not based on the lay persons using their spiritual gifts eventually will flounder and fail. “F” is for “Functional Structures.” The church must be organized to carry out its work effectively and efficiently. “I” means “Inspiring Worship.” The fervor of the church can be measured largely by the way it worships. Though style may vary, worship centered in Christ will always be inspiring. “R” stands for “Relational Small Groups.” Established churches need relational small groups to really be church. New churches, if organized correctly, have the opportunity to function in and through small groups. The final “E” is for “Evangelistic Effectiveness.” The church is here for mission. If it does not focus upon the accomplishment of its God-given mission, it is irresponsible.

This biblically based illustrated sermon series was generally well received by the congregation. The church leaders were pleased that the eight biblical qualities, most of which are taught in SBB Lessons, were brought before all the people. However, one middle-aged man who was uninvolved in any church activity other than attendance at the worship service told me that he thought the series was out of place for the church service.
He thought it was appropriate only for church leaders, not for the congregation on Sabbath morning.

**Church survey.** A church must gain an understanding of the needs and perceptions of its members and regular visitors regarding the various aspects of congregational life before any short- and long-range planning can begin. This was accomplished in part by conducting a church-wide survey in the fall of 1997. The focus of the survey was major areas of church life including Sabbath school, the worship service, the climate of the church, personal involvement in a church role or ministry, the Christian experience, and personal devotional life. No attempt was made to measure outreach. By this time the attitudes of members about the church were surprisingly positive, and the survey gave some clear feedback on where the church needed to make changes. The survey results were published in the church newsletter and carefully considered in future planning.

**Spiritual Body Building Groups, 1997-2000**

About six months after coming to the church, I personally visited some of the key leaders of the church to invite them to participate in an introductory meeting of *Spiritual Body Building Lessons*, a sixteen-week series of group sessions designed by Kim Johnson “to develop a nurturing, spiritual community that produces maturing disciples for Christ.”

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1Johnson, 3.
After explaining the purpose of the group sessions, I invited the key leaders to come to an introductory meeting, a "come try it for yourself" session. Five couples came to the introductory session, and all signed the group covenant. I knew from past experience that it is beneficial for both husband and wife to come together. This joint attendance enables a couple to share insights gained from the lessons and group discussions and to experience together the sense of community developed in the group. The group covenant included attendance at all of the sessions, starting and dismissing on time, studying the lesson in advance, and participating in the group discussions as they felt comfortable.

The *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* include topics such as God's purpose for the church, spiritual gifts, the priesthood of all believers, the importance of community in the body, the need for a total reliance upon the Holy Spirit, and what it means to be a disciple. The emphasis is on how "to be" church and how "to do" church. *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership* speaks to this point:

The church, like the circulation of the blood in the human body, is constantly on the move. It gathers for inspiration and instruction as the blood gathers in the heart and lungs for oxygenation and cleansing. It is then pumped out into the world just as the blood carries nutrients, hormones to the most distant parts of the body. You cannot go to church; you are the church wherever you go.1

The concepts presented in the first SBB group meeting and the small-group format resonated with the participants. An evaluation of *Spiritual Body Building* in the Brandon Church is presented in chapter 4. The follow-up strategy is presented in chapter 5.

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Strategic Planning Committee

As those in SBB began to understand the concepts of equipping disciples, it seemed the right time to put together an ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee. The Bible says, "Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purposes that prevail" (Prov 19:21). This is wonderful encouragement as a church begins to plan.

The church board appointed a strategic planning committee with guidance from the pastor. Half of the committee was made up of those who had gone through the SBB Lessons. The fact that some of the committee members had already worked through some of the biblical perspectives on ecclesiology was helpful. Lyle Schaller commented that usually when the church leadership realizes the need to do planning, it is time to conduct a survey and to find out what the members want to do. He noted "That usually produces wishes to re-create yesterday." He suggested a better approach may be to survey one-time visitors who joined elsewhere or members who have left for another church. The planning process needs to ask the right questions of the right people. The church survey held in Brandon was sent to inactive as well as active members and regular visitors. This was helpful in establishing areas of need and areas of excellence.

Mission statement. The first task of the Strategic Planning Committee was to develop a church mission statement. This work was made a subject of intense prayer. The committee began the process by establishing core values, those seven to ten

2. Ibid.
“statements of principles” that drive the organization. In Brandon we were surprised how almost every member of the committee came with the same list of “core values.” A consensus was easy to reach as to what was really most important to our church at this stage.

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church, emphasized that, until you know what your church exists for, you have no foundation, no motivation, and no direction for ministry . . . Recapture a clear vision of what God wants to do in and through your church family. Absolutely nothing will revitalize a discouraged church faster than rediscovering its purpose.

The business arena has been much quicker than most churches to define clearly the mission of the organization. “A vision (mission) statement is future oriented.” It describes what the organization will do to carry out its principles.

With prayer and much discussion, the church mission statement took shape over the next two or three meetings. Once the preliminary statement was developed, it was sent to the church elders and then to church board for fine-tuning and approval. Lastly, it was presented, discussed, and voted in a church business session. It is important that everyone have the opportunity for input to a mission statement; this increases the probability of understanding and “ownership.”

The Brandon Church mission statement reads thus,


2Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 81.

3Harvey and Drolet, 29.
The mission of the Brandon Church is to invite people into a personal relationship with Jesus, to faithfully nurture them through their healing experiences, and to empower them to become mature disciples who will reflect God's love and impart His word while using their spiritual gifts to grow the body of the church.

While this statement is too long to be memorized easily, it has served as a guiding star for planning purposes. In the bulletin it is condensed to read, "The mission of the Brandon Church is to invite people into a personal relationship with Jesus... and to empower them to become mature disciples who will reflect God's love... while using their spiritual gifts to grow the body of the church." In the near future, this revised statement will be presented to the church board and then to the church in business session for their consideration. This shorter statement, if accepted, will make it easier for our members to memorize it and thus increasing its functionality.

After the church voted on the mission statement, I preached a series of sermons on each aspect of the statement. The mission statement serves as a decision-making guide. When important church decisions must be made, the question is asked, "Is this in harmony with our stated mission?"

Nominating committee process. The 1998 Nominating Committee implemented the gathering of information from church members regarding their personal preferences and dislikes for church offices and ministries. Every member was invited to address three items:

1. What I would be willing to do in the church, if asked.
2. Offices or tasks I have had in the church in the past.
This information was extremely helpful in guiding the nominating committee. Not only could it avoid asking people to take jobs they definitely did not want, but it was also able to focus on quite a few who were anxious to serve.

Nominating Committee members must be sensitive to listen to how members respond when asked to serve in a specific capacity. Individuals should be encouraged to take time to think and pray about what God wants them to do since balanced Christian living is a part of one’s witness for Christ. Care must be exercised to be sure no one feels pressured.

Written job descriptions of church offices and ministries were given to those asked to take a church office. Such descriptions should be developed or adapted to the specific situation of each church. This can be accomplished by interviewing those who have recently been in a particular ministry and recording their comments and ideas. Also the importance of an office/task is elevated when a member receives a written job description.

With the ever-increasing demands of work and family, some members are so stretched for time that some responsibilities should be shared by two people. In Brandon, the Junior Sabbath School was taught by a young couple who agreed to teach the class two Sabbaths each month while someone else taught on alternate Sabbaths.

One of the real dangers of church life is doing too much.

This is one of the overlooked barriers to building a healthy church. We wear out people. Too often small churches involve themselves in all kinds of activities, events, and programs. Instead of concentrating like Paul did, they dabble in forty different things and miss being good at any of them.”

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1Warren, 89.
This sounds very much like most Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Ministry management coordinator. Every church should be a training school to equip the members for effective service. This requires a very intentional process of recruiting, training, and supporting members in ministry. Though the pastor is not expected to do all the equipping and training of the laity, he/she can certainly block the entire process by failing to take it seriously or by being unwilling to share power. “The job of equipping lay-members primarily rests upon the pastor.”1 We know from Eph 4:12-13 that this really is the “primary” work of the pastor, not the multitude of tasks that usually call for his/her attention. “In many churches, tragically, the pastor has become the primary shepherd, soul winner, fund raiser, organizer, administrator, and errand boy. According to the New Testament, however, it is actually the members in the pews who are to be the primary shepherds of the flock and the primary soul winners.”2

In the spring of 1998, one of the elders and his wife were appointed to serve as Ministry Management Coordinators for the church. They attended a week-long seminar on ministry placement sponsored by Leadership Network, which provides outstanding workshops and materials on lay mobilization. Using his executive management and people skills, the elder met with new members and helped them find a meaningful ministry. He personally followed up with each one ensuring a high level of support and satisfaction.

A church-wide system to discover spiritual gifts and talents and involve members

1Kilcher, 102.

2Johnson, 23.
in ministry is vital to a church’s health and growth. Failing to develop such a system results in a great loss of valuable resources to the church as well as personal loss to those who do not get involved in ministry. The importance of quickly helping new members find a ministry cannot be overestimated. It is the key to their becoming a part of the church.\(^1\)

One of the challenges in accomplishing this important work is the thorough training of an adequate number of people (according to the size of the church) who can assist the new members in this process. Ministry Placement Advisors, MPAs, work under the leadership of the Ministry Management Coordinator.\(^2\) MPAs review with each member his/her spiritual gifts inventory, personality profile, and passion for ministry. Some MPA must stay close to the member through the “internship” period while he/she is experimenting with various ministries to find the appropriate niche.

Launching a ministry-placement program can be a slow process. It is best accomplished by a team. As new people come into the church, either by transfer or conversion, they should be interviewed at the appropriate time and acquainted with ministry opportunities, as well as the opportunity for training and ongoing ministry support. Unless the church is very small, this job cannot be done very effectively by just one person. Brandon’s Ministry Management Coordinator did the work of an MPA and worked primarily by himself. He was able to do this because of his personnel experience and the large amount of time he was able to dedicate to the task.

\(^1\)Rainer, 283.

In 1999 a membership audit revealed that 70 percent of the active membership in the Brandon Church was involved in one or more ministries or church offices. This was a significant increase in member involvement as compared with past years; it is certainly a compliment to the dedicated work of the coordinator.

When the church as a whole accepts the idea of a Ministry Management Coordinator and takes part in a membership audit, it is time to formalize the process by appointing a Ministry Management Team by training a number of MPAs to provide coverage for the entire membership. Many growing churches involve non-members in various ministries. This gives people an opportunity to become connected to members while also fulfilling meaningful tasks.

Establishing a database or system of information storage and retrieval is essential. The larger the church grows, the more important this becomes. Otherwise, people can be overlooked. Some excellent computer programs are written for churches. These categorize a member’s spiritual gifts, ministry experience, time availability, and so on. The Brandon Church uses ServantKeeper. It is easy to use and has good technical support for an annual fee. Any system is effective only when information is kept current. An ongoing challenge faced in Brandon was getting information from those who made visits with members or evangelistic interests.

Casting the Vision

One of the most important roles of the pastor is to cast the vision for the future of
the church.\textsuperscript{1} This requires much praying, listening, and talking together with church leaders. The vision held before the church is that every member is a minister and needs to be active in a ministry of love supported in a nurturing spiritual community. The Brandon Church leadership team looked for every opportunity to present this ministry of love in our newsletters and bulletins, in sermons, training events, and from the pulpit. I, as pastor, looked for fresh ways to present these biblical principles again and again. Rick Warren called this “creative redundancy.”\textsuperscript{2}

Perhaps the most important method of casting the vision is by modeling. When the pastor and church leaders are involved in ministry to the lost, assisting members in finding a ministry, and mentoring new members, the message then becomes credible.

We as pastor and church leaders also attempted to model “community” in various committee meetings, such as in the church board. Members were frequently given an opportunity to share the high point or low point in their week. We frequently implemented “ten-minute team concept” which opens the way for the group or committee to spend the first ten minutes of each meeting dealing with group process. The question is asked, “How are we doing? . . . People need to vent, to discover whether others share their feelings, and to be empowered to make necessary changes.”\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Warren, 118.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}Harvey and Drolet, 37-38.
Bible Worker

The church leadership realized that the church was not adequately focused on the first part of its mission statement: “to invite people into a personal relationship with Jesus.” So the church hired a young man who had recently graduated from college with a theology degree but had not yet received a call to pastor a church. He was given the assignment not only to give personal Bible studies but also to train a few key lay members how to give studies. He worked with some community people and prepared some young people from the church for baptism. Unfortunately, no one was trained to give studies.

The following year, my wife, Becky, was hired part time to do a similar job. She, too, found it very difficult to coordinate schedules for training church members. She directed her work more towards networking with church members’ relatives and friends and met with good success. During the past eighteen months she has prepared seventeen people for baptism and church membership. More and more people are expressing their desire to study with her. Church members frequently totally overlook those close by who are already receptive to the Adventist message and lifestyle. Becky’s success points to the need to give priority to training lay people to give Bible studies and indicates that conferences need to hire skilled Bible workers for a period of time in particularly fruitful areas when a ministry placement process is launched.

Planning Session 1999

An Innovative Beginning

Though the Brandon Church and I had conducted planning sessions before, I
suggested we make our annual planning session special by beginning with a Sunday brunch. “Plant a Seed” theme was emphasized by a garden-setting decor. After the meal, we gathered in small groups sitting around tables for community and for planning purposes. Following a brief devotional, we played the “Body Life Game,” a high energy exercise which stresses the importance of spiritual gifts and community. The small groups then met to consider ministry needs, opportunities, and specific goals. These were shared with the entire group and recorded on newsprint. A secretary typed up the goals so they could be sent out that week to all the participants.

The ministry teams were encouraged to get together at other times to work through action plans and scheduling. Having a strategic plan to work from helps a church to “reach decisions in the light of future consequences, establish sound priorities, and develop effective strategies.”

The responses to the planning session were very positive. The evaluation sheets included remarks such as enjoyable, productive, enlightening, well organized and thought out, very well planned and implemented. One member quite honestly said, “I dreaded coming to this session, but now I would welcome a weekend planning workshop.” Suggestions for improvement included: “Let’s have a planning session more often—twice a year.” One suggested that we “have two sessions—one for goal setting, one for scheduling events.” Quite a few suggested a weekend retreat for planning events.

The results from the first planning session were encouraging. Goal setting

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1Ibid., 39.
encouraged more focused activities on the part of the various ministries. For example, a men’s ministry was activated; the women’s ministry reached out with quarterly activities to non-members as well as members; health ministries involved a number of people in a well-attended cooking school for the public and church members; and the Little Disciples, a ministry to parents of pre-schoolers, held quarterly events that were well attended and much appreciated. Other ministries also became more active. Each of these events happened as a result of a team effort and a firm reliance upon the Lord.

Revival Series

The conference evangelistic coordinator conducted a three-week, ten-session revival/decision series on the parables of Christ in the fall of 1999. Our members appreciated this revival type series in contrast to evangelistic meetings for the public. Adventism has tended to put its best efforts towards winning new converts but very little towards nurturing members.

Excellent seminars conducted on the conference level cannot be a substitute for excellence and relevancy of programming on the local-church level. Brandon church members were encouraged by the high quality of the revival series. The content, delivery, and use of PowerPoint illustrations were excellent. Ten persons were baptized at the end of the series.

The Adventist church has been more “message driven” rather than people-centered for too many years. The unbalanced emphasis on doctrine by Adventists has made them more focused on the message rather than the object of the Adventist mission. Dale
Galloway, church-growth educator and former pastor of the New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, asserted, “People in our world who are perishing from a variety of diseases of mind, body and soul—which are all the results of being apart from God’s love—do not give two hoots about cold doctrine. . . . Our calling is first to heal hurts and build dreams and at the right time and the right place we will instruct people in the basic doctrines of the church.”

1Dale E. Galloway, 20/20 Vision, How to Create a Successful Church (Portland, OR: Scott Publishing, 1990), 16.
CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EQUIPPING

CHURCH MEMBERS IN COMMUNITY

Equipping in Community in the Bible

Genuine community flows from God who is described in the Bible as Himself existing in community (Deut 6:4; Matt 28:19). In the first three verses of Genesis, we read that God the Father “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). Vs. 2 reveals that the Spirit of God was present “hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2). Next, the spoken Word performs the act of creation saying, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3.) Jesus is clearly revealed as the Word who created everything. In John 1:1-3 we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

These references to God in the very first book of the Bible reveal a community of oneness. There is equality and mutuality—the members of the Godhead function together. This is seen throughout the Bible. At creation, the Father is at the forefront with both the Word and the Spirit present and involved. In the work of sanctification, the Spirit is at the
forefront with the Father and Son present and involved. This truth is revealed in the words spoken by God at the creation of humankind, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:26). Early theologians almost unanimously regarded the “plural ‘us’ . . . as indicative of the three persons of the Godhead.”

Old Testament Examples

The first family. When God reflected on His creation, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1:31). However, He declared that one thing was “not good,” and that was man’s aloneness (Gen 2:18). He said, “I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Gen 2:18). The creation of Eve as a “helper” for Adam (Gen 2:18) does not describe someone to help him till the soil and take care of the garden. He was not so overwhelmed with work that he needed an assistant. This term “helper” (Heb. ‘Ezer) is used to describe God in other parts of the Bible when He comes to rescue man from danger and trouble (Exod 18:4; Ps 33:20). Eve would help Adam by rescuing him from his aloneness, and providing him with love and companionship.

God making Adam and Eve in “our” image suggests that God’s image is community. He created people who were to live in the same kind of oneness or


3Bilezikian, 21.

4Ibid., 20.
community. God’s small group grew to five on the sixth day of creation: Adam, Eve, and the Triune God. Human beings were not to live alone. They were to live in community with each other and with God, experiencing unity and joy in those special relationships.

The community of the first couple was so close it was referred to as “one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Through this union, the couple would not only enjoy a pleasant and satisfying intimacy, but as a result of their union, community would be expanded. The mandate was to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth . . .” (Gen 1:28). True community seeks to reproduce itself, not necessarily biologically as in this case, but by bringing others into the fellowship of oneness.

The greatest consequence of the first couple’s sin was a loss of true community. Their sin caused them alienation from God as evidenced by the fear that consumed them when they heard Him walking in the garden (Gen 3:8-11). Having separated themselves from God, the resulting guilt and shame shattered their oneness with each other. Adam blamed Eve for his sin and indirectly blamed God Himself: “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:13). This legacy of sin, shame, guilt, and blame has been passed down from generation to generation (Rom 3:23). Isaiah said, “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear you” (Isa 59:2).

Ever since the entrance of sin into the world, God has worked to restore a community of oneness (Gen 3:15). This work would include a sacrifice for sin (Gen 3:21; Heb 9:12), instruction in and an example of godly living in community (Gen 3:17; 1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 2:21-25), and the transformation of human hearts by filling them with His
love (Gen 3:15; 1 John 4:7-8). In the restoration of community, the Trinity not only works together, but it extends to redeemed sinners the privilege of joining them (Isa 43:10, 12; 1 Cor 5:18-20).

Looking to the Trinity as a model for human relationships and for doing ministry is very obvious and foundational, yet it can easily be overlooked (Eph 5:1-9). The Trinity as revealed in the Scriptures provides helpful insights into the nature of the relationships that God desires in the experience of His people (John 17:20-23). More than that, the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit gives us deep insights into the nature of ministry. . . . Ministry is nothing more nor less than participation in the ministry within the Godhead. We may reverently suggest that Trinitarian ministry is systemic. Each one points to the Other. Each lives for the Other. Each finds identity in the whole. Each is for the Other; all are for the One.1

A covenant of mutual ministry has existed among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from the days of eternity.

Ministry is not merely redemptive, patching up human and creational brokenness. It is also creative and unitive. The mystery of the Christian experience is that we are invited to participate in the life of God. . . . The gift of leadership that arises from this splendid though mysterious fellowship is first of all directed, as was the leadership Jesus exercised on earth, to the pleasure of God rather than the approval of people.2

In the seventh century, John of Damascus, a Greek theologian, used the word perichoresis to describe the relationship of the Godhead. The literal meaning of the word is “circle dance.” “Dances in the round” were common on festive occasions. “A perichoretic image of the Trinity is that of the three persons of God in constant movement

1Stevens and Collins, 113.

2Ibid.
in a circle that implies intimacy, equality, unity, yet distinction, and love.”¹

Theologian Shirley Guthrie referred to this image of God as a “lovely picture” that presents the Trinity as a “choreography” similar to a ballet. She said that this circle dance of God portrays a sense of joy, freedom, song, intimacy, and harmony. Guthrie noted, “The oneness of God is not the oneness of a distinct, self-contained individual; it is the unity of a community of persons who love each other and live together in harmony.”²

Since the Godhead is itself a community, it is through observing the actions of the Trinity that we can discover guidelines for living and working in community. The purpose of the gospel is to restore people to the image of God. His mission cannot be completed until people are restored relationally to live in community even as do the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Creating community in the various groups of the church must be an integral and intentional focus of the Christian mission.

Community is the essence of who God is. It is impossible to understand Him apart from His role in community. In the same way that God does not exist alone, neither can human beings. In the midst of brokenness, God brings together a people who are reconciled to Him and to each other, reflecting His own divine attributes.


Ironically, when people rebelled against God, they built cities. Cain built a city and named it after his son (Gen 4:17). The tower of Babel was the ultimate sign of rebellion (Gen 11:4-9). Cities, man’s attempt to control and dominate, arose out of a broken community with God and led to less, rather than greater, community among people. God had a different plan for His people, to lead them to build covenant family communities.

God called Abram to not only leave the city and go to Canaan but made a sweeping promise to him.

Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen 12:1-3)

Abraham did not hesitate when the call of God came to him. “By faith Abraham, obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Heb 11:8).

The promise of blessing upon his family and descendants was ratified by the offering of animal sacrifices. The animals were cut up and placed on the ground.

Then, it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given
this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.’ (Gen 15:17-18)

A “covenant” is more than a contract which implies an exchange of goods and services. A covenant is an indication of a relationship preceding the imperative of performance.¹ This is stated in the covenant formula: “I am your God; you are My people” (Exod 19:5-8). Yahweh is bound to His people. Even though the covenant was initiated by God, it evoked a wholehearted response from His people.

It is interesting to note that the animals presented as an offering were the very types “later prescribed as sacrificial beasts by Moses.”² These animal sacrifices, given by God, pre-figured Christ, the one perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:12). Abraham began to understand the significance of animal sacrifices when on Moriah he found a ram to offer on the altar in the place of his son Isaac (Gen 22:11-14). The descendants of Abraham would be blessed on the basis of the covenant received by faith and ratified not by the blood by animals but by the atoning sacrifice of Christ (Gal 3:5-16; Heb 9:12).

Abraham understood and practiced the divine principles which build community. When strife arose between Lot’s herdsmen and his own, Abraham said, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, then I will go to the left” (Gen 13:8-9). Abraham surrendered self to the Spirit of God and followed the essence of the

¹Stevens and Collins, 93.

²“Genesis,” SDABC, 1:313.
teaching upon which Christ would some day build His church: “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom 12:10). He later showed the same generous spirit when refusing to enrich himself by rightfully taking the spoils of a victorious battle (Gen 14:21-24). Abraham’s example of unselfishness was even more important than his teaching. It built community and equipped his family to trust and to serve God.

**Moses.** God told Abraham,

Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. (Gen 15:13-15)

When that time period was fulfilled, God chose a man to lead His people to the Land of Promise. More than that, “his leadership was invested primarily in building community.” However, the man God chose was educated in the ways of Egypt. It took forty years of tending sheep in the wilderness to teach Moses God’s way of leadership. He had to unlearn the way of Egypt, the way of power, and learn to trust God.

The leadership style of Egypt was characterized by the pyramid. The pyramid

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1Stevens and Collins, 124.


system of leadership is the way of the world. Those on the top are supported by those underneath. Therefore, the struggle of life is to get to the top.

When Moses returned to Egypt to lead the people, he came not to be above the people but to be in their midst. In the same way, God wants to come and be one with us, to be in community with us. God told Moses that the entire nation were to be priests (Exod 19:5, 6). In this sense, power would be dispersed among the people rather than residing in one person at the top.

"God’s initial ideal for Israel to be a kingdom of priests was abandoned when Israel rebelled at Sinai, but it is an ideal toward which God worked and finally instituted in the New Testament."\(^1\) The fact that Moses and Israel wandered for forty years in the wilderness reveals that God’s ultimate goal is to develop a community of faith, not just complete a task. The purpose of church leadership today is primarily to develop a community of faith that will reflect the character of God and prepare a people to enter the heavenly Canaan. "All other tasks that occupy human purposes and demand an investment of human will and energies are qualified by this divinely given task."\(^2\)

Hierarchal organizational church structures block community. It is only when power is given away that true community can take place. God’s model of leadership is suggested more accurately by a circle rather than by a pyramid. "The pyramid suggests that humanity may lift itself into heaven. The circle suggests that God must come down to earth. In the pyramid, only one person at a time can be on the top. In the circle, everyone

\(^1\)Ibid., 38.

\(^2\)Stevens and Collins, 124.
is included as egalitarian members of the community.”¹ Some important strategic concepts are here for equipping and supporting members in community. Icenogle observed, “Small groups are to be circles of mutual priesthood, where power is shared and care is reciprocal as every member of the group defers allegiance to God in their midst.”²

Exod 18:1 through 19:6 tells of the situation in the camp of Israel when Jethro visited Moses, the husband of his daughter Zipporah. Moses was working from early morning until late at night hearing all the problems of the people. After observing this, Jethro suggested a plan that gave power away to other leaders. No person would be responsible for more than ten people or families. This distribution of power created what we now call a “small group.”

Moses probably had some two million people to “pastor.” Of that number, 603,550 were men (Exod 28:36). Jethro’s counsel meant that Moses would need 60,000 leaders of 10; 12,000 leaders of 50; 6,000 leaders of 100; and 600 leaders of 1,000—a total of 78,600 leaders.³ Jethro’s model was followed in the time of the judges and later when the synagogues were established.⁴ After that, Israel demanded a king, thus reverting back to a pyramid leadership style, a time when apostasy deepened.

¹Burrill, 38.
²Icenogle, 101.
⁴Burrill, 42.
New Testament Examples

Jesus. Our chief example of an “equipper” of people in community is Jesus. Mark says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons” (Mark 3:13-15). The first step in the “equipping” ministry of Jesus was a call that the disciples “might be with Him.” They could not preach, teach, or heal until they had been “with Him.” The assurance of His presence, His power, His love, and His acceptance was essential to the equipping strategy of Jesus (John 15:5). The disciples needed to observe Christ’s attitudes and motivations before they could do effective ministry. Jesus made it clear that everyone “who is perfectly trained will become like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

Jesus’ style contrasted authoritarian leadership (Matt 20:25) with a new way of relating, a way based on submission and service. His ministry focused on the few rather than the many. Much of His work involved training the twelve, who, in turn, would reach the masses with the gospel.

Jesus was not interested in building institutions; His interest was in building people who would worship God from the heart (John 4:21:24) and share the gospel with family and friends (Luke 8:39). “The God who lives in community had now come to earth to give humanity a living demonstration of what it means for people to live together in community”1 (John 1:14).

1Ibid., 47.

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Jesus did not choose people who “had it all together” to form His church. On the contrary, He chose people from dysfunctional groups and families. For example, James and John’s mother instilled in them the need to climb to the top (Matt 20:20-24). Simon was dictatorial, aggressive, and ambitious. Matthew used the power of Rome to enforce the collection of taxes. Jesus took these men and women from all backgrounds to establish His new community of faith.

Much of Jesus’ time and effort was spent in developing community among His disciples. The original twelve were the twelve sons of Jacob—a family. Jesus called the new twelve to be a new family. The ancient family of Jacob demonstrated significant sexual and spiritual brokenness; selling their brother into slavery and massacring whole villages of vulnerable people. The new family of Jesus was called away from such a destructive life pattern. They were to be the family of the reconciled as well as the reconciling family. They had to be small, and they had to be unique (separate) to Christ.1

Jesus established a new family, one established on the Fatherhood of God (Matt 6:9). He even went so far as to teach that this new community transcends the natural family.

While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. And someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside to speak to You.” But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold, My mother and My brothers! (Matt 12:46-49, NASB)

Jesus did not just tell the disciples what to do; He showed them how to reach out and minister to others. As He sent them out to teach and heal, He sent them “two by two” to provide a measure of safety for them, and they could complement each others efforts.

1Icenogle, 207.
Perhaps another reason why Jesus used this approach was that Jesus knew it takes a community to effectively bring unbelievers into the community of faith.

While Jesus ministered to the multitude, He emphasized the importance of the relational group. He said, “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst” (Matt 18:19-20). Jesus comes to us individually, but here He mentions specifically members interacting together, thus underscoring the relational aspect of church. Even a large church, therefore, must be made up of relational groups which meet in His name if its members are to truly be church.

Jesus established a new model of church in which the members, as “priests” (1 Pet 2:9, 10), were to provide a ministry of mutual care. It is in this New Testament understanding of the “priesthood of all believers” that the “one another” texts become meaningful. The small group is the place where believers can relate to one another with openness and honesty. It is a place for giving and receiving mutual support. Jesus at times met with a small group of just three disciples. Even as they witnessed His transfiguration and saw His glory, so small groups today may behold His glory.

Jesus not only demonstrated a new model for church, He also modeled true

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1Burrill, 50.

Christian leadership. The disciples often bickered over who would be first in the kingdom.

He showed them how true leadership looks:

But there was also rivalry among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are “benefactors.” But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him to be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. . . . Yet I am among you as the One who serves. 

(Luke 22:24-27)

Jesus’ goal was always the development of redemptive relationships. He “always put people before structure and traditions.”¹ Jesus set the example of how “to be” church and how “to do” church. When He prayed “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4), He was referring to the equipping of His disciples for their task of taking the gospel to the world.² Forty times He mentioned His disciples in His high priestly prayer (John 17:1-26). On this point, Ellen White wrote, “Christ had finished the work that was given Him to do. He had gathered out those who were to continue His work among men. He said, ‘I am glorified in them’.”³

The New Testament church. It is not surprising to note that the New Testament (NT) church put a major emphasis on equipping and supporting believers in community. It was the plan modeled by Jesus. When the Holy Spirit’s power was poured out upon the

¹Kurt W. Johnson, 52.


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120 believers during Pentecost, the church grew rapidly in numbers. Soon three thousand more members needed to be cared for (Acts 3:36-41). Assimilating so many new converts was a challenging task. Probably one way they were able to accomplish it was by dividing the increased membership into some kind of smaller groups. The inspired account notes: “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42 NASB).

The NT church was devoted to the study of the Word, to fellowship, eating together, and prayer. These activities naturally take place in homes. While the early church may have had larger meetings for evangelistic purposes, most of their meetings were small groups in the homes of the members.¹ There they experienced a deep caring for each others’ needs. Some of these believers actually sold what they had so they could share with the others. The Bible says “they had all things in common” (Acts 2:44).

The attractiveness of the early church was its fellowship. The Greek word for this type of fellowship is koinonia, a word that describes the closest kind of support for each other. But in the context of the Book of Acts, koinonia expresses the unity of oneness brought about by the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, 38-46). God was restoring the sense of closeness, of community, which had been lost at the fall. The mission of Jesus to bring healing and reconciliation was being realized through His church.²

¹Burrill, 59.
²Ibid., 61.
The believers met in homes and shared meals on a daily basis. While this may seem unusual to those living in very individualistic societies, it should be remembered that these people had just accepted Christ and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Naturally, they would want to meet and share with other believers. The “eating together” which is mentioned probably “included both the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 10:16), and the ordinary communal meals (Acts 2:44, 46).”

Prayer was also given high priority in the early church. The promises which Christ had recently given of the power and effectiveness of prayer meant much to the early believers as they faced a hostile culture. Much of that praying was also done in homes as people gathered to seek God’s presence and His blessing.

Many people have the idea that the only reason the early believers met in homes was because of persecution. While these believers did encounter opposition and persecution, they apparently did not try to meet secretly. Secret societies were outlawed by Nero, and violators could lose their property, their Roman citizenship, and even their lives. Christianity was considered a Jewish sect and, therefore, was not outlawed by the Romans. Persecution, then, was not the only reason believers met in homes. “Before or during and with or without persecution, active participation in a house church was not considered an option – it was the norm.”

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2Kurt W. Johnson, 23.

Believers met in homes for a number of reasons. One would be practicality. It would be difficult to find halls large enough to hold the rapidly expanding membership. Even wealthy members probably had houses that would hold only about twenty or thirty people at a time. This meant that “church” was held regularly in homes scattered all through Jerusalem. The pattern set by these early believers of meeting in homes was continued by the Christian church in many areas for more than three hundred years.  

The early church followed the example and teaching of Jesus who instructed His followers to go “two by two.” Paul took Barnabas and Mark, and later Silas, as he preached the gospel. It could be said that Paul modeled a “team ministry.” Evangelism and equipping took place in community. While occasional incidents in the NT tell of ministers working alone, such as Nicodemus visiting Christ (John 3:1-21) and Philip witnessing to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), most of what we observe are “ministry teams” working together. These teams, whenever possible, would work for entire families as was the case when Paul and Silas preached Christ to the jailer in Philippi (Acts 16:25-34) and when Peter and his friends brought the gospel to Cornelius (Acts 10:23-48).

Robert Banks explained that when persons embrace the gospel and become Christians, they become a part of a new community: “A person cannot have one without the other.”  

1Kurt W. Johnson, 23.

Already we see how closely Paul’s understanding of freedom, or salvation, is bound up with his idea of community. He does not view salvation as simply a transaction between the individual and God. Prior to their encounter with Christ people belong to a community, however much their actions incline them to pursue their own (or their immediate circle’s) self-interest. And it is into a new community that their reconciliation with God in Christ brings them, however much they experience that event as an individual affair.¹

Churches continued to meet primarily in homes for three centuries after the apostle Paul’s death. Only after the church was “institutionalized” by the Roman Emperor Constantine did a transition take place away from house churches to large church buildings. “This was a turning point in the church’s theology and practice.”²

The so-called “conversion” of Constantine in the early fourth century represented a “paradigm shift” in the way church was done. Not only did large buildings replace home churches, but the empire and the church became closely linked together; therefore, evangelism was seen as the work of the soldier who conquered new lands and forced the conquered to become Christian. The result was nominal converts, a professional clergy, and a religion left to the specialists.

The Apostle Paul on equipping in community. The Apostle Paul followed the example of Christ by equipping disciples in community. He not only took a fellow worker with him on his missionary trips, but worked the cities by developing missionary teams of men and women for prayer, support, counsel, and encouragement (Acts 13:2-3; 18:1-3). The writings of Paul lay out the principles of equipping church members in community.

¹Ibid., 27.
²Kurt W. Johnson, 23.
Three chapters in the Bible most clearly define Paul’s concept of equipping: Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, and Eph 4.

1. *Rom 12:* The meeting of the church, according to Paul, is a place for the nurturing of Christian relationships which encourage each other in the faith. “Having gifts differing according to the grace given to us, let us use them; . . . he who gives, with liberality, he who leads with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another” (Rom 12:6, 8, 15, 16).

In Rom 12, Paul called upon Christians to present their bodies as “living sacrifices,” which he says is “your reasonable service” (vs. 1). Other translations use the word “worship” in the place of “service.” For example, the New English Bible reads, “the worship offered by mind and heart.” The New International Version reads, “This is your spiritual act of worship.” When the Christian yields his body, heart, and mind to serve God in every area of life, it is an act of worship.

William Barclay commented on the interesting history of the Greek word translated “service.” The word *latreia* is the noun of the verb *lateruein* which originally meant “to work for hire or pay.” It had the meaning of voluntary service but gradually took on the meaning of “that to which a man gives his whole life.” Finally, the word came to mean “the service of the gods.” In the Bible, the word is always used of the service of God or the worship of God.¹ The Greek word for “reasonable” or “spiritual”

refers to that which is internal and spiritual as opposed to a merely external act.¹

Spiritual gifts come from God’s grace (vs. 6), and their use must be characterized by such qualities as liberality, diligence, mercy, and cheerfulness (vs. 8). They are to be exercised in the atmosphere of brotherly love (vs. 10), demonstrated by meeting the needs of each other and practicing hospitality (vs. 13). “It is extremely important that Christians stop quarreling, bickering (and) struggling against one another. . . . A church where these attitudes exist is a totally ineffective body in the community. Such a church can say nothing to which the world will pay attention.”² The world recognizes authenticity.

Paul, ever with a pastor’s heart, goes on to discuss how a “transformed” Christian can do the “perfect will of God” (vs. 2) by humbling oneself and using the “gifts” to fulfill the function he/she is assigned by God to do (vss. 3-8). Of course, it is the “mercies of God” (vs. 1), His “grace” that has “dealt to each one a measure of faith,” (vs. 3) which enables all the gifts to be used for their intended “function” (vs. 4). There is an interdependency which is necessary if God’s “perfect will” is to be accomplished.

The gifts listed are representative, not exhaustive. There was an emphasis not on just the more visible, honored gifts such as prophesying (preaching the gospel), leading, and teaching but also upon the less ostensible gifts of encouragement, showing mercy, and serving. It should be noted that all the gifts “focus on building up both the spiritual life


and the sense of community among believers.”

Spiritual gifts nurture body life in a church.

The context of Rom 12 makes it clear that the individual Christian does not serve God alone but in the larger community of faith. This text serves as a balance for those “independent” Christians who think that participation in the body is optional. Barclay contended that to belong to the body of Christ is “the supreme glory of the Christian.”

Paul concluded his letter to the Romans by appealing to the “prophetic Scriptures” as the final authority which reveals the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ and establishes the church to the glory of God (Rom 16:26-27).

2. 1 Cor 12: Paul used the simple yet powerful metaphor of the body in his first letter to the Corinthians, as he does in Ephesians and Romans, to explain the unity and functioning of the church (vs. 12). Though Paul was the first to apply this metaphor to the church, Christ also alluded to the same concept by stating that any attack on His followers was an attack on Him personally. On the Damascus road, Christ asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4).

The term “body” was used in the culture of Paul’s day to describe the societal community to which every citizen had responsibilities. Paul applied the metaphor “to the personal responsibilities of people to one another rather than their civic duties.”

The body concept implies that every Christian in a church is united to other

1 Brunt, 213.
2 Barclay, 127.
3 Banks, 66.
Christians. "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). The church is not just a collection of Christians; it is a fellowship (vs. 13). For Paul, the reality is that the church is a single unity which expresses itself in the diversity of its members (vss. 12-27). The unity of Christians with Christ means the church is not merely a human organization. The fullness of God fills His people, the church (1 Cor 12:7; Col 1:17-22).

Spiritual gifts are given for ministry and to create community (vss. 5, 25). "Gifts" (1 Cor 12:4) come from the Greek word charismata. The root word is charis from which we derive the word "grace." So the gifts are literally "grace-gifts" which come when we receive Christ.1 Greg Ogden in The New Reformation expounded on this: "I like to look at spiritual gifts as the tangible, manifest expression of the love of God for us."2

The gifts are not given to benefit the one with the gift, "but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (vs. 7). What a difference it would make in a church at nominating-committee time if every member recognized that the gift/s they possess could benefit the whole church.

Paul emphasized the interdependency of Christians: "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you' (1 Cor 12:21). All are needed for the body to function normally. All have an important role to play. Failure to use a gift under the direction of the Spirit means that the whole body and the individual growth of the members are stunted.

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1Ogden, 41.

2Ibid.
“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor 12:26). This makes it clear that each member affects and influences every other member, either directly or indirectly.

In God’s plan for the church and His bestowal of spiritual gifts, no member is left out. Even those with seemingly less impressive gifts are necessary (vss. 20-22). Here is God’s answer to the isolation people feel in their lives. They belong. They are needed. Also, as in the body, the members who are more in the background are to receive “greater honor” (vss. 23-25). Through the gifts, God is saying to each one, “Your contribution is valuable! You are significant!” It is God’s answer to the low self-esteem of many Christians. Kim Johnson underscored this concept, “You have been chosen, specially placed, and gifted... You are irreplaceable. Your particular mixture of gifts, personality, and experience are unique in the universe.”¹

A person does not just decide that he/she wants a particular gift. The Spirit “distributes to each one individually as He wills” (vs. 11). This statement seems to be in contradiction to the final verse in this section which counsels, “covet the best gifts” (vs. 31). Wagner interpreted this admonition as applying to the church itself and not to individual members.²

The picture of the church as a human body has important lessons for all Christians


but especially church leaders. One can imagine a body that has developed only one or two parts:

Big arms and shriveled legs. Huge ears and puny hands. An enormous mouth and tiny heart. What a bizarre individual. But that’s exactly how churches look when they do not develop all the talents and abilities of the members. That’s how churches look when they focus on one or two aspects of ministry, such as reaping, to the exclusion of the great variety of ministries available.¹

One pastor wrote, “Frankly, I am embarrassed that for the past 23 years this major emphasis in the New Testament has gone unnoticed in my ministry.” He then elucidated the advantages of placing members in the area of their giftedness: “People with administrative skills serve on committees; extroverted people work with people; people who love to teach and have that gift, teach. Very few people burn out! Instead they find meaning and purpose for their lives as well as build up the body of Christ.”²

The work of the pastor is to help members discover their spiritual gifts and lead them in the process of discerning God’s calling for their lives. The church is in the “disciple-development” business.³ When this biblical mandate is implemented, the local church will once again be a place of encouragement, satisfaction, fruitfulness, and joy.

3. Eph 4: In Eph 4, Paul stated the “biblical and theological framework for a working ecclesiology in ministry throughout the church.”⁴ The foundation and focus is the

¹Kim A. Johnson, Spiritual Body Building Lessons, 12.


⁴Bauknight, 19.
person and work of Jesus Christ (vss. 12-13). The church of God on earth is made up of
Christians who are “called” to ministries of love (vss. 1-2). This sense of “calling,” of
belonging, means that every Christian is special to God and important to God’s church.
Every member is given grace “according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (vs. 7). The gifts
are given “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with
every wind doctrine . . . but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into
Him who is the head—Christ” (vss. 14-15). God’s grace through the gifts, working in the
church, brings members to a maturity expressed in interpersonal relationships and ministry
(vs. 16). This creates unity in the church (vs. 14).

The gifts which Christ gives to His people are for two expressed purposes: “for the
equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” and for the “edifying of the body of
Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God” (vss.
12-13). The word “equipping” is from the Greek word katartismos. A verb form of this
word is used in Matt 4:21 to describe the mending of nets and in Gal 6:1 for restoring one
who has fallen into sin.1

The three phrases of Eph 4:12 are not parallel as some versions would suggest. A
better translation would be “to take the first two phrases together— in order to fit his
people for the work of service (Goodspeed).”2 “The third phrase—for building up the body

1“Ephesians,” SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F.D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review

2Francis W. Beare, “Exegesis of the Epistle to the Ephesians,” Interpreter’s Bible
of Christ— is then to be taken as the ultimate end for which the gifts of Christ are bestowed.\footnote{Ibid., 10:692.}

Bauknight saw the emphasis in these verses as referring to the two aspects of ministry: inreach and outreach. He saw “the work of ministry” as outreach and “building up the body of Christ” as inreach. To illustrate his point, he drew an ellipse with two focal points. To retain its shape, these two points must “remain in proper balance.”\footnote{Bauknight, 24.} This may be a useful illustration, but the distinction is not so clear in the text. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary presents what seems to be a more balanced perspective on this passage. The “works of ministry” are described as “including all types of ministry and serving within the church.”\footnote{“Ephesians,” SDABC, 6:1023.} “Building up the body of Christ” includes building it up in “both character and numbers.”\footnote{Ibid., 6:1024.} The body is built up through genuine community.

The oneness in the body is a mystery (Eph 5:30, 32) which must be experienced, even as the mystery of the one-flesh relationship (Gen 1:27), and the mystery of combining Jew and Gentile into a new humanity (Eph 3:10). These mysteries point us Godward to the transcendent unity within God (vss. 4-6).\footnote{Stevens and Collins, 104.}

The metaphor of the body focuses inward rather than outward. It may be functional to suggest that Christ does His work on earth through His body, but that is not

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\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 10:692.

\textsuperscript{2}Bauknight, 24.

\textsuperscript{3}“Ephesians,” SDABC, 6:1023.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 6:1024.

\textsuperscript{5}Stevens and Collins, 104.
the emphasis of the passage. The text suggests that the concern is for the “structure of relationships” rather than how the church relates to the world. The members are called “to edify one another by speaking the truth in love, each part contributing to the growth” (vss. 15, 16). This is not to deny the outward focus of the church for this is portrayed more clearly through other metaphors such as the royal priesthood.¹

The inward focus is an important corrective for busy Christians. “Realizing unity is doing God’s work. God is as concerned about ‘being’ as God is with ‘doing.’”² By “endeavoring to keep the unity in the bond of peace” (vs. 3), the members become more like God. They reflect God’s character in their relationships.

The local church obviously needs to design and implement a strategy for helping members discover their gifts and then to use them productively in the church. This can help to bring about a healthy interdependency among the members and to unite in love churches that are now frustrated and fragmented (vss. 25-32).

Clearly every member not only has a gift(s) but a responsibility to use that gift(s). Accountability is in place because it is expected that “every part does its share” (vs. 16). The result is “growth of the body” and “edifying of itself in love” (vs. 16). Here is the answer to the almost constant searching for some new program to build up the church. The church needs fewer programs and more utilization of the process God has given for mobilizing the members according to their gifts. The result would be growth–spiritually

¹Ibid., 105.

²Ibid.
and numerically. Furthermore, far less sensitivity and hurt feelings would occur over
minor irritations because the church would edify “itself in love” (vs. 16). An “equipping
ministry” in community would put sick and dying churches back on the road to health.

“One-another” admonitions. The New Testament provides helpful insights into
how the body of Christ is to function by using the phrase “one another” over and over
again. These words are repeated fifty-eight times in the New Testament. Paul used this
phrase to describe specific activities that will help the church to truly be a body.¹ In the
Scriptures he admonished us to:

1. *Bear* one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)

2. *Accept* one another (Rom 15:7)

3. *Encourage* one another (1 Thess 5:11)

4. *Be devoted* to one another (Rom 12:10)

5. *Honor* one another (Rom 12:10)

6. *Greet* one another (Rom 16:3-6, 16)

7. *Submit* to one another (Eph 5:21)

8. *Serve* one another (Gal 5:13)

9. *Be of the same mind* with one another (Rom 15:5).

A church that seeks to live out these “one-another” admonitions will be a magnet

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for those who are looking for authenticity in spirituality. It will reflect God’s love, the sign of true discipleship (John 13:35).

Equipping in Community in the Writings of Ellen White

Methodist Background

Ellen White was raised in the Methodist church, an influence which can be seen in her work as one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church and as a spokesperson on the work of the gospel. The success of the Wesleyan movement, the forerunner of the Methodist church, was in large part due to the reawakening of the power of the laity and to the use of small groups.

John Wesley realized the necessity of establishing small groups for the ongoing spiritual care of his followers. He organized mandatory classes for discipling members and providing accountability. At first Wesley’s followers met in rented facilities in Bristol, England. Someone was designated to visit the families and collect money to help with the rental fee. The designated visitor observed that many of the converts had bad habits and lifestyle patterns that were un-Christian. To address this situation, Wesley’s followers were divided into groups of twelve and encouraged to meet in the homes of the members where they could receive personal help. The plan was so successful that it was adopted by the believers in London and then throughout the country.¹

¹Kurt W. Johnson, 61.
A sense of community was developed in these home classes because of the format which was followed. It was agreed that the members of each class should meet together once a week. The appointed leader was not only to collect the weekly contributions but also to give advice, reproof, or encouragement as needed. The meeting opened on time with a short hymn and the leader’s report of his own spiritual condition. He shared his victories, struggles, and temptations from the previous week. This set an example for the others to follow. Many of those who attended the classes were poor and uneducated. They were not used to sharing their inner feelings, and so the leader, by “modeling,” set the tenor for the session. A dynamic Christian fellowship quickly developed as members began to care for each other.¹

Visitors were allowed to come to the class meeting, but only twice before deciding whether they wanted to join. Meetings were closed to visitors every other week to provide an atmosphere for group bonding and openness. Membership in the Methodist Society was contingent upon attending a weekly class meeting.²

Early Adventism was influenced by the Methodist movement through Ellen G. White and others from that persuasion. Having grown up in the Methodist church, White knew the power of small groups. An adapted form of the “class meeting” became known


²Ibid., 95.
in Adventist circles as the “social meeting.” These groups met after a preaching service to share what the sermon meant to them and how it could be applied to their lives. Groups gathered at other times as well, similar to a prayer meeting.

Small Groups

Ellen White had much to say about small groups. She described her own experience during the early days of the Adventist church:

We meet together to edify one another by a mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, thus making one another acquainted with our aspirations, our hopes, and gathering strength, and light, and courage from one another. . . . All have not the same experience and the same exercises in their religious life. But those of diverse experiences come together, and with simplicity and humbleness of mind, talk out their experience . . . of daily trials, conflicts, and temptations, strong efforts and victories, and great peace and joy gained through Jesus. A simple relating of such experiences gives light, strength, and knowledge that will aid others in their advancement in the divine life.

These group meetings for Bible study also encouraged the group members to share their feelings, thoughts, struggles, and victories over sin. In some ways, they sound similar to “Alcoholics Anonymous” meetings. “Self-disclosure” of this kind is frowned upon by some Adventists as being inappropriate, but notice White’s comment that it imparted “light, strength, and knowledge” which would help members grow in their spiritual experience. These meetings provided accountability in spiritual matters.

When one considers the influence of Methodism on Adventism, it is surprising that so few Adventist churches have groups that are truly “relational.” The church has always

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1Burrill, 103.

had a focus on sharing biblical knowledge, but it appears to turn away from this earlier relational orientation to become a much more “message driven” church. This development has paralleled a dependency upon full-time paid workers. Professional evangelists win converts, professional pastors lead the church, and for the most part the church members are spectators. This will change only when members respond to God’s calling in their lives, when they are equipped for service and feel their need for on-going support from the body for their ministry.

Ellen White said small groups provide a non-threatening venue for members to minister to each other, but many Adventists are skeptical about participating in a group. Typically they comment: “People are just getting together and pooling their ignorance.” “I don’t think it’s right to sit around ‘navel-gazing.’” “We should be focused on Bible study not talking about our feelings.” These attitudes may be a reaction to the extremes that were reported about small groups in secular settings during the sixties and seventies without understanding the scriptural basis of small-groups.

Small groups can be used effectively to form “ministry teams.” Note this classic statement for small group ministry:

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, and gaining courage and strength from the assistance of others. . . . Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self in their endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ’s name, their numbers will increase, for the Saviour says, ‘If
two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be
done for them of My Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 18:19)¹

Here Ellen White presented six key characteristics of Christian small groups:
(1) God endorses small groups, (2) the love of God bonds members together in groups,
(3) members encourage one another to grow in Christ (4) members labor for those
outside of the church, (5) groups grow and multiply and (6) members experience answers
to their prayers.

If a church is serious about doing God’s work, it should not overlook the power of
small groups. They are effective for renewal, revival, building community, and organizing
ministry teams. Equipping church members is most effectively accomplished in
community, and small groups are a major means of building community.

Every Member a Minister

One of the most difficult concepts for Adventists to understand and accept today is
that they are just as responsible for carrying out the gospel commission as is the pastor of
the church:

The Savior’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all
believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of
saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister... All who receive the life of
Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow-men. For this work the
church was established, and all who take upon themselves the sacred vows are thereby
pledged to be co-workers with Christ.²

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific

1898), 822.
The fact that every believer today is “ordained” to ministry should be the most urgent agenda item at every level of church organization. The “fatal mistake” certainly applies to the personal loss to every individual who fails to take an active role in soul winning as well as to the church in failing to engage all its resources in ministry.

Spiritual gifts. Recognizing the importance of spiritual gifts, Ellen White observed: God “designs that in every place where the truth is introduced, different minds, different gifts, shall be brought in to exert an influence upon the work.” While there are plenty of talented and intelligent workers, everyone needs counselors and helpers. “God has set in the church different gifts. These are precious in their proper places, and all may act a part in the work of preparing a people for Christ’s second coming.” The emphasis in this statement is on making sure that every person is in his/her proper place. Too often the church has taken someone who is successful in one area of work and transferred him/her to another area of “need” without considering unique spiritual gifts, personality, and interests. Thus the member ends up frustrated, unproductive, and unhappy. The church has suffered because the job was not done. Even worse, someone who was gifted for the task was kept from assuming the responsibilities.

God in His wisdom and love has considered every person in His master plan. “There is nothing more beautiful than His plan of giving men and women a diversity of

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2Ibid., 481.
gifts."\textsuperscript{1} All are needed for the smooth functioning and fruitfulness of the church. Being needed gives great significance and dignity to every believer.

"There is a need for a variety of gifts in the Lord's work. Read carefully the fourth chapter of Ephesians. The entire chapter is a description of the Lord's manner of working. Every gift is to be acknowledged as essential to the success of the work."\textsuperscript{2} People in the church and in the community have a wide variety of needs. Many of those needs go unmet simply because the spiritual gifts of the church members are not enlisted in the right ministries.

Every church should have a goal to actively recruit every member for some form of ministry. "Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church, so that every one shall be working according to his ability."\textsuperscript{3}

In helping members find a ministry, rather than trying to simply recruit for specific church programs, leaders should be very open and flexible in encouraging individuals to develop new ministries. "There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity will be preserved."\textsuperscript{4} To underscore this point, Ellen White wrote, "Means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in the present will be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Ellen G. White, \textit{Evangelism} (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 98.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ellen, G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 23 January 1899, Letter 8, 1988, Manuscript Releases, Vol. 11, EGWRC, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI:
\item \textsuperscript{3}White, \textit{Acts of the Apostles}, 111.
\item \textsuperscript{4}White, \textit{Evangelism}, 105.
\end{itemize}

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different from the methods used in the work in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism.”

**Modeling.** Ellen White was given a clear understanding of those principles which are essential in equipping members. Her prime example was the way Christ equipped the twelve apostles for their ministry: “The most complete illustration of Christ’s methods as a teacher is found in His training of the twelve disciples.” Christ did not just impart information to His disciples, give them an assignment, and expect them to do it. With His warm-hearted interest in them, the disciples “had been associated together as members of the family of Jesus.” “To them, above all others, He gave the advantage of His own companionship. Through personal association He impressed Himself upon these chosen colaborers . . . for it is only life that begets life.”

The disciples had many lessons to learn, not only about ministry but equally about living and working together. “Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.” This is a principle easily overlooked by those who would work for Christ. Our relationship to Christ determines our relationship to each other; and our relationship to one another determines the success

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1Ibid.

2White, *Education*, 84.


4White, *Education*, 84.

we can expect in our ministry. Christ “modeled” ministry bathed in prayer and a different way of relating and handling conflict. In our ministry, some of our most effective equipping will be in those real-life situations where we have the opportunity of “modeling” the way of grace, particularly in dealing with conflict and misunderstandings. The most unforgettable experiences are when members see God triumph over Satan and realize that “the powers of darkness stand a poor chance against believers who love one another as Christ loved them.”

Ministry in Community

Equipping church members for ministry must be done in community.

Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another? In our churches let companies be formed for service. Let different ones unite in labor as fishers of men. Let them seek to gather souls from the corruption of the world into the saving purity of Christ’s love.

Ellen White also emphasized the importance of following Christ’s example by sending workers out two by two.

Calling the twelve about Him, Jesus bade them go out two and two through the towns and villages. None were sent forth alone, but brother was associated with brother, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one’s strength supplementing the other’s

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2White, Testimonies, 7:21.
weakness. . . . In our own time evangelistic work would be far more successful if this example were more closely followed.¹

**Pastor's Role as Equipper**

Every worker is "not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister. . . . Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their examples. One example is worth more than many precepts."² Christ’s method of equipping was to let His disciples observe Him ministering and then to try it themselves. The most effective way to equip church members is to allow them to serve in the community.

One of the pastor’s first jobs when beginning his/her work in a different church is to equip the members for ministry. "When they (members) are prepared to sustain the minister by their prayers and labors, greater success will attend their efforts."³

The story is told of a construction foreman who was fired because he was found digging a hole while six of his workers stood watching him. This illustrates what many pastors do. "If pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively engaged at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visiting and also avoid many causes of friction."⁴


³White, *Gospel Workers*, 196.

⁴Ibid., 197, 198.
Overactive ministers may actually impede the growth of the churches they pastor. "The ministers may do their part but they can never perform the work that the church should do."1 "The best help that ministers can give the members of our churches is . . . planning work for them. Give each one something to do for others. . . . And let all be taught how to work."2 What a change that would bring into our churches!

To those entrusted with special capabilities, talents, and experiences rests the obligation of equipping others for ministry. "Christian ministers, physicians, teachers, have a broader work than many have recognized. They are not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister."3

The Challenge and the Promise

We often hear comments about "finishing the work." All such talk is futile unless we take seriously the task of prayerfully equipping church members in a loving supportive community. The following statement contains a wonderful promise and a caution.

The great outpouring of the Spirit of God, which lightens the whole earth with His glory, will not come until we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God. When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God.4

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1White, *Evangelism*, 352.


The task of equipping church members in community has end-time significance (Rev 14:6-7). We are preparing a people who are “wholehearted” and “enlightened” workers for God. The church will be filled with the Spirit, the earth will be illuminated with His glory, and Jesus will return for His people (Jas 5:7-8; Rev 18:1; Matt 24:14).
CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF SELECT CURRENT LITERATURE ON EQUIPPING IN COMMUNITY

Much talk, many articles and books, and periodic seminars tell about equipping church members for ministry both within and outside of the Seventh-day Adventist church. David Hansen in *The Art of Pastoring* wrote, tongue in check, on the limitation of planning and management. "Perhaps the most common shortcut people want from their pastors comes from the fact that people need leadership, but they want to be managed instead."¹

He explained that the pastor, trying to be a manager, helps to analyze the church. He/she looks at strengths and weaknesses; writes a mission statement and goals; and develops a "program." The problem he observed with this emphasis is that the "weaknesses and obstacles facing the church are never the sins of the church. . . . In the management model, churches don't have sins. . . . Therefore the purpose of programs is to enlighten the church to the methods by which it can transcend the morass of this world.

The pinnacle of insight is the program."

Hansen concluded by stating, "The fact is, no one expects these programs to work.

¹David Hansen, *The Art of Pastoring, Ministry without All the Answers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 73.
We simply want to experience believing that they work, so that we can live our lives together without risking a thing, without repenting of a single sin.”¹ He reminded us that we must first and foremost maintain a spiritual and biblical focus in all our ministry.

Organizational renewal must always be joined with personal renewal.

Rick Warren, speaking to the same issue, wrote: “Unless the driving force behind a church is biblical, the health and growth of the church will never be what God intended. Strong churches are not built on programs, personalities, or gimmicks. They are built on the eternal purposes of God.”²

Discovering Spiritual Gifts in Community

As I began writing this chapter, the phone rang. Since it was not office hours and the secretary had not yet arrived, I did not answer it. But the caller was persistent, dialing the church over and over again. Finally, in frustration, I picked up the receiver. An excited new convert was calling to ask how she could obtain more witnessing literature to give away to her friends and neighbors. Then she shared how she had talked to first one friend and then another about her faith in Christ and His gift of righteousness. She had already enrolled two friends in Bible studies.

Somewhat surprised to hear her enthusiastic story, I thought about all the difficulties she had faced in her life during the past year. I asked how she felt about

¹Ibid., 74-75.

²Warren, 83.
sharing her faith. She exclaimed, "I love it!" and added, "I have a mouth and I can use it for God."

Research conducted by Christian Schwarz, author of *Natural Church Development*, reported that church members who use their spiritual gifts in ministry report the highest level of contentedness and happiness. Every person needs to belong. Even those who have been wounded emotionally and have withdrawn into solitude desire deep inside to belong. Family and community structures that once provided support and caring have changed with the increased acceleration of life. "Churches are not exempt. One man sadly described church as a place where we come to be lonely together. . . . Spiritual gifts were designed by God to put people on the fast track to belonging."

Members who are involved in a meaningful task also have a sense of importance. "When you feel that you really aren't needed, it hurts. God has made us so that we have a need to feel that we are of worth and making a significant contribution. And God has so designed his church that when we say we need you, we aren't saying it just to be nice— it is true." The church must address the question, "How are we helping our people to use their gifts and talents?"

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1Schwarz, 24.


Peter Wagner, professor at Fuller Theological Seminar and well-known author on spiritual gifts, related a comment made by Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Valley Community Church. “For the church to grow, the pastor must give up the ministry and the people must give up the leadership.” Wagner enlarged upon that idea by stating, “Small churches will become larger only if the pastor does the leading and the people do the ministry.” That statement may sound radical, but it is biblically solid. Twenty years ago Elton Trueblood was the first to describe the pastor as a “player-coach.” “This image suggests immediately that there is one team of which we are all a part, and the pastor has the role of helping people know and develop their places on the team.”

God’s plan includes a “call for certain people to specialize in making sure that other people are able to open their gifts properly.” Eph 4:11-12 mentions four unique gifts for this purpose: apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These are to “equip” God’s people for their ministry or develop them for service. This is accomplished by assisting church members to find God’s calling in their lives, the place where they can serve effectively by using their spiritual gifts.

Kim Johnson, author of the *Spiritual Body Building Lessons*, devoted four entire lessons of sixteen in his series to spiritual gifts. His definition of spiritual gifts is winsome and functional: “Special abilities and talents [are] given by the Holy Spirit to enable each

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1Wagner, 11.
2Ibid., 12.
3Ogden, 116.
Christian to play an important part in God’s plan for loving and saving humanity.”

Wagner defines a spiritual gift this way: “A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God’s grace, for use within the context of the Body.”

Spiritual gift inventories are popular and can be helpful in assisting individuals to find their unique gift mix. Sometimes, simply asking a friend or family member for feedback on what one does well can provide direction. It is important for “confirmation to come from the body.” One practical approach to finding a person’s ministry is for him/her to experiment with a number of different ministries, perhaps by observing or being mentored.

Tom S. Rainer in *Eating the Elephant* suggested graduated goals for effectively implementing a ministry based on spiritual gifts. Rather than trying to assess every member at the same time, which would probably overwhelm the ability of the placement system to provide adequate attention and follow-up, he would include between 10-30 percent of the active membership in the assessment-placement process initially and expect to be at 75 percent at the end of three years. By starting more slowly, it “creates an awareness and places the burden for ministry on the members.”

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1Ibid., 49.
2Wagner, 34.
Bruce Bugbee, designer of the Willow Creek “Networking” program that has helped equip over 120,000 people (the program adapted by the Seventh-day Adventist church and renamed “Connections”), identified three important personal variables to evaluate in an equipping ministry. These are (1) spiritual gifts, (2) personal style or personality, and (3) passion. To ascertain personal style, a person answers the question, “How are you organized?” Do you like structured work or unstructured? While most of us can go either way when we have to, usually there is a decided preference. The other question to answer is, “How are you energized?” Do you prefer working alone or with a group of people? The two together make up your personal style.1

The human personality is fascinating and complex. “The possibilities include people who are introverts or extroverts, organized or spontaneous, thinkers or feelers, up-front or behind the scenes, relationship oriented or task oriented.”2 Understanding the four temperament types—sanguine, choleric, melancholy, phlegmatic—and the blending of the various temperaments can be helpful. Matching ministry opportunities to personality is important.

The third personal variable is passion. “Passion is the God-given desire of the heart to make a difference somewhere.”3 It could be working with children or planting a


3Bugbee, 30.
flower bed at the church or a local nursing home. The two tests of passion are (1) Does it glorify God? and (2) Does it build others up?¹

With a limited view of “church,” it is easy to think that the church’s mission is to get non-believers to come to the church. In fact, that seems to be the aim of many churches. But “church” is also what happens when the members go out and mingle with the world. That being the case, members need to be equipped for ministry outside the church. A realistic goal should be set for involving a percentage of the membership in ministries outside the church. “Evangelism happens naturally as church members build relationships with the non-churched people they work with on service projects, at their office, or in neighborhood organizations.”²

Churches that become very ingrown seldom share resources, finances, or personnel with those truly in need. Bill Hybels, pastor of the Willow Creek Community Church, described what happens too often after the benediction is pronounced and church is over. “The affluent family would go to the country club and spend a small fortune on dinner while the single mom packed her belongings into a cardboard box because she was getting evicted from her apartment this week.”³ Hybels is fond of quoting “Dr. B,” Gilbert Bilezikian, a seminary professor who inspired him to plant a different kind of church.

“This is God’s ultimate achievement—a community, a center of warm, pulsating,

¹Ibid., 39.

²Rehnborg, Section 1, 40.

³Bill Hybels and Lynn Hybels, Rediscovering Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 62.
effervescent, outreaching Christian love, a place with all its components united in order to become a force in this world instead of a farce.”

Spiritual gifts are for women as well as men. An unfortunate translation in the King James Version translates 1 Cor 12:7 as “to every man” instead of “to each one for the profit of all.” Even though women have been the backbone of the church for generations, many of them have been denied the freedom to use their spiritual gifts.

The spiritual gifts of a senior pastor can make a difference in the direction of the church. Most pastors have a “gift mix” that includes one or more of the following: teaching, preaching, faith, encouragement, and pastoring. Seminaries usually train pastors to be teachers and preachers, but a pastor’s work usually requires tasks far different, and it is these that lead to frustration and stress. The church needs leadership to carry out a mission. Yet surveys of pastors reveal a startling fact: Only about 6 percent of senior pastors feel that they have that gift.

Peter Wagner wrote that while a pastor may have a wide variety of gifts, only two are necessary for church growth: the gift of faith and the gift of leadership. The gift of faith makes one more oriented to the future than to the past. “They see where God wants them to go, although they may have no idea at the moment how they are going to get there.” The gift of leadership enables a pastor to stay in a church for a long period of

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1Ibid., 157.
2Wagner, 33.
3Barna, 121.
4Wagner, 146-147.
time. If he/she does not have this gift, it is still possible to effectively carry out the role of leadership by delegating it to others. However, the pastor will probably remain in churches with an active membership of less than 200 because he/she probably focuses more on relating to people than leadership issues. Conference ministerial directors need to understand this when matching a pastor with a church.

The expectations on pastors can be overwhelming. Ray Stedman decried the unrealistic demands on pastors. They are given the task of “evangelizing the world, counseling the distressed and brokenhearted, ministering to the poor and needy, relieving the oppressed and afflicted, expounding the Scriptures, and challenging the entrenched forces of evil in an increasingly darkened world.” If a pastor fails to develop and utilize the gifts of the members, he/she is likely to end up “frustrated, exhausted, and emotionally drained.”

While a pastor does not need the gift of “pastor” to effectively lead a congregation, it is imperative that those with this gift be identified, recruited, and trained for service. In an average congregation of 100 members, four or five members will have this gift. They will include women as well as men. Such persons will probably be able to pastor from eight to fifteen families, but the smaller number is more realistic for most people. A professional, full-time pastor can probably take care of fifty to one hundred families.

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1Ibid., 150.
2Stedman, 79.
3Wagner, 139.
It is important for those with the spiritual gift of “pastor” not only to become active in taking care of the members, but also that the members themselves be involved in a small group where they can get to know others on a deeper, more intimate level. The church must provide meaningful, healthy groups for its members. This can be accomplished by transforming existing groups or starting a small-group ministry.¹

Even as individuals possess different gifts, so do churches. Every church will have its own “gift mix.”² The important thing is the faithful use of the gifts entrusted to it. “As we understand our calling and identify our ministries, the doctrine of spiritual gifts can eliminate a lot of unnecessary guilt and burnout.”³

Planning in Community

When planning an equipping ministry, it must be done in community. What secular business knows all too well, the church often overlooks. “When a team, rather than an individual working independently, develops strategies, not only are the strategies more comprehensive, but the team buys into the solutions and supports their implementation. So involve your entire team in finding approaches to organizational issues and problems.”⁴

Many components make up an effective equipping ministry. These may include a new class or program, a gifts seminar, and some way to match people to tasks; but these

¹Roberta Hestenes, Turning Committees into Communities (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 3-4.
²Wagner, 76.
³Kim A. Johnson, Spiritual Body Building Lessons, 43.
⁴Harvey and Drolet, 40.
in themselves are not sufficient. A complete equipping system is required that “involves new and existing members, sets the context for service, supports a discovery process, matches members to service based on their gifts, places members in ministry opportunities, coaches their involvement, and celebrates service as an avenue for spiritual growth.” Developing such a system requires member involvement at every level of the church’s structure and operation.\(^1\) The most capable and influential members should be enlisted to help share the vision.

Relationships rank very high when it comes to planning and making changes in the church. “Relational leaders intuitively know that the primary level of trust is personal. Friends and acquaintances listen more openly to proposals for change than do strangers.”\(^2\) One of the first things a congregation wants to know before it is willing to even consider suggestions from a new pastor is “Does our new minister love us?”\(^3\)

Securing the use of a place in a retreat setting for the planning session can be helpful for two reasons: it elevates the importance of the work and it provides uninterrupted time and space for relationship building and planning. The appropriate setting could be the home of a member, a motel conference room, or a high-quality retreat facility. The place chosen should be close enough to members homes so they can commute without difficulty.

\(^1\)Rehnborg, Section 1, 6.


\(^3\)Ibid., 70.
Proverbs 13:16 says, “Every prudent man acts with knowledge.” When developing a strategy for equipping members, it is vital to conduct both internal and external audits to gain a clear understanding of the issues and environment. This can be done through a formal survey or by casually talking with church members and people in the community.

A simple comprehensive planning guide should include a needs assessment, a discussion and establishment of core values, clarification of the mission, casting the vision for an equipping ministry, a carefully thought-through strategy, the allocation of resources, scheduling of events, and an evaluation instrument. To omit even one of these items means that the necessary information or important component will be lacking, and it will be impossible to plan wisely.

Wagner cited six advantages of careful planning: (1) efficiency will make good use of money, time, and energy; (2) mid-course corrections will be easier to make; (3) team building results from a common plan, and vision will help each member to realize where he/she fits in; (4) effectiveness will be measured against progress; (5) accountability will result naturally; and (6) a model will be established from which others can learn.

Managing new beginnings requires an intentional process; hence, one needs to follow some proven approaches. *The Starter Kit*, a resource book of Leadership Network written by Sarah Rehnborg, has some helpful suggestions:

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1. Be consistent in the implementation. For example, job descriptions should be required for every position.

2. Establish reasonable goals that will ensure quick success.

3. Find ways to ‘symbolize’ the new beginning. Try such ideas as a special bulletin, new name tags, a logo, a new letterhead, or designating a special place to highlight equipping in the worship service.

4. “Celebrate successes” in the equipping ministry by planning special events. An “annual festival” might be one way to promote ministry opportunities.¹

The church leadership needs to develop a strategy for implementing the overall goal of helping people become disciples. Aubrey Malphurs defined a “strategy” as a process that determines how the mission of the ministry will be accomplished.² Sweeping outlines of new services or events might satisfy the church board, but a concrete, detailed plan is needed to provide desired information for staff and leaders. “You need to create a user-friendly plan that tells each person what to expect and how he/she can become involved in the process.”³

An experienced church-organizational consultant can be invaluable in helping a church develop a disciple-making strategy. A trained consultant can lend credibility, objectivity, and support to a church around predicted difficulties.⁴ Developing a strategy

¹Rehnborg, Section 2, 213.
²Malphurs, 44.
³Rehnborg, Section 2, 122.
⁴Malphurs, 82.
may require ten to twenty full days. An outside consultant may cost from $500 to $1,200 a day.\textsuperscript{1} Most Adventist local or union conferences have someone on the staff who can provide consulting services.

When planning ministry opportunities, tasks must be broken down into small manageable pieces that can be assigned to a member on the basis of interest and skill. By planning ministries that focus on fewer activities, church members can “develop deeper relationships in the midst of their service.”\textsuperscript{2} The question that needs to be asked frequently in the planning process is this, Will this add to an already full schedule? Everything must be seen in the context of the bigger picture. This overall view takes more work at first, but seeing the whole picture will energize the members as they become involved in ministry and, eventually, it will lighten the load for everyone.

Part of good planning involves goal setting. Wagner described four characteristics of effective goals.

1. Goals must be relevant to the needs of the community and the church.

2. Goals must be measurable because such goals provide for a built-in system of accountability.

3. Goals should be significant. “Shy away from meager goals and learn to trust God for the big things.”

4. Goals must be manageable. “Coming up with pipe dreams and setting ridiculous goals is counterproductive and produces so much frustration” that it turns people off.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 84.

\textsuperscript{2}Rehnborg, Section 1, 9.
“Perhaps more than any other factor, the goals should be related to both the pastor and the people.” This team approach will build strength in the church and lead to meaningful accomplishments and personal satisfaction for both pastor and those members involved in the planning process.

Seven components that make for an effective equipping ministry are outlined in *The Starter Kit*. Each one has to be in place to some extent to ensure success.

1. **Assimilation**—helping members become more involved in ministry and assisting new members in understanding the church and its mission.

2. **Context**—the biblical context of spiritual gifts, every member a minister, and the mission of the church must be preached, taught, and discussed.

3. **Discovery**—providing opportunities for members to discover their spiritual gifts, understand their temperament, and share their life experiences.

4. **Matching**—connecting members with ministry opportunities and connecting with those who have a passion to work in certain areas.

5. **Placement**—matching but also meeting with ministry leaders to review ministry descriptions and how to nurture the ‘intern’ placed with them. Placement allows the member to explore other options.

6. **Coaching**—provides for training and support as well as the opportunity to learn from the ministry experience.

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7. Recognition—provides an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the service, and includes exit interviews for those completing or leaving a ministry, considering new areas of service, and moving towards leadership.¹

George Barna studied the characteristics of successful churches. He found that a very prominent one is their battle for excellence in every area: credibility, consistency, reliability, integrity, and excellence in effort.² A planning session is a good time to emphasize these essential qualities and to encourage excellence.

Even after the initial planning for an equipping ministry is completed, one needs to consider the mission of the church periodically to make sure that what is happening in the church is aligned to the mission and that the equipping strategy is effective. Time spent in planning can be profitable for solving problems before they arise, making the best use of everyone's time, and nurturing the community of oneness that brings joy to church fellowship and provides a witness to the world.

Training and Ministry in Community

Training and ministry are presented together here because Jesus used ministry as an opportunity for training His disciples. Today we call it on-the-job-training or “OJT.” As Christ went about teaching, healing, and visiting, He trained the twelve.³ The teaching method of the scribes was dry and boring, devoid of spiritual life. Christ taught with

¹Rehnborg, Section 1, 20.
“authority” (Mark 1:22). “Knowledge was not communicated by the Master in terms of laws and dogmas, but in the living personality of One who walked among them. . . . Knowledge was gained by association before it was understood by explanation.”

The strategy of Jesus was simple and straightforward. Cerna outlined that strategy in a brief paragraph:

Jesus trained His disciples slowly because He was in a hurry! He took His time with them because His time on earth would be cut short. He concentrated His energies on a few for the love of the multitudes in all the world. He never planned a hectic, high-exposure, round-the-world, personal-appearance tour. He simply concentrated His efforts on one small group in one small country.

This is not the strategy of most churches. Certainly, it is not the strategy that is acceptable to members. Many members believe the pastor should devote much of his time to the weak members of the church. While Christ ministered to the weak and sick, He concentrated His training efforts on a few capable, committed, and willing men. He knew that He would reach the masses by training the few.

The church wants quick fixes and shortcuts, but quick fixes and shortcuts simply do not work. They bring discouragement to the workers and are a drag on the church. “Only one road leads to world evangelism: disciple making.” Disciple making is totally misunderstood in most Adventist churches by most members. They were led to believe that evangelism is making disciples. While that may be the first step, it is not the end, only


2Cerna, 22.

the beginning. "Discipling others is the process by which Christians, with a life worth emulating, commit themselves for an extended period of time to a few individuals in order to—1. Help them find assurance of salvation in Christ, 2. Develop their hearts and minds to Spirit-filled maturity, 3. Equip them for ministry and the discipling of others."1

The effective training methods of Christ are not limited to any particular time or culture. In the late 1960s, a "think-tank" was put together by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta to conduct an assessment of medical education around the world. The goal was to find the best method of training skilled doctors most quickly and economically. They came up with the "docent" system. "Docent" refers to someone who learns while teaching others.2 In the same way, church leaders can learn effectively from each other, while, in turn, they teach other members. This on-the-job training not only is practical but also provides valuable service to those in need of Christian ministry.

Learning readiness during training has everything to do with motivation and felt need. Once people have accepted an assignment, they are much more open to learning the information they will need for the assignment. This is the opposite from traditional training methods which "teach, assign, do." The more effective approach is "assign, do, teach."3

The training in most churches is haphazard at best, non-existent at worst. Aubrey

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1Kim A. Johnson, Spiritual Body Building Lessons, 124.


3Ibid., 78.
Malphurs reported on a survey conducted in 1994 by Bob Gilliam. *The Spiritual Journey Evaluation* of approximately 4,000 Christians was completed in thirty-five different churches to determine “if the church today is making disciples according to Christ’s criterion in Matthew 28:19-20.” Gilliam measured four “training phases” from pre-conversion through to spiritual maturity. His findings reveal that churches are not effectively being intentional about making disciples. According to the survey, very few Christians will ever excel in spiritual maturity unless the church develops an effective strategy for making disciples.2

Bill Hull contended that “Christians are not well trained, largely because pastors have not worked out a means of helping people do what He [Jesus] has told them they should do. As a result they feel a great deal of frustration and guilt.”3 The frustration is felt on both sides. Pastors are frustrated because they must continually carry what they perceive to be the members’ load. Members are frustrated because they are failing to use their gifts, which brings guilt. The tragedy is that spiritual growth is hindered in both pastor and people.

Training must take place on two levels. Often it focuses on the individual rather than on the church as a system. Much effort and attention can be invested in individuals, but in the end the church is not changed very much. More attention needs to be given to

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1Malphurs, 23.
2Ibid., 24-25.
3Hull, 20.
“how those people function together and how they are organized.”\(^1\) Personal renewal must be accompanied by relational and organizational renewal.

Kim Johnson has identified four critical areas in which disciples need to grow and mature: knowledge, character and attitudes, sense of belonging (to God and fellow church members), and ministry skill. Equipping too often focuses on ministry skills or knowledge.\(^2\) Training must be broadened to include all four areas. “The goal is to bring these four areas into balance in people’s lives.”\(^3\)

Training should be team building, not just imparting facts and knowledge. Business and industry have learned this important concept. A certain bonding takes place when an entire team participates in a training event. We must not minimize the value of team building. “Teamwork is one of the keys that unlocks and unleashes the power of God (Acts 2:1-40; Cor 12:12-14).”\(^4\) The prayer of Christ before His crucifixion was that His disciples would become a team, experiencing that oneness of love and unity that He enjoys with the rest of the Godhead (John 17:11).

Team ministry is the biblical pattern for ministry (Mark 6:7). The strength of one can make up for the weakness of another (Eccl 4:9-10). The skill of one can complement the skill of another. It takes a team to bring a person to Christ. By the time an individual


\(^3\)Ibid.

hears the gospel and puts faith in Christ, he/she has been influenced by many different people. “In reality, God depended on a team and every team member's part was equally important.” It also takes a team to nurture a new Christian. “No one individual has everything it takes to bring another to maturity, but every healthy Christian community does.”

The Natural Church Development Survey found that the statement, “The volunteer workers of our church receive training for their tasks,” correlated highest of any question that measured the spiritual gifts characteristic with church growth. Research also revealed this. Of the 170 variables Christian Schwarz studied in churches around the world, “holistic small groups” correlated highest with growth. One of the most effective means of training is involvement in small groups. Again, it can be seen that training and ministry can take place alongside each other. As members minister to each other in a group, learning takes place. They “learn to serve each other—both in and outside the group—with their spiritual gifts.”

Learning in small groups is facilitated by the use of “sharing questions” and relational exercises. These one-or-two-sentence, open-ended questions provide an opportunity for group members to talk about themselves to, share their thoughts and


\[3\] Schwarz, 25.

\[4\] Ibid., 32.
feelings with the group. "The questions ask for personal sharing of self, not for opinions on issues." Relational exercises include one or more activities which involve members in doing something together. This becomes the basis of a discussion focused on the selected topic.²

Training has to do with empowerment. Harvey and Drolet defined empowerment as "the art of increasing the competence and capability of others by endowing them with a sense of self-worth and potency."³ The more people in an organization who have power, the stronger it is. The fewer people who have power, the more unstable and toxic it is.

Leaders can empower others by providing informal training, such as taking people to a seminar; discussing their work one-on-one; or providing books, tapes, and videos.⁴ Delegating responsibility, giving others discretion to make decisions, working in teams, and providing resources are all empowering.⁵ Christians can share "God's power" by praying for and with each other, sharing the promises of God's Word, and speaking faith.

The equipper must give careful attention to his/her own spiritual needs. Success in ministry brings increased demands for one's time and attention. It is easy to put aside personal devotions, the quiet time of communion with God, to attend to more urgent

²Ibid., 68.
³Harvey and Drolet, 127.
⁴Rehnborg, Section 2, 9.
⁵Harvey and Drolet, 126.
matters. Ellen White gave a perceptive warning, one that many workers have ignored to their ruin.

They are working for others' good; their duties are pressing, their responsibilities are many, and they allow their labor to crowd out devotion. Communion with God through prayer and a study of His word is neglected. . . . They walk apart from Christ, their life is not pervaded by His grace, and the characteristics of self are revealed. Their service is marred by desire for supremacy, and the harsh, unlovely traits of the unsubdued heart. Here is one of the chief secrets of failure in Christian work.¹

Personal influence is a large part of the discipling process. "A powerful proof of spiritual maturity" is when our actions are prompted by gratitude, joy, and peace (2 Thess 1:3, John 15:11, John 14:27).² These qualities cannot be just taught. They must be observed in everyday life. The qualities of the equipper who abides in Christ will be picked up by the disciples. Ellen White said, "When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact."³

Paul Yonggi Cho, Korean pastor of the world's largest local church, a church built on small groups, wrote about the power of a deep spiritual walk with God: "When a home cell meeting is full of life, and when people are happy and sharing their faith and


witnessing to what the Lord has done in their lives, other people are drawn to them.”¹
This faith-expressing attitude is passed from leaders to group leaders to members of small
groups to the community.

Spirit-filled training leads to skillful, knowledgeable workers who can reach out to
train others. More than that, such workers “will go beyond simple outreach, beyond
baptizing and adding new converts, to reproduction and multiplication of disciples.”²
When this equipping of reproducing disciples becomes the focus of all our training, when
the methods and motivations of Christ are followed in the church, the effects in the world
will be explosive (Dan 12:3, Rom 1:16).

Maintaining Responsibility and Accountability in Community

Christians have important responsibilities to God, to each other in and out of the
church, and to the world. Peter said that the Christian has become a part of “a royal
priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9). Priest means “bridge builder.” “God made us the bridge-builder
from the people to himself. Through our lives they come to know him.”³ Kim Johnson
emphasized this truth.

Every follower of Christ is a full-time minister. As a “layman,” you are a priest to your
world—whether it be in the home, job, society, supermarket, auto repair shop, or
neighbor’s house. You are called. You are a key part of God’s plan. No more carving

²Samaan, Christ’s Way of Making Disciples, 55.
³Bubna and Ricketts, 95.
life into sacred and secular. Everything you do is now part of your sacred ministry for God.¹

Understanding this all-encompassing truth means that everyone must see him or herself as a full-time minister. The artificial division between clergy and laity must be removed. We must change our vocabulary. "If we are all priests, then ‘you’ must become ‘us’ and ‘he’ must become ‘we.’"² Paul wrote, “For we are laborers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9), and “the love of Christ compels us” (2 Cor 5:14). The New English Bible reads, “The love of Christ leaves us no choice.” The same sentiments were expressed by Ellen White. “One who believes in Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour is to be a co-worker with Him, bound up with His heart of infinite love, cooperating with Him in works of self-denial and benevolence.”³

Listening to the Sabbath afternoon conversation of most church members gives one the impression that the members are just sitting on the sidelines simply watching the play-by-play moves in the great controversy. Phil Downer spoke from his heart on this issue. “I believe too many Christians occupy the rank of ‘disgruntled Christian.’ We need to put aside our complaining about the culture long enough to build relationships of love and introduce others to Christ. He will change people’s lives—and they will change the culture.”⁴ Downer added,


²Ibid., 26.


⁴Downer, 78.
Too many Christians have developed a ‘bunker’ mentality, hiding out from the hostile world. . . . They work for Christian organizations, send their kids to Christian schools, and only socialize with people from church. Their only interaction with non-believers is during the short dash into the grocery store.¹

In most cases, the Adventist church is shirking its responsibilities. It has a mission to the world and a message for the world, but it is content with mostly talk. The amazing thing is that some Adventists are very critical of other denominations who are actually doing far more than Adventists to share Christ and to demonstrate His love in practical ministries. One church that seems to catch much criticism and concern from Adventists is the Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois, founded by Bill and Lynn Hybels. Most people who talk about Willow Creek focus upon their drama, music, and seeker service. What they are missing is the key difference between Willow Creek and other churches. To be a member of Willow Creek, one must be active in a ministry and must be a part of a small group. In other words, the membership standards are much higher than for most churches. It is interesting that while some churches see true religion as a commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy or abstinence from certain things, Willow Creek believes true religion is a commitment to the body of Christ and to ministry.

Bill Hybels attended Bible classes at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois. He was captivated by the picture that Gilbert Bilezikian painted of a truly Christian community. “Dr. B,” as he is affectionately called by his students, asked, “Do any of you students want to do something truly great with your life? Do you want to sign up for the most compelling, far-reaching challenge in this world? Do you want to discover real

¹Ibid., 77.
excitement?" He continued without apology: "Then commit yourself to Jesus' vision of establishing communities of God here on this earth. Devote yourself to the church!"¹

Dr. B would become animated as he spoke, "The early church was alive. It was Spirit-led, so it was fresh and energetic and creative and dynamic and unpredictable. It wasn't about maintaining the status quo or going through the motions. It was about the Holy Spirit working dramatically and explosively in people's lives."²

Dr. B, an impassioned Frenchman, lamented the condition in most churches:

"Fellowship means little more than superficial conversations in the church lobby after a service. . . . The 'haves' give little thought and even less help to the 'have-nots.' The church operates as an isolated island of subculture, wondering why it is ignored and unappreciated by the community at large. Evangelism is, more often than not, 'something we ought to be doing' but aren't. This is a modern day tragedy."³

The solution Dr. B suggested was a return to church as described in Acts 2.⁴ Lynn Hybels comments on how deeply this dream was planted in Bill's heart and her own. "We didn't dream about how to be a big church. We dreamed about Acts 2. We dreamed about what it would feel like to be part of a biblically functioning community. We

¹Hybels and Hybels, 50.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 47-48.
dreamed about how to be the church. And we believed that the dream was straight from the heart of Jesus. The church is, after all, His vision.\textsuperscript{1}

It is easy to look critically at what other churches are doing. What we need to do is to look seriously at our responsibility. This is a topic for much prayer and planning. It is a topic to be addressed not only by the pastor and a few leaders but by the whole leadership team and, eventually, the entire church body. The \textit{Spiritual Body Building Lessons} quote Paul Benjamin, author of \textit{The Equipping Ministry}: “Responsibility [for church life] is mutually shared. The lack of numerical growth, unmet budgets, or inaccurate announcements become corporate problems, not just individual ones. The congregation asks the question, ‘What are we going to do about these problems?’”\textsuperscript{2}

These problems can no longer be passed along to the pastor; they must be seen as responsibilities to be met together as a united church.

Accountability for meeting goals should go along with accepting responsibilities. “True leadership commits to results. Leaders pour their energy, excitement, prayer, blood, and sweat into solving the obstacles between them and the vision God has given for that church.”\textsuperscript{3} When the results are not happening, then the true leader will seek to discover why.

Barna observed that a “user-friendly church” involves church members in the responsibility of following up their own interests. That is, if a member invites someone to

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 50.


\textsuperscript{3}George, 86.
a church service, he/she is expected to sit with visitors, take him/her home to lunch, and follow up with that person. Usually, when a “visitation team” attempts to visit the interested person, only a small number of the teams actually get into the home. When they do, the results are often discouraging.1

Members also need to carry important responsibilities in providing care for other members. “Lay-led small groups remove the impossible demand for a senior pastor or a staff member to shepherd 500, 150, or even 50 people. Gifted members assume pastoral-care responsibilities for 10 other lay people, each participating in the ministry process.”2

The climate of the church is another area of responsibility that should also be shared by all the church members, particularly when dealing with conflict. “All vital families have conflicts.” The church family is no different. “Where there are creative, excited people, conflicts arise. The challenge is to keep these conflicts open and public so the team can take responsibility for resolving them.”3 Keeping the conflict under cover only delays a problem that could grow and become damaging. All the church members have the responsibility of raising concerns that could affect the church. Discussing problems openly, with a cooperative spirit, usually leads to a resolution.

Accountability is a touchy subject in the church. Some think that since people are working as volunteers, they cannot be held responsible for the consistency or quality of their work. Others think Christians should overlook failures or make excuses for those


2Rehnborg, Section 1, 7.

3Harvey and Drolet, 20.
who do not do what they commit to do. Nothing could be further from the truth. God expects us to do what we say we will do. Scripture has a story about this. A man said, “I will go,” but did not. Another man said “I won’t,” but he did (Matt 21:28-31). It is only right for Christians to honor their commitments and fulfill their responsibilities (Ps 15:4).

Three areas require accountability when one considers a discipling ministry. The first and most important is character (who he or she is). The second is competency (what he or she can do). And the third is community (with whom does he or she do it in the walk with Christ).\(^1\) Effectiveness in ministry requires these three areas to be considered in the planning and evaluation phases.

Clear communication of what is expected provides “an atmosphere focused on the organization’s goals.”\(^2\) The one in charge should meet with team members individually to make sure they understand clearly what the goal is and what is expected of them. Harvey and Drolet warned leaders to “elicit from them [team members] questions or concerns they may have. Never make them second-guess your intentions.”\(^3\) At the close of a meeting, decisions and action steps must be restated, noting what will be done, who is responsible, and at what time. Distributing written notes of the meeting as soon as possible after the meeting is helpful.

Sometimes it is necessary to confront an individual who is “being tested as to how

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\(^1\)Downer, 75.

\(^2\)Harvey and Drolet, 34-35.

\(^3\)Ibid., 38.
important the ministry is to him or her in light of God's call.¹ He/she must be held accountable—with love, respect, and sensitivity. When people need counsel, we should "emphasize" how we want them to behave in the future.² If the focus is on the past, we end up with blame and recrimination.

"Accountability is an integral part of discipling, and you need it in your life," explained Phil Downer, author of *Eternal Impact*, in his practical book on mentoring. He elaborated, "Without a Barnabas, a friend or two with whom you can disclose yourself, there won't be anybody to check your spiritual temperature. . . . I've never known a great Christian leader who didn't have this sort of relationship."³

Downer called for accountability in equipping men and women one-on-one. He insisted on equippers asking the hard questions. For example, "How often did you have a quiet time last week? What one thing have you done recently that your family will remember five years from now? When did you struggle with your thought life, and how did you respond?"⁴ This rather open approach to accountability may not be comfortable at first, but "God will use you as an implement in the lives of men."

Accountability is essential in growing a small-group ministry. One aspect of most

¹Steinbron, 130-131.
²Harvey and Drolet, 58.
³Downer, p. 73.
⁴Ibid., 85-86.
small-group ministries is the “covenant,” a commitment to attend every week, to prepare ahead of time, and to keep confidences. Experience has shown that “a group that has established a covenant of commitment will not easily dissolve, but will grow and multiply.”

The Jethro model (Exod 18:13-23) included different layers of leadership to coordinate an expanding small-group ministry. Most leaders of small groups today are required to turn in a weekly report. Any leader who does not submit his/her reports will not be retained in the network. Cerna explained, “It is only what is accounted for that gets done. It may be a sad commentary on human nature, but we all tend to do only that for which we must give an account.”

Giving Affirmation and Recognition in Community

Jesus recognized and affirmed those who did well. For example, He healed ten lepers. Only one, a Samaritan, returned to glorify God. Jesus said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” (Luke 17:17). Jesus commented on the fact that nine men did not come back to show appreciation. God, in whose image we are made, desires expressions of appreciation. Jesus specifically affirmed the Samaritan who returned to

1Cerna, 83.

2Rainer, The Book of Church Growth, 296.

3Cerna, 86.
give glory to God. There are lessons here for the church that must be remembered and incorporated into the life of the church.

Victor Hugo, the renowned French author, may have been right when he asserted that “man lives by affirmation, even more than by bread.” American humorist Mark Twain reflected a similar idea when he said, “I can live for two months on one good compliment.” Christians, too, are strengthened and lifted when they are genuinely affirmed.

Jesus said His people are “the salt of the world” (Matt 5:13). Salt is a preservative. Believers bring the saving grace of God to the world. Salt also brings out the flavor of food. Christians, like Christ, bring out the very best in people by showing them love (1 John 3:1-2). That love is then reflected in those who are open to receiving His love (1 John 4:17-19). We also must remember that many people who have not openly accepted Christ are still being drawn to Him (John 12:32, John 1:9). The work of the Spirit is evident in their lives (Rom 2:28-29).

Affirmation looks for the commendable qualities in people and expresses high value for them as individuals. This is vitally important in an equipping ministry. “Appreciation is the oil that keeps the wheels of ministry turning.” We all need to be acknowledged; we all need to feel needed and special. “Affirmation is a key to the retention and continued involvement of your members in ministry.”

1Samaan, Christ’s Way of Reaching People, 25.
2Kim A. Johnson, Spiritual Body Building Manual, 105
3Rehnborg, Section 2, 98.
Leaders should look for opportunities to express appreciation. Modeling appreciation in a church-board meeting or leadership meeting pulls members together and provides an atmosphere for productive meetings. Simple relational questions or group exercises also can help. For example, “strength bombardment” focuses on one person if the group is not too large. Everyone in the group shares what that person brings to the group. In a team of six to eight people, everyone can be honored in one session. One should allow about 45 minutes for this exercise.¹

Philip Samaan raised some difficult questions about the way Christians relate to each other.

What about the church? Is it really a hospital for the bruised and broken? Are all our energies channeled toward their spiritual recovery? Why is it that sometimes we do not reach out even to our own church members with affirmation and healing? They may even stay in church with us for years without experiencing spiritual improvement and recovery. And then they sometimes leave it without experiencing that genuine love we so often talk about—love that manifests itself to them in concrete deeds of kindness and friendliness.²

The experience of some church members, as Samaan described, is all too common in many Adventist churches. Expressing affirmation does not come naturally to most people. It is a trait that must be cultivated. Affirmation takes many forms. One of the greatest affirmations is simply to listen respectfully to a person. People, in general, have a tendency to talk too much and fail to listen carefully to others.

As Christians, we have the answers to many of life’s most perplexing questions. We understand the sin problem and the plan of salvation. We make the mistake of

¹Harvey and Drolet, 31.
²Samaan, Christ’s Way of Reaching People, 31.
thinking that people want our “truth.” In reality, people want first of all to know whether we are genuine. When they see a genuine demonstration of caring, listening, and compassion, they are ready to receive our testimony. According to the written account, when Christ first met a person, He spent very little time with them before sharing truth. But in the more detailed accounts we have of His conversations with people, such as Nicodemus and the woman at the well (John 3, 4), Christ treated them with dignity and respect. He listened to them carefully and responded to them appropriately. This is affirmation!

Paul Tournier said that the people who had helped him the most were the ones who “listened to me in silence” and then shared their own personal struggles and experience.1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.”2 Giving the gift of listening is communicating the value and importance one places on another person. When you are giving yourself totally to others for a period of time, you are treating them the way that Jesus treats all of us.

Affirmation can be given in many different ways. It can be done verbally or in writing, but it should be done personally, consistently, and specifically.3 “It is the comment, the smile, the word of welcome or thanks that says, ‘We’re glad you are here’; ‘I know that you are an important child of God . . .’; ‘You are important in the life of the

1Ibid., 65.
2Ibid.
3Harvey and Drolet, 132.
church." Other simple ways to affirm are introducing the person to others, asking about family and job, reminding about upcoming meetings, sharing a story or joke, providing child care, calling when he or she is absent, and expressing personal concern.

Recognition is similar to affirmation, but whereas affirmation is a celebration of the worth of a person, recognition is a celebration of some accomplishment, a job well done, a success experienced. Assumedly, Christians do not serve for recognition, but all people desire to know that their contribution is valued. Recognition may be given in many different ways: giving certificates, having a picnic or party, planning a commissioning service, putting photos of events on the bulletin board, expressing appreciation to the person’s family and friends, giving books to graduates during the church service, and praying for members by name and for their ministry during the morning prayer.

“People who are recognized are energized.” One wonders what might happen if every ministry leader continually looked for creative ways to recognize involvement and accomplishment. “Getting together to celebrate successes and project completions and to welcome new members not only provides shared personal experiences, but also, and more importantly, brings joy and laughter to the team.” Our churches should be filled with many such positive events!

1 Rehnborg, Section 2, 93, 98.
2 Ibid., 2-108-109.
3 Harvey and Drolet, 31.
4 Ibid., 30.
Evaluation in Community

Evaluation is not a pretty word in the church. Somehow we have come to think that if a program is spiritual, it is above the level that needs objective evaluation. Invariably, when evaluation is mentioned, someone will tell a story of a person who was helped through the program. Another person will comment, “Well, if it helps one person, it is worth it.” Others will nod their heads in agreement. Seldom do those entrusted with the evaluation have the courage to ask, “What could we do if we took these same resources and focused them in more productive and meaningful ways?” We have no problem looking for and expecting the highest return on our earthly investments. We should expect the highest return from our spiritual assets as well.

Evaluation is the gauge of personal and program success. It reveals where improvements can be made. It is not all criticism, nor all accolades. It tells us where we “hit the mark’ and where an altered approach might facilitate a more desirable outcome.”1

Evaluation helps us to “rethink, refocus, and reorder priorities.”2 Robert Coleman presented an impassioned concern for the church to ask the hard questions:

Merely because we are busy, or even skilled, doing something does not necessarily mean that we are getting anything accomplished. The question must always be asked, Is it worth doing? And, does it get the job done? This is a question that should be posed continually in relation to the evangelistic activity of the church. Are our efforts to keep things going fulfilling the great commission of Christ? Do we see an ever-expanding company of dedicated men reaching the world with the gospel as a result of this ministry? That we are busy in the church trying to work one program of

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1Rehnborg, Section 2, 95.

2Harvey and Drolet, 35.
evangelism after another cannot be denied. But are we accomplishing our objective?¹

Effective evaluation of an equipping ministry requires having clear, definable goals. Once these are in place, the implementation strategy must be considered. It is usually advantageous to start small and do a pilot test of the process. One way to do this is to concentrate on the area or department of the church that seems to have the greatest need. Perhaps the Sabbath school needs some focused attention, or maybe it is youth ministry.

A number of approaches can be used to evaluate a ministry. Using goals and objectives helps to review progress and document success. Baseline measures focus more on gains that are made as a result of the intervention. Subjective measures involve telling the stories that describe the effect of the program. This can be useful when requesting funding for a new program or for extending existing programs.²

A powerful approach to evaluating organizational effectiveness is to ask the question, "How would we do it differently another time?"³ In designing evaluation questions, clarify what information is really needed and what you will do with it once it is in hand. The number of hours worked by volunteers is not useful; finding out what difference the program or service made in peoples lives is.⁴

It is easy to evaluate by using numbers—number of baptisms, number of people in attendance, dollars given, and new enrollees in the Bible course. But we seldom measure

¹Coleman, 11-12.
²Rehnborg, Section 2, 98.
³Harvey and Drolet, 36.
⁴Rehnborg, Section 2, 99.
the things that are most important—the spiritual growth of members, members’ understanding of truth, and the level of fellowship in the church. Samaan spoke about the importance of keeping our love relationship with Jesus foremost in all of our conversations with those outside the church and in our relationships with those inside the church.

In fact, sometimes I wonder if we really understand what true Christian fellowship is all about. So conditioned to quickly warn the world of a soon-coming Christ and His impending judgment, we neglect to let others know that we are His disciples by our love for each other. The two things must go hand in hand, because they both reinforce each other. For how can we be prepared for Christ’s coming, and how can we ready others, unless we experience what a loving fellowship is?1

In addition to evaluating a church, it is helpful to do an “environmental scan.” This considers what people in the community think about the church. The “environmental scan” looks at external forces and trends. What do the various entities in the neighborhood think of the church? What about the city officials, one-time visitors, former members, and members of other churches?

“Environmental scanning also looks internally to assess trends and assumptions.”2 In a sense, this is what Jesus did when He asked the disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt 16:13). He helped them to do an environmental scan, to think about the impression He was making on the people. This would be important as they went about their work of teaching and preaching. Then He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:14). He wanted them to assess their own thinking and strengthen

1Samaan, Christ’s Way of Reaching People, 61.
2Harvey and Drolet, 39.
the understanding that they had of Him and His ministry and how they might best
approach people with the gospel.

Some Adventists express surprise when they learn that surveys of people around
the country reveal that they know very little, if anything, about the church. Such
evaluations might help us to realize the necessity of returning to the biblical model of the
priesthood of all believers. We need to realize “that there is a direct correlation between
meaningful community involvement” and the perceptions people have of the church; that
these perceptions directly influence their openness to church membership.¹

Michael Foss, pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, Minnesota,
observed, “Lay people are called to the ministry of the church not the business of the
church. . . . They need a personal sense that what they are involved in is making a
difference.”² Accurate and meaningful evaluation can provide the feedback that is needed.

Evaluations can be done anytime, not just at the close of a program or ministry.
Midway through a program, an evaluation allows for “mid-course” corrections. It is
helpful to ask those attending an event or program to evaluate what is happening. This
can be done verbally or with a simple written form. Keep written records of the
evaluation. Notes made now will provide invaluable information when planning the next
event.

Giving feedback on a person’s service requires perceptiveness and tact. Feedback
on an area where the person needs to improve may be very casual. Feedback must focus

¹Rainer, Book of Church Growth, 203.

²Rehnborg, Section 1, 76.
on the behavior or task, not the person. Share what you perceive the person said or did. People often see things differently. Open discussion gives an opportunity for both to grow. Focusing on the positive actions encourages the possibility that good actions will be repeated. Appreciation should be expressed in meaningful ways.

"Exit" interviews after a person concludes a ministry provide a good time to do an evaluation. People can be asked what went well and what suggestions they have for improvements. A brief, written evaluation provides guidance for making changes. An exit interview is an excellent opportunity to explore ways the person might want to serve in other capacities in the future.

Equipping Models

Adventist churches need to develop equipping models which can be field-tested and evaluated. However, a successful model from one church cannot be borrowed wholesale by another. But many churches share much in common, and such models would help leaders to identify those components that would be effective in the mobilization of the laity in their own church. For example, the North American Division Institute of Christian Ministries has published *How to Set Up and Run an Evangelization and Discipleship Cycle in Your Church*, a manual that presents a model used by the San Fernando, California, Spanish church. It contains many useful ideas, but it must be understood that

1Ibid., 2-95.

the target population of that church is "Spanish-speaking immigrants and English-speaking babyboomer Hispanics." Other models are needed for small, mid-size, and large churches in various cultural settings and diverse communities.

Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Church* outlines the model developed at Saddleback Community Church in southern California. This Southern Baptist church grew to 10,000 members in fifteen years without owning a building or property. Growth did not come by Christians transferring from other churches. Largely, it came from bringing unbelievers to Christ and then equipping them for service.¹

Saddleback Community Church followed an intentional strategy, a process, consisting of five levels of commitment: (1) the "Community," unbelievers; (2) the "Crowd," regular church attendees; (3) the "Congregation," official church members; (4) the "Committed," serious church members who are not yet involved in service; and (5) the "Core," those who are the dedicated workers and leaders in the church. Special classes and events were designed for each group with the plan of helping them to move to deeper levels of commitment. By studying a model such as this, it is possible to identify transferrable principles and workable ideas which can be applied in similar situations.

Warren said, "Our vision has never really focused on getting big or erecting buildings; instead, our vision has been to produce disciples of Jesus Christ."² Accordingly, the purpose statement of the church is expressed in terms of results rather than activities:

"To bring people to Jesus and *membership* in his family, develop them to Christlike

¹Warren, 39.

²Ibid., 42.
maturity, and equip them for their ministry in the church and life mission in the world, in order to magnify God’s name.” Merely stating activities “makes it harder to evaluate and quantify.”

Adventists have a deep desire to proclaim the “everlasting gospel” in the context of the three angels’ messages (Rev 14:6-12), but we Adventists have overlooked the task of making disciples (Matt 18:20). Proclamation that does not include the process of disciple-making is doomed to failure. Lukewarm, tradition-bound, and cold, impersonal congregations abound. A new vision of church is needed. Evaluation must be based not on buildings, budgets, or baptisms but on the effectiveness of an equipping ministry that supports members in a loving community:

Chapter 3 has presented a survey of current, select literature that deals with nine principles of an equipping in community ministry. Grouped under the following six headings they are

1. Discovering spiritual gifts in community
2. Planning in community
3. Training and performing ministry in community
4. Maintaining responsibility and accountability in community
5. Giving affirmation and recognition in community

The main emphasis in the current literature on equipping church members focuses on the six areas which include the principles and processes which result in authentic

\[\text{Ibid.}, 107.\]
community and effective ministries. When these are implemented consistently over time, the church will grow and Jesus Christ will be magnified.

Chapter 4 presents an evaluation of the *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* used in the Brandon church.
CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING
IN THE BRANDON CHURCH

Introduction

Every year since 1997, at least one SBB group has been conducted in the Brandon church—the last three facilitated by lay leaders. To date, thirty-four members have completed SBB. Many of them are now in leadership positions. The first small groups were formed through personal invitations to the existing core leadership of the church. Johnson wrote, “It is from that open, caring, small group environment that a true leadership team can often emerge with a common philosophy and vision for the future.”

After the church-leadership team completed the SBB Lessons, the plan for subsequent groups was to prayerfully seek a mix of people—young adults and older persons, long-time members and new members, and individuals from different ethnic and educational backgrounds. Diversity adds richness to any group-learning experience and encourages a deeper level of community. Brandon’s participants experienced not only a sense of community but began to think about their own involvement in ministry.

The SBB Lessons also provided an opportunity for the participants to begin evaluating the church. At the beginning of a new SBB group formation, questions called

\[\text{Kim A. Johnson, } \textit{Spiritual Body Building Manual, 74.}\]
ice-breakers are used to start discussions. The participants were asked: “What does your local church currently do very well?” “Where could your church improve the most?” The comments and suggestions were discussed and, in some cases, were recorded and later brought back for further discussion. This approach gave participants a sense of ownership in their church. They realized that they not only had a part to play but that they could actually influence a change in the church.

This chapter presents results from the three evaluation instruments that were completed by those who had attended one full set of the sixteen-week SBB group sessions. The first evaluation instrument, the “Spiritual Body Building Exit Questionaire,” was administered at the close of each SBB group series (See Appendix E). It revealed that by the end of the series the participants were very positive about SBB and desired to find ways to continue the experience of community.

The second evaluation instrument, the “Spiritual Body Building Survey,” was designed to evaluate the influence of SBB on the participants’ understanding of key areas of discipleship and their expectations following SBB. It also measured participants’ perception of community and ministry-support experienced in the church following SBB. Some of these findings are reported in chapter 5.

A third survey, the “Brandon Church Body Life Survey” (Appendix F), was designed to measure the effectiveness of SBB in influencing attitudes and behaviors related to five key areas of discipleship. This survey revealed that those who completed SBB had made significant changes in thinking and behavior in five key areas of
Christian/church life: a nurturing ministry, community, spiritual gifts, relationship to God, and pastor/member roles.

The SBB Exit Questionnaire

The "SBB Exit Questionnaire" revealed that the feature of the group experience most appreciated by participants was the "connectedness" to other members. Having tasted the satisfaction and fulfillment of community, they expressed a deep desire to find a way to continue the experience. Many of the participants also gained new insights regarding the purpose and function of the church. Twenty-eight participants filled out the evaluation forms. No names were requested on the forms.

When the members initially thought about coming to SBB, they were not very enthusiastic. Probably this was because they knew they would be expected to make the high-level commitment to attend all sixteen sessions (See Appendix G). To the statement "My reaction when I first heard about the Spiritual Body Building series..." 50 percent responding marked "I'll give it a try." Thirty-three percent marked "We need something." Seventeen percent responded by marking "Excitement." No one responded to the two negative options, "Not another program" or "Ho Hum."

The second question asked, "How do you feel about the content of the lessons?" Of those who responded, 100 percent commented favorably on the content of the SBB Lessons. Observations included, "I thought the lessons were very in-depth," "Excellent," "Very thought provoking," "Wonderful," and "Planted many seeds in my head for future growth."
The responses to “What was the best part of the group experience, and how can it be improved?” were amazingly similar. A few representative ones included: “The small group became a family as a church should be,” “The interaction and closeness,” “The support was amazing. I felt very loved,” and “Belonging, it filled that close fellowship need.” Seventy-two percent mentioned that what they liked best was the group experience of sharing and openness. This reveals how desirous our members were for meaningful relationships. Most of them had never experienced the kind of openness and sharing they found in the group.

A recurring comment, one expressed by 34 percent of the respondents, was “I wish every church member would go through these lessons.” Another said, “It should be a part of every member’s life.” Others commented, “I really didn’t understand what God intended church to be before this series,” “I now know that I matter to God and my job in the church matters to Him,” “I hate to see this study come to an end,” and “It helped me to understand my role as a church member.”

Several people commented on their new understanding of the pastor’s role—“That all the jobs can’t be done by the pastor!” “I didn’t realize the role of the pastor before” and “This series went so fast. Please do not condense the series as it would take away from its effectiveness.” Suggestions for improvement included: “Shorten it a little,” “I think just one person should facilitate the group instead of having co-leaders,” “Don’t go over Christmas and New Years.”

The enthusiasm for SBB expressed verbally and in the exit survey at the close of each series was very high. The need was to channel that enthusiasm into accomplishing
personal and church goals. The group expectations for the continuance of community was very high.

**Spiritual Body Building Survey**

The "Spiritual Body Building Survey" was filled out in August 1999 by twenty-one participants who had completed the first three SBB groups in Brandon. A fourth SBB group finished the lessons in December 1999 and filled in the survey in July 2000. A total of twenty-eight participants completed the survey. They were asked to rank their responses on a ten-point continuum with 1 as "little" and 10 as "greatly."

The survey was designed to measure the influence SBB had on the understanding of the five key concepts of discipleship: (1) ministry of nurture, (2) community, (3) spiritual gifts, (4) relationship with God, and (5) pastor/member roles. Each of these concepts is defined and a mean score is assigned to each one. When more than one item is used to measure a discipleship concept, the individual scores are combined forming a construct.

**Ministry of Nurture**

The Ministry of Nurture is what every church member is called to do in living out the "one another" admonitions, such as that found in Eph 4:1-3: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Kim Johnson defined church as "a place where we abandon our independence, let down our masks, and are
intimately connected with one another.” Biblical references which he presented for study and discussion include 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5a. One needs to be aware that involvement in a ministry of nurture does not require specific spiritual gifts. It does require a winsome, caring, loving expression of Christlikeness lived out in the daily life.

The only item in the “Spiritual Body Building Survey” relating to the ministry of nurture is “Better understanding of the purpose of the church.” It needs to be stated that this item covers more than just nurturing one another, for example: presenting a picture of the character of God, glorifying God, and making disciples (Eph 2:4-7; 2 Cor 8:23; Matt 28:19-20). Additional items could have been included in the survey, but these are adequately covered in “The Body Life Survey,” the results of which are presented on page 128.

The ministry of nurture factor had a mean score of 9.00. This score indicates that the Spiritual Body Building Lessons helped participants gain a much clearer understanding of the purpose of the church: living and learning together as brothers and sisters in the nurturing family of Christ.

The purpose of the church is to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). A major emphasis on the “Great Commission” often overshadows the “Great Charter” (John 15:12), but these must be blended together. “God’s grand design is that His church reflect the love and unity that exists within the Godhead.” This kind of behavior is descriptive of


Ibid., 12.
"body life" (1 Pet 4:10; Rom 12:6-8). Jesus said the love and unity among His followers is the most powerful argument to the world that God sent His son and that He loves us (John 17:20-23).

The disciples were able to minister to others the nurturing love of God because they themselves had received that nurture from Jesus (John 15:12). Those Christians who receive ministering nurture have a tendency to pass it on to others. At the time of this writing, a new convert and his wife who are in the current SBB group reported that they feel a real sense of responsibility for those who joined the church at the same time they did. This couple is giving practical assistance to a single mom who was baptized with them. He said, “We’re watching out for others in our group as well.”

Community

People will open up and share in a group when they feel that they are in a safe place and that they are valued. Bonds of trust which are created by interdependence, honesty, consistency between word and deed, affability, and the extension of trust make it possible for members to experiment with what they learn and to seek support from the group.¹ This defines some of the characteristics of “community,” but Christian community includes an awareness that Jesus Himself meets with the group that is gathered in His name (Matt 18:19-20). Kim Johnson shared how God’s vision for His church began to

¹Harvey and Drolet, 18-20.
reshape his thinking as a pastor: “I finally came to understand that we cannot be successful Christians until we also know how to be Christians together.”

Three items under question #3 in the survey are forming a “community construct”: “Experienced openness and honesty in the group,” “Experienced caring and bonding in the group,” and, “Gained insights from group discussions.” The mean score for this construct was 8.68. This indicates that SBB was an extremely positive community-building experience for the participants.

**Spiritual Gifts**

Members who apply a knowledge of spiritual gifts in making decisions about ministry opportunities are more fulfilled and fruitful in carrying out their responsibilities (1 Pet 4:10-11). The *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* give some practical advice about spiritual gifts: “You can treat spiritual gifts like a picture that you hang on the wall and admire periodically. Or you can treat it like a new car that you get into and use over and over to take you where you need to go. So get behind the wheel and hit the gas.”

The “Spiritual Body Building Survey” measured the help SBB gave participants in understanding spiritual gifts. The concept was measured by responses to two items, “Better understanding of spiritual gifts” and “Better understanding of my spiritual gifts.” The “spiritual gifts” construct has a mean score of 8.80. This indicates that participants

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2Ibid., 65.
gained a much greater understanding of spiritual gifts as a result of SBB and appreciated the practical help in this area.

The *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* were designed to teach spiritual gifts in community. Participants studied the lesson the week before and came prepared to discuss it. The lesson content is not only cognitive but also directs one towards the affective domain. For example, the “foundation blocks” for spiritual gifts provide openings for the group members to discuss personal challenges in their own lives. They show how spiritual gifts influence self-worth, sense of belonging, the certainty of spiritual calling, freedom from guilt placed on us by other people, involvement in team ministry, and involvement in ministry together with Christ.¹

**Relationship with God**

The plan of salvation, assurance, and the basics in building and maintaining a relationship with God can never be stressed too much. They must be presented in fresh, creative ways. An understanding of the assurance of salvation and a relationship with God must be lived out in the body. Kim Johnson in the *Spiritual Body Building Lessons* explained how the church can help people to receive assurance: “By the church modeling acceptance, the fearful one can say, ‘O, now I see what Christ’s acceptance is all about. If Jesus is like you, I think I can trust Him for my salvation after all’.”²

The “Spiritual Body Building Survey” has one item that measures the

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¹Ibid., 39-46.

²Ibid., 91.
understanding of the assurance of salvation. Participants responded to the statement, “Better understanding of the assurance of salvation.” The mean score was 8.38. This is a fairly high score when one remembers that this reflects a “better understanding” by active church members who presumably hear about salvation on a regular basis.

**Pastor/Member Roles**

Kim Johnson made what many members would consider a radical suggestion regarding the role of the pastor:

To fulfill their role of equippers, pastors need to spend the majority of their time with the segment of the congregation that is the healthiest, spiritually and emotionally, training them to minister. Pastors should mentor the most mature Christians in order to multiply themselves and build ministry leaders who can, in turn, equip others.¹

Pastors of growing churches are not generally the “super stars.” They are those who put a priority on discipleship and delegation. By including members in church planning and by working alongside them in ministry, energy is generated that is multiplied over and over again.²

Once members realize what the role of the pastor is, they come to the realization that they probably need to have a much more active role in the church than they had thought. They see themselves in a new light. Believers really are in “full-time ministry” whether they work in an office, as a salesperson on the road, or as a stay-at-home mom or dad.

¹Ibid., 35.
²Schwarz, 23.
The "Spiritual Body Building Survey" has two items which combined measure an understanding of the pastor/member role: "Better understanding of the role of the pastor and Better understanding that every member is a ‘minister’." The mean score for this "Roles" construct is 9.21. This represents a major increase in the understanding of the role of the pastor and the fact that every member is a minister of Christ.

The Body Life Survey

Thirty-four SBB participants filled out the "Body Life Survey" in August 2000. While the "Spiritual Body Building Survey" measures "understanding" of five key areas of discipleship, the "Body Life Survey" measures "attitudes and behaviors" related to these same five areas: (1) ministry of nurture, (2) community, (3) spiritual gifts, (4) relationship with God, and (5) pastor/member roles.

Participants were instructed to put an O on a ten-point continuum scale to rate their attitudes and behaviors before SBB, and an X to rate them after completing SBB. The "pre" and "post" responses provided by the participants from the four groups of participants were combined for statistical calculation. A t test at the $p<.001$ level was used for calculating statistical significance.

Ministry of Nurture

The ministry of nurture items in the survey measure actual behaviors reported by participants. Five survey items #2, #3, #4, #6, #7 are combined to form a "ministry of nurture" construct. Participants ranked each item on a continuum from 1 (seldom) to 10 (often). The items are:
#2. I make it a point to try and talk to visitors who attend our church.

#3. I offer to sit with a member or guest who is sitting alone.

#4. I invite members and visitors to share a meal with me and my family.

#6. I make it a point to contact or visit a member who I know is sick or hurting.

#7. I drop a card of encouragement or phone to express appreciation to other members.

Notice the “Before” and “After” mean scores shown in table 1. The research data show that SBB participants perceived that they were much more nurturing of other members and visitors attending the church after completing SBB. This was indicated by the change from the “before” score of 3.82 to an “after” score of 5.61. The 1.78 mean score difference reveals statistical significance at a level of $p < .001$.

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The “after” mean score of 5.61 indicates that though some growth has been realized in this area, the church leadership needs to continue to encourage church members to reach out and minister to each other. The ministry of nurture is really about
member care. It is the responsibility of the body to provide this kind of care for one another. The larger the church, the more imperative it is that this not be left to chance. Even small churches can overlook the very ones who need the most nurturing. That very need is another reason why every church should have some kind of small groups and a regular method of reporting what is happening in its nurturing ministry. Members who are not taking an active part in a small group should be assigned to an involved member who has agreed to be part of a member-care ministry.

Community

The "Body Life Survey" items dealing with community include five items: #9, #10, #13, #14, #15. The five items are combined to form a "community" construct. The items are:

# 9. I can be open and honest in sharing my thoughts and feelings with fellow church members.

#10. I welcome group support when working on a church project.

#13. I look forward to times of fun and fellowship with other church members.

#14. I have a sense of belonging in the church.

#15. I experience love from others in the church.

Please note the "Before" and "After" mean scores in table 2.
The research data show that SBB participants believed that they experienced a greater sense of community after completing SBB. This was indicated by the change from the “before” mean score of 6.53 to an “after” mean score of 8.55. The 2.03 mean score difference reveals statistical significance at a level of $p < .001$.

"In a world that is full of strife, fractured relationships, blame, criticism, loneliness, and independence, the Trinity is working twenty-four hours a day to bring people together."¹ Most pastors can relate to an insightful observation made about the need for community in the church: "One of the on-going challenges of the church as the body of Christ is for its members to know each other as persons—individuals who are unique and important."² Genuine community in the body is essential if unbelievers are to be drawn to Christ and His church.

The influence of true community in a church is one of the greatest qualities a church can possess. Usually this kind of community is lived out in small groups. The group may be a Sabbath School class, a ministry team, or the church board, but each can

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²Rehnborg, 2, 53.
function as a small group. For that reason, the SBB group leader should not only model group skills but at every opportunity teach those skills to the participants. The small group provides an excellent format for equipping church members. It is non-threatening, supportive, and provides the “lab” for experimentation. The SBB Lessons include opportunities for participants to become involved in simple nurture and outreach events.

**Spiritual Gifts**

The “spiritual gifts” construct is made up of two survey items: #11, #12.

#11. I carefully and prayerfully consider my spiritual gifts before accepting an office or ministry opportunity in the church.

#12. I realize that the spiritual success of the church depends upon every member using his/her spiritual gifts in loving ministry to members and visitors.

Notice the “Before” and “After” mean scores in table 3.

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The research data show that SBB participants used their understanding of spiritual gifts, in general, and of their own spiritual gifts, specifically, to make decisions about
accepting a church office or becoming involved in a ministry. The “before” mean score of 5.79 reveals that most participants had a fair understanding of spiritual gifts before SBB. The “after” mean score is 8.91. This reveals a mean-score difference of 3.12. This shows the greatest amount of change in any of the five areas measured in the “Body Life Survey” and is statistically significance at a level of \( p < .001 \).

This construct measured the participants’ perceived application of the knowledge of spiritual gifts when making decisions about what ministries they should do in the church. It also measured their attitudes about the importance of spiritual gifts to the success of the church. On both considerations, the positive change was significant.

Too often “spiritual gifts” are seen just as personal. It is important to understand how the use, misuse, or abuse of the gifts can impact the entire church. The SBB Lessons include the use of a modern parable about an orchestra to illustrate the importance of coordinating spiritual gifts in a church. The parable draws a verbal picture of the opening night’s concert entitled “The Glory of God.” At the time scheduled for the concert to begin, only half of the performers are present; some are sitting in the wrong section, some are talking to each other, while the conductor is trying to get their attention. After relating the parable, the question is asked, “What aspects of this parable and accompanying suggestions relate to your church? What changes do you sense God is calling your church to make in order to create great music?”

It is only when the right people are in the right place at the right time using their spiritual gifts that the church will bring glory to God. This is a critical issue facing

\begin{footnote}{1} Kim A. Johnson, \textit{Spiritual Body Building Lessons}, 73-78. \end{footnote}
churches today. Until it is addressed seriously, the members will be uninvolved and the unbelievers untouched.

**Relationship to God**

Two survey items were combined to measure the “relationship with God construct.” The items are #1, #8:

#1. I have the assurance of salvation and a growing relationship with God.

#8. I respond to some slight, frustration, hurt, or put-down with love.

Please see the “Before” and “After” mean scores in table 4.

The research data show that SBB participants believed that they had a greater assurance of salvation and a stronger growing relationship with God after SBB. The “before” mean score of 5.97 reveals that most participants had a lukewarm relationship with the Lord. The “after” mean score of 7.90 reveals a positive change which is statistically significant at a level of \( p < .001 \).

**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP TO GOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 7.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Everything the believer does in the church or in the way of service in the community must
grow out of a relationship with God. Power to live a transformed life and power that will
transform others through ministry flow from God (Rom 1:16; 2 Cor 5:18; Phil 4:13).
Nothing, therefore, is more important than one’s relationship with God and the assurance
that undergirds it (Rom 8:31-37). Ellen White spoke to this matter: “But many people are
sadly ignorant in regard to the plan of salvation; they need more instruction upon this all-
important subject than upon any other.”

The SBB Lessons address this issue in the chapter entitled “The Kiss.” It
delineates five “Assurance barriers” (1) Legalism, (2) Distorted God-concept,
(3) Dependence on feelings, (4) Worrying too much about self, and (5) Difficulty trusting. After presenting strong biblical arguments and practical down-to-earth illustrations to
address the five barriers, a reflection question is asked, What difference would it make in
your Christian life if you could be as sure of your salvation now as you will be when you
actually arrive in heaven?

A relationship with God will be reflected in relationships with others. Even though
the Christian will always have room to grow, his/her relationships will be characterized by
humility, patience, and love (Gal 5:22).

1White, Gospel Workers, 158.

1Kim A. Johnson, Spiritual Body Building Lessons, 86-91.

2Ibid., 88.
Pastor and Member Roles

Item #5 in the "Body Life Survey" was designed to measure attitudes about pastoral and member roles: *I think the pastor's ministry is more important to God than my ministry.*

Notice again the “Before” and “After” group mean scores in table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PASTOR/MEMBER ROLES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>Mean Score Differences</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>2-tail Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 5.88</td>
<td>-2.24</td>
<td>-3.75</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 3.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “before” and “after” scores show a perceived positive change in attitude regarding the role of both the pastor and lay person. The “before” mean score of 5.88 reveals a traditional view of the pastoral role. The “after” score of 3.64 shows movement in the desired direction that is statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Bill Hybels said, “One of the best contributions that pastors can make to their church is to create a leadership culture in which others can lead, cast a vision, and organize volunteers around different parts of the ministry.”\(^1\) Another pastor was shocked when he realized he was actually hurting his members by his ministry. He felt that he

\(^1\)Hybels and Hybels, 154.
needed to confess this to God “because He had shown me clearly that I would be held responsible for every ministry I stole from my people. And I had a list of them. I asked God to show me how to avoid that in the future.”

The importance of the five areas of discipleship presented here are not a matter of style or preference. These are inextricably intertwined with God’s plan for His church. If any one of them is not in place, like a critical missing part of a car engine, the church will fail to function as God intended. This tragedy must be seen for what it is because “the Godhead’s plan for the entire universe is to be accomplished primarily through the church!”

*Spiritual Body Building* is an effective tool for equipping church members in community. As the participants interact with the lessons, the facilitator, and other group members they gain a better understanding of biblical concepts of church and ministry, and this is reflected in a significant change in attitudes and behaviors that directly influence how they do church.

*Spiritual Body Building Groups* must not become ends in themselves. They require the development of a carefully thought-through strategy well before the last night of SBB to take advantage of the window of opportunity created by the group sessions. Seven potential outcomes are outlined in the *Spiritual Body Building Manual*: (1). Fostering personal spiritual renewal, (2). Developing a shared vision among leaders and

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influencers, (3) Reshaping the church culture by positively influencing values and attitudes, (4) Assimilating both new and veteran members into the Body of Christ, (5) Transforming existing groups within the church, (6) Giving birth to new small groups, and (7) Becoming the launching pad for a Ministry Development Process.¹

Chapter 5 of this dissertation outlines a follow-up strategy for *Spiritual Body Building Groups* that was developed and implemented by the church leadership team in the Brandon church.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF A FOLLOW-UP
STRATEGY FOR SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING GROUPS

Introduction

The *Spiritual Body Building* group is an effective tool for creating community in a church and in preparing members for an equipping ministry, as was documented in chapter 4. The program builds enthusiasm among participants to make necessary changes personally and creates an openness to organizational change. Too often, however, SBB becomes an end in itself: “A good time was had by all.” In other words, SBB can become just another program in the yearly calendar. It does raise expectations, however, that things are going to change in the church. Question 4 in the “SBB Survey” asked, “What expectations did you have after going through SBB?” The most frequent response to this question was related to continuing the sense of “connectedness,” “bonding,” or “community.” Responses included: “Becoming closer to new members,” “I thought everyone would grow closer together as a real family,” “Closer friends,” and “Meet together on a regular basis like once a month or quarterly.”

The second most frequent response had to do with outreach, such as “Moving ahead with ministry,” “Start a small-group ministry,” “If our group would meet once a month or so to plan, focus, review.” There was an earnest desire on the part of most of
the participants to see something happen to build up the church and reach out to others.

The second part of question 4 on the survey asked, "To what extent were your expectations met? Of yourself? the group? the church?" The mean score on this from all four SBB groups combined was 6.48. These results must be understood in context. When the survey was first administered, only the first three SBB groups were included. The mean score for the three groups was 4.25. Two of the respondents were very negative and gave a "0" score to some of the items. Due to the sample size, the negative responses somewhat skewed the results. On the other hand, the fourth SBB group was made up mainly of new members recently transferred from other places. They were still in the honeymoon phase of church life in Brandon. The mean score for group 4 alone was 8.8. Thus the combined mean score for the four groups was raised to 6.48. The data show that the expectation of continuing a close sense of community was not met following SBB. Addressing this need was one of the reasons for this project.

The experience of SBB is so effective at raising people’s desire for change, that it has to be tempered to fit the reality of how churches change. This is particularly true concerning the expectations raised by the close bonding that usually takes place in SBB. Just as there is usually a little letdown following a spiritual revival or an organized retreat, such as a marriage weekend, the same thing can happen with SBB. The participants, like Peter, James, and John who wanted to stay on the mountain with Jesus, must be told about the responsibilities down in the valley (Mark 9:1-27).

On the other hand, the expectations do need to be raised that things are going to change in the church. This requires, as in everything, much prayer and advanced planning.
that is aligned with the church mission statement and is sensitive to the resources of the 
congregation. Waiting before the Lord, study, and consultation are required to develop a 
strategy that will effectively advance God's work.

Because I realized that the church would sink into a maintenance mode unless the 
energy from SBB was directed towards clearly defined goals, I met with four elders to do 
strategic planning. The previous year, seventeen people were baptized; a number of them 
had been directed into a ministry. New ministries had been launched, and planning had 
been followed up with support for key leaders. However, a comprehensive strategy was needed.

Aubrey Malphurs describes the equipping strategy as "the process that determines 
how you will accomplish the mission of the ministry." Three elements are essential and 
must be clearly articulated: the overall mission, the process, and the answer to the 
question, "How?"1 Win Arn cautions against single-event interventions and emphasizes 
the need for a carefully designed strategy:

An intervention event, by itself, will not produce growth. . . . The new pastor arrives 
and business continues; the sanctuary is rebuilt, the renewed-pastor or lay leader loses 
enthusiasm or leaves; the seminar is forgotten. Intervention events only create 
"windows of opportunity" which, for a limited time, create an environment where 
growth is more likely to occur—if appropriate strategy is applied.2

1 Malphurs, 44-47.

2 Win Arn, The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry (Monrovia, CA: Church 
Growth, 1988), 43, quoted in Aubrey Malphurs, Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins, 
How to Change a Church without Destroying It (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 
125.
Strategic Planning

When I met with the elders, we reviewed the church’s mission statement: “Invite people into a personal relationship with Jesus and empower them to become mature disciples who will use their spiritual gifts to grow the body of the church.” A mission statement cannot be just pretty prose for the church bulletin. It must permeate the hearts of the leaders.

The word “invite” is winsome. No coercion, use of force, or judgmental spirit is involved. It is like offering a thirsty person a glass of water (Isa 55:1; John 7:37-38; Rev 22:17). The emphasis is on “relationship.” People are not called to just believe doctrine or join a church. They are invited into a relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ (John 17:3). The word “empower” denotes more than synergy. It is God working through His people to give supernatural power for living (Rom 1:16-17).

“Mature disciples” abide in the Word (John 8:31), in prayer (Mark 9:29; Col 4:2), and in worship (John 4:23-24; Heb 10:25). They are willing to bear the cross (Luke 14:27; Gal 2:20). They have the same burden for people that Christ has, and they are known by their love (Matt 10:5-8; 24-25; John 15:12). They use their spiritual gifts in community, and as a result the church grows (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12).

The Brandon church-mission statement was clear, but it was easy to lose the big picture in the details. The process was still too much “hit and miss.” Healthy churches have a clearly defined “workable process to turn seekers into saints, turn consumers into contributors, turn members into ministers, and turn an audience into an army.”

1Warren, 46.
Two equipping needs in Brandon were identified from personal observation and confirmed by the first three groups who completed the "Spiritual Body Building Survey": (1) Provide members with ongoing ministry support which would include planning, training, and supervision, and (2) develop and maintain community.

In the fall of 1998, plans had been made for a major evangelistic meeting to be held in the church by a conference evangelist in the spring of 2000. Those meetings were a part of our strategy. Too often public evangelism is disappointing and discouraging. The meetings give the appearance that something is happening; however, too often, little preparation, few interests, and hit-or-miss follow-up move the church one step further along the road to disillusionment. Brandon church had not had a major crusade for at least twelve years. Successful Revelation Seminars had been held about seven years ago; so it was time for an evangelistic series. The church needed to get ready on both a personal and corporate level.

There was a consensus, at the planning session with the elders, that whatever equipping we did it should have a small-group component along with some practical training. My objective originally was to develop and present a program that would be a continuation of SBB principles and processes as part of an overall equipping strategy. The four elders, however, while agreeing with the objective, suggested a different approach. They had just returned from a "Lay Pastor Seminar," a weekend training course. Part of their assignment was to conduct a *Making Friends for God Seminar* and a *Prayer Warriors Seminar* in the local church. The elders felt strongly that these seminars would meet specific needs in our church. I was pleased by their enthusiasm, and realized
that a "bottom-up" or "grass-root" process was highly desirable in implementing a strategy. We prayed, studied the materials, and discussed the upcoming evangelistic meetings. The seminars they suggested apparently were suited to accomplish our goals of providing ministry support and developing community, a good follow-up to the principles and processes presented in SBB.

Even though the material in both seminars suggests using a small-group format, the lesson plans are largely cognitive. We added our own discussion questions slanted toward the affective domain.

The strategy was discussed with the church board and unanimously supported. The first seminar would be offered on Wednesday evenings in the place of the midweek service. To include as many people as possible, the seminar would be offered as part of a "family night," beginning with a light supper at six o’clock; at seven o’clock, special programs for children and youth would run concurrently with the small-group seminar.

**Group Leaders’ Meetings**

Five group leaders, four local elders, and I were selected to facilitate the discussions at each session. All four of the elders had some experience in leading groups, including the facilitation of certain portions of SBB.

The leadership group met for one and a half hours each week on the specified day. The format for that meeting was simple and straightforward. An opportunity was provided to share the "highs and lows" of the week, to pray, to discuss the basic concepts of equipping disciples, and to review and discuss the lesson for that night. To provide
accountability, the group worked through a contract in which we committed ourselves to the process and to each other. (See Appendix H.)

An evaluation was completed by the leaders at the end of the twelve weeks and responses were favorable (Appendix I). The first question asked, “In conducting your small group, how helpful to you were the leadership sessions in the following areas?” The overall rating using a composite of all seven items was 8.79 on a scale from 1 (Little) to 10 (Great). (See Table 6.)

**TABLE 6**

EVALUATION OF GROUP LEADERS’ MEETINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In conducting your small group, how helpful to you were the leadership sessions in the following areas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal sharing (community)</td>
<td>9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praying together</td>
<td>9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing group leadership issues</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning together</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the seminar concepts</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing small group dynamics</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing of the previous session</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scale: “Little” 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 “Great”; N=5.*
To the question, "How important do you think group leaders sessions are to building community and equipping church members?" the mean score was 9.8. Comments under "What do you think would have improved the group leaders' sessions?" included: "Preview the entire group sessions including content, objectives, etc.," and "I was pleased with the sessions just as we held them."

The success of any small-group ministry is directly related to an effective leadership group. If the leaders are not experiencing true community among themselves, probably community will not happen among the members. The leadership group "models" what a genuine small group is like. The meetings also provide the time to discuss problem areas and to process what is happening in the other groups.

Making Friends for God Seminar

*Making Friends for God Seminar* is a five-part video series by Mark Finley, director and speaker of the "It Is Written" telecast. The videos are approximately thirty minutes long and, although somewhat dated in clothing styles, the content is excellent. The focus is on ways to build bridges and share one's faith in a natural, inoffensive way. A fifty-two-page workbook is available for use with the series.

Promotion and Attendance

Considerable promotion including bulletin inserts, mailings, announcements in church, and personal telephone calls were done for this seminar. (See Appendix J.) A response card was included, and people were encouraged to sign up in advance in order to have adequate materials available. Fifty-two people came to the opening session.
including the five leaders. Towards the end of the first meeting, opportunity was given for the people to sign a covenant. (See Appendix K.) Forty people signed the group covenant.

Seminar Format

The program format included a brief welcome, introductory comments, and the video presentation followed by small-group discussions. The introductory portion of the program was held in the sanctuary because of the availability of installed audiovisual equipment. This also allowed time for the fellowship hall to be cleaned after supper to make it available for a group meeting. At the first session, the small-group leaders were introduced and people chose the group they wished to attend. Groups met in Sabbath-school rooms and in the fellowship hall.

The small groups followed the adapted study guide with almost equal emphasis on content and community building. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings. The small groups closed with conversational prayer. Everyone returned to the sanctuary at 8:25 P.M. for a few minutes of feedback, concluding thoughts, announcements about the following week’s program, and prayer. Sessions closed at the time announced, not an inconsequential detail when you expect people to attend a five-week seminar.

First Night Feedback Session

Following the first night’s session, group leaders met for debriefing. Four of the groups reported a very positive interaction. The leaders were extremely pleased with the
response of the people in their groups and how everything flowed together. One leader had some difficulty. The irregular people in his group greatly discouraged him, especially when he compared his group with the others. He seemed so let down by the experience that I offered to help him with his group the following week. Although I had intended to co-facilitate the group, I ended up leading out the following week. I had to agree that the group did have its share of difficult people. One was a “non-stop talker,” another was an “off-the-wall talker,” and several were “non-talkers.” I tried to include the original group facilitator, but my hands were full just trying to keep some balance in the group.

My decision to leave my group with a new leader and help with the problem group was not good. I learned a couple of weeks later that the perception of the original group leader was that I “had taken over his group.” He interpreted my actions as a lack of confidence in him. Furthermore, he did not attend the next two sessions because his employer asked him to work overtime, something that happens only twice a year. I continued to facilitate the problem group for the rest of the seminar. Later, the original leader and I sat down and talked about the misunderstanding. I had acted as an “over-functioning leader” and failed to discuss the issue sufficiently with him when the problems originally surfaced. I apologized and had to take responsibility for the tension between us.

Leaving my original group was not wise for another reason. A few of my group members felt abandoned. They had come expecting to be in my group. Most of the participants were contented with the decision since my wife, who is an excellent group facilitator, took over in my absence. In some ways, my actions were not fair to her either.
She had not planned and was not prepared to lead a group; however, God blessed her leadership.

**Exit Questionnaire**

The last night of the seminar, participants were given a sheet of paper and asked to complete two sentences: The first was “What I liked about the seminar” and the second was “What I would change about the seminar.” Of those who responded to the first sentence, 83 percent mentioned the sense of close community. Personal comments included:

“I loved this seminar. The small-group sessions really touched me!”

“The time just flew by.”

“I feel I am getting to know others, finally.”

“Enabled me to express my feelings and truly felt listened to and cared about by those in the group.”

Another 17 percent specifically mentioned the practical help on witnessing. They felt that they received tools they could use in the future. Comments included:

“A great help to me in teaching me how to approach people.”

“Through the illustrations of how to witness to others, I found encouragement for witnessing.”

The small groups used a conversational prayer format each evening, and 17 percent mentioned how much that prayer time meant to them. The other positives mentioned were “the videos,” “the workbook,” “unity,” “punctuality.”
Of those responding to the second statement, 31 percent said they would have liked more time in the small groups; 48 percent mentioned specifically that they would not change anything about the program. Other comments included:

“Go longer than five weeks.”

“Extend this to the entire church.”

“Let’s have more of this type of program.”

“More role playing.”

“Start earlier.”

“Use the small groups in Sabbath School classes.”

“Keep going with a similar type of program every Wednesday evening.”

Seminar Evaluation

The “Equipping and Community Building Seminars Evaluation,” attempted to measure the impact of the *Making Friends for God Seminar* on “community” and “ministry support.” The evaluation was completed by twenty-four participants, those who previously had gone through SBB. To the question, “How would you rank your experience in the following areas?” “Connectedness” had a mean score of 8.16. Obviously, the participants felt positive about the interaction with the group. (See Table 7.)

The question, “How helpful has the seminar been in your witnessing?” had a response that was just mid-range, a mean score of 6.83. Eating the meal together was somewhat important. The question, “To what extent did the seminar help you to be more
effective in your role in the church?" had a slightly higher mean score of 7.41.

The responses of the participants to this equipping seminar were very positive. This probably reflects the fact that the evening's program was multifaceted. It included the meal, the video, the small groups, the conversational prayer time, and the total group feedback session. Also the seminar content was timely, considering the upcoming evangelistic meetings. It emphasized the importance of tactfulness, asking questions to arouse interest, and the basics of sharing one's personal testimony. Introductory instruction in giving Bible studies was also presented.

The small-group dynamics were appreciated by participants. This reveals the hunger of many Adventists for a sense of community. It would be very refreshing for them to have more opportunities for "connectedness."

### TABLE 7

**EVALUATION OF MAKING FRIENDS FOR GOD SEMINAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. How would you rank your group experience in the following areas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Leader</td>
<td>8.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Participation</td>
<td>8.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectedness (community)</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scale: “Little” 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 “Great”, N=22.*
Prayer Warriors Seminar

The Prayer Warriors Seminar, written by Ron Halvorsen, has thirteen sessions. The material is in a workbook format with space for notes and a “Personal Battle Plan” at the close of each chapter. Participants were asked to study the lesson in advance and come prepared to discuss the material. Church leaders felt that the emphasis on prayer would be timely with the upcoming evangelistic meetings. The seminar started two weeks before the evangelistic meetings were scheduled to begin, continued throughout the weeks of the meetings, and extended three weeks beyond the end of the meetings. This provided the prayer support which sometimes is put aside for more urgent matters during a crusade.

Promotion and Attendance

The seminar was advertised through bulletin inserts, public announcements, and personal invitations. (See Appendix L.) People were encouraged to pre-register so adequate materials would be available. Child care was provided for the young children. The seminar began on Sabbath afternoon, March 4, and concluded on May 20, a week earlier than originally planned to accommodate those who would be attending camp meeting. Thirty-six people came to the opening session; twenty-six people completed the program.

Seminar Format

Meetings began promptly at the advertised time. After a greeting and a prayer, groups spent approximately ten minutes with the “get-acquainted” or “icebreaker” question. For thirty minutes the facilitator reviewed the lesson, and encouraged discussion
and sharing. The last twenty minutes of group time were reserved for prayer. Personal requests were solicited, and special prayer was offered for the church and the upcoming evangelistic meetings. The sessions were closed in the individual groups.

Exit Questionnaire

Sixteen participants filled out the exit questionnaire the last evening of the seminar. To the statement, “What I liked most about Prayer Warriors,” 56 percent responded that they liked the fellowship (community); 37 percent said that they liked the study materials; and 18 percent liked the group discussions. The following comments are representative:

“I enjoyed studying and praying together.”

“I think the sessions were excellent.”

“Loved the sessions.”

“Repeat the course again.”

In response to the evaluation statement “the sessions could be improved by” the following comments are representative:

“If everyone came to every session.”

“More time for each session.”

“Hold the groups in each other’s home.”

“More prayer singing.”

“Be consistent with the starting time.”

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Group Leaders

There were four group leaders for the *Prayer Warriors Seminar*. The leaders met thirty minutes prior to each session to pray and briefly to discuss the lesson highlights. With the evangelistic meetings underway and so many interests requiring attention, little time was allotted for the leaders’ meeting; however, it did continue to play a significant role in providing opportunity to share ideas and pray together for the group participants.

Seminar Evaluation

The seminar was evaluated by the eighteen participants who had completed SBB. "The Equipping and Community Building Survey" was used to evaluate the group experience with question #2: "How would you rank the group experience in the following areas?" (See Appendix M.) Participants rated “connectedness” with a mean score of 8.12. (See Table 8.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. How would you rank your group experience in the following areas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Participation</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Leader</td>
<td>8.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectedness (community)</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scale: “Little” 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 “Great”; N=18.*
Another question, #3, asked, "How helpful has the seminar been in your prayer life and personal ministry?" Participants reported that the seminar was quite beneficial in helping them grow in prayer and in their personal ministry. The mean score was 8.06.

Finally, question #4 asked, "How important do you think Prayer Warriors was in the success of our evangelistic meetings?" There was a strong sense that God blessed the meetings because we sought Him earnestly for the Holy Spirit. The mean score was 8.53.

The Prayer Warriors Seminar was effective for a number of reasons. It was held at a convenient time on Sabbath afternoon. The promotion, the workbook, and the emphasis from the church leaders all communicated that this was an important seminar. The timing was right, just before an evangelistic crusade.

The biggest challenge during the seminar was running it back-to-back with the evangelistic meetings. Not only did it make for a long day, but at least a third of the participants had other responsibilities in conjunction with the meetings. A "scheduling conflict" was the major reason given as to why others did not attend.

**Evangelistic Series**

Public evangelism in the Brandon Church for the previous six years had consisted primarily of "satellite crusades." Though such meetings can be effective, usually attendance was good at only the opening session or two, then it quickly fell off. A new emphasis was needed. Members needed to be more personally involved, not only in providing support services for evangelistic meetings, but in inviting friends and relatives
and following up with interests. Those church members with the gift of evangelism needed to become active in reaching out to interests.

In a given church, about 10 percent of the members can be expected to have the gift of personal evangelism.\(^1\) Other members may witness to their faith in Christ, but without intense training the majority will probably not be able to follow an interest all the way through preparation for baptism. Even those with the gift of evangelism frequently focus on persons who are not serious about making decisions, while overlooking those who are.

It is imperative that those individuals who do have the gift of evangelism be identified, trained, and encouraged in their important work. This is frequently one of the least-developed phases of ministry among laity. There are many reasons why this is so. One is that the pastor’s busy life dictates against consistent, ongoing training of the laymembers. He/she is pulled in many different directions doing less important things.

Lay people, too, are very busy. They are coping with increasing job demands, driving children to piano lessons and school functions, and trying to attend a variety of church activities. Connecting the pastor, a lay trainee, and a Bible-study interest is a major task. If any one of the three must cancel an appointment for any reason, a long time can lapse before another appointment can be made.

One elder in Brandon approached me with an encouraging request, “Pastor, will you train me to give Bible studies like you and John gave to my wife in preparing her for baptism?” Only organization, a high-level commitment to training, much prayer, and the

\(^1\)Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 160.
grace of God can enable a trainer to adequately prepare a person to give Bible studies and 
lead interests to a decision for Christ and the church. Satan constantly fought our efforts 
to get together for that training ministry.

In the spring of 2000, one of the conference evangelists spent seven weeks 
conducting a series of prophecy meetings in the Brandon Church. Our ministry 
management coordinator helped to recruit and involve a large number of members in 
preparation for and support of the meetings. The church and community response was 
most encouraging. The evangelist observed, “This is only the second church in my twenty 
years of evangelism that has truly been ready for a series of meetings.”

In addition to the high attendance by our congregation, non-member attendance at 
the meetings was good. Almost one hundred came to one or more of the sessions. 
Twenty people were baptized, and the members verbalized their joy saying, “This has been 
the best evangelistic series ever held in the Brandon Church.”

The success of these meetings was undoubtably due to a combination of factors: 
The grace of God, prayer, the involvement of a large number of church members in every 
aspect of planning and implementation, a nursery and children’s program, and nightly 
recorded videos that were made during the meetings to loan to those who missed that 
session. The messages were highly interesting, illustrated with PowerPoint presentations. 
In addition, an hour before each nightly session, a video “replay” was provided for those 
who needed to make up a session. Two other major factors impacted the number of 
decisions for baptism. A Bible worker had given studies to some of the interests prior to 
the meetings, and the evangelist used tremendous tact and discretion when talking with
interests, primarily over the telephone, as he was answering questions and giving Bible studies. His approach showed the value of using the telephone to minister to busy people today.

**Spiritual Guardian Program**

Perhaps the weakest link in Adventist evangelism is the follow-up with new members. The evangelist who conducted our meetings had developed a twelve-week Spiritual Guardian program that he introduced to our key leaders. The program was adopted by our church for use in following up with the new members from the Brandon crusade. Twenty-two spiritually mature, stable church members, twenty of whom had gone through SBB, were personally recruited and asked to serve as spiritual guardians to one or more of the new members from the series.

**Program Outline**

A training session was conducted with the members who agreed to serve as spiritual guardians. They were given a definite assignment for each week, such as inviting the new member home for lunch or to some church function, giving him/her a copy of *The Adventist Review* or other church magazine, or introducing him/her to several people in the church. Some were able to connect in meaningful ways with the new members, others were not. As pastor, I found it necessary to stay in close touch with the new members myself, either by visiting with them at the church, in their home, or by telephone.
Evaluation

At the end of the twelve weeks, the Spiritual Guardians were asked to fill out an evaluation sheet. Ten evaluations were completed, several of them providing information from a husband/wife team who worked together in the program. Responding to the statement “Success in following up with the new member/s assigned” gave a mean score of 5.7 on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 rated as “very successful.” (See Appendix N.) Several rated their success at only 3. While these evaluations are low, they at least indicate the beginning of a process to involve members more directly in new-member follow-up. The learning curve may appear low, but it is a hopeful indicator.

Under the statement, “What I found most fulfilling in the Spiritual Guardian program” representative comments included:

“Watching spiritual growth.”

“How often they came to mind. . . . That always prompted a prayer for them.”

“Getting to know them on a personal basis.”

“Talking about their lives and developing new friendships.”

“Having a new friend.”

“Seeing them branch out socially.”

The greatest challenges faced by most guardians was time constraints or difficulty in finding access to the new member. Responding to the statement, “What I would change about the program” several mentioned the need to assign the new members to more than one person or couple. They also suggested getting together as a group more often to compare notes and encourage each other. Some found the assignments repetitious.
Following up the interests was important. Equally important though was giving church members the equipping necessary to carry on friendship evangelism more successfully. Kindness shown to visitors and new members by church members is one of the greatest untapped evangelistic potentials within Adventism. In this area, as in so many others, we have delegated evangelism to the professional evangelists and pastors. Hence, our churches experience little real growth when measured by average weekly attendance rather than by baptisms.

**Bible Marking Class**

A Bible Marking Class was offered on Wednesday nights following the evangelistic crusade. It continued for four months. When school was in session, each class was preceded by a simple, shared meal. When school closed for the summer, the meal was suspended. Average adult attendance was thirty-five. The head elder joined me in co-teaching the class. Marking pencils were provided for each person. Approximately ten texts were written on a white board and a simple explanation given for each text. To facilitate community, participants sat at round tables during the meal and during the class discussion. It was encouraging to see the fellowship established members developed with the new members.

The purpose of this class was not just for study, but also for equipping. Members were encouraged to share with others what they were learning; some reported that they did so. The program would have been more meaningful, if we had allowed time to report
experiences. In this we failed. At the conclusion, members had sixteen studies marked in their Bibles.

**Planning Session 2000**

An important part of a successful equipping ministry is planning on a regular basis. Since officers in Brandon are elected to a term that coincides with the school year, newly elected church officers and ministry leaders were invited to participate in a half-day planning session in August 2000. The positive and productive planning session conducted in 1999, using a “Plant a Seed” theme (with a creative garden scene and delicious food), helped build the attendance for the 2000 session. One excellent event carried out builds for the next event.

**Advance Preparation**

Leaders were sent a planning sheet a month before the session. They were encouraged to meet with their ministry teams to develop goals for the next twelve months. They were reminded to keep in mind the church’s mission statement. The planning event was promoted through bulletin announcements, personal letters, and telephone calls. It was also mentioned from the pulpit, and members were asked to pray for their leaders as they entered the planning process.

**Seminar Format**

The theme for the 2000 session was “Fishers of Men.” The theme was further developed with nautical decorations, such as fish nets and beautifully decorated tables.
Every participant received a folder containing a morning schedule and printed materials run on various colored papers. (See Appendix O.) A delicious Sunday brunch preceded the work session. Good food and leisure time for visiting builds community. Everything about the session indicated in some way that what we were doing was important and had been given much advance thought.

To prepare for the actual planning process, participants shared at their table a positive experience they had in the Brandon Church during the past twelve months. One young woman asked if she could share her experience with the whole group. With tears and much emotion, she told how the church had reached out in love to her when she had gotten pregnant before she was married. She had since been baptized, gotten married, and was the leader of one of the children’s divisions. Such testimonies prepare the way for serious planning. The participants realized they were not there to just plan programs but to transform lives.

**Goal Setting**

Individual ministry teams were invited to come forward and share their goals which were written on large newsprint and posted on an easel. The next day, all the goals were typed and mailed out to every participant. A letter of thanks for taking part in the planning session was included. Sending these out promptly sent a message that planning is taken seriously in this church.

Once goals are set, the church leadership must stay in close touch with ministry leaders. Our new health-ministries leader, a very accomplished professional person, had
trouble putting her ideas into action. Some of the problem stemmed from concerns about how her program would be accepted. We spent three or four hours over a six-week period giving her ideas and encouragement. The office secretary helped create an appealing brochure. As a result, the health lectures and cooking classes were well attended both by the public and our own members. Many members were involved in the project. The time invested in assisting the leader with planning has already paid off and will continue to bring returns for years to come.

Equipping members in community involves being available at every step in the ministry process. When some people get “stuck,” we have a golden opportunity to model servant leadership by assisting them to overcome the obstacles. If we encourage them with prayer and Scripture, we can then celebrate success with them.

Evaluation

Thirty participants completed the “Evaluation-Fishers of Men Planning Session.”

(See Appendix P.) A few of the comments included:

“Thanks for calling us together to do this exercise.”

“The support of the people here today was wonderful.”

“Learned a lot.”

Two insights picked up by participants seem quite contradictory. One remarked, “I alone am responsible for my ministry and I must continue doing it.” Another noted, “Sense of shared responsibility for all ministries, not just the one we are responsible for.”

While they may seem to be in contradiction, they are not. Ministries need leaders who are
responsible, but collaboration, sharing of resources, encouragement, and support also are needed. A few other suggestions included: “We should continue to have these sessions to keep the church and officers focused on our responsibilities,” “Involve more church members in the process.”

The mean score for the first question, “How would you rate the planning session overall?” was 9.42. This exceptionally high score for a process that many find boring may be due to a number of factors: the shared meal, emphasis on relationship building, deep spiritual orientation, well-organized pre-planning, practical assignments that could be accomplished in the time allotted, and program variety. Variety helps to create a certain flow or movement to a meeting. In this case, we had social mixing at meal time, a devotional presented to the entire group, small group work, testimonies, reporting, the “body-life” game, practical recording of ideas and goals, and conversational prayer. All these worked to create a meeting that was fast-paced and relational while accomplishing the task. A “Time Line for Equipping Church Members in Community” shows visually how the planned events, seminars, and evangelism came together. (See Appendix Q.)

Spiritual Gifts Seminar

Knowing that it may be several years before everyone who wants to go through SBB gets a chance, we planned a Spiritual Gifts Seminar and Ministry Fair for September 2000. Ric Pleasants, a member of the Forest Lake Academy pastoral team, conducted the afternoon seminar, providing the opportunity for people to take the Temperament Inventory and the Spiritual Gifts Inventory, a modification of the modified Houts...
inventory used by Peter Wagner in his work with the Fuller Evangelistic Association.¹

Ninety-two people registered for the seminar, a full house with everyone sitting at round tables.

The seminar lasted only an hour and a half, but it was a good introduction to spiritual gifts to some members who knew little about them. With permission, Pleasants read aloud some of the personal profiles, making observations about ministries they might enjoy. The session provided an opportunity to laugh, to affirm, to observe, to learn, and to get feedback on spiritual gifts in the context of community.

Ministry leaders were asked to complete an evaluation form. They rated the seminar with a mean score of 8.9, 10 being Excellent. The written comments were upbeat.

"It helped me to understand what I'm able to do for the church."

"A reinforcement to our work. Have it again!"

"It was enlightening."

"It was so positive."

The suggestion made most often was "More time!" "More time for explanations."

"Divide the process of testing and teaching." Pleasants said he sometimes sends the assessment materials in advance so they can be filled out before he comes. That would make it possible for the leader to go into greater detail both on spiritual gifts and the temperaments.

¹Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow, 255.
Ministry Fair

The Ministry Fair followed immediately after the Spiritual Gifts Seminar. The fair was designed to introduce members, particularly new ones, to the various ministries of the church. It was an “eleventh-hour” idea, so ministry leaders had only three weeks for ministry leaders to prepare their booths. Normally such short notice would not be a morale booster.

First, the ministry leaders met in a planning session where the idea was introduced. They were assured that the church secretary would help them prepare their handouts, including creative brochures. Deacons would take care of setting up the booths, providing each ministry with a four- or eight-foot table space. One very artistic member volunteered to decorate a booth for anyone who desired her help. All she needed was the idea or theme they wanted to use. Each ministry was asked to print out its goals for the year and to list the various opportunities for members who wanted to get involved. Some of the groups were very creative. Health Ministries provided free shoulder-and-neck massage by a licensed message therapist.

The fair provided a forum to talk casually about ministries and to get better acquainted. If conversation is any indicator, the event was very successful. Afterwards, a meal was served to all who attended the fair.

Ministry leaders were asked to evaluate the fair. The mean score was of 8.3, “10” being excellent. Comments included:

“This was a great way to fellowship and talk with people about their ministries.”

“This should be done on a regular basis—perhaps every other year.”
"Have it again!"

Suggestions on how to improve the fair included:

"Involve more people."

"Put it on the calendar earlier and involve more people in set-up."

"Try to get more members to attend."

This very positive event will probably become another means the church will use in the future to equip members for ministry.

**Ministry Involvement—Support and Affirmation**

An evaluation was conducted to assess the perception of ministry support and community among SBB graduates. The SBB Survey measured both of these items in August 1999 “before” the two equipping and community building seminars were presented. The “Equipping and Community Building Seminars Evaluation” measured both of these items in August 2000 “after” the two seminars were presented. (See Appendix M.) The hypothesis was that the two training seminars offered in a small-group format would have an influence on both of these variables. However, not sufficient data were available to get accurate “before” and “after” readings. The survey still provides a helpful qualitative analysis. Comparing “before” and “after” readings also raises some questions and important observations. (See Table 9.)

The first observation is that far more of the SBB graduates, at least twice as many, completed the “ministry support” items on the survey after going through the *Making Friends for God* and/or the *Prayer Warriors* training seminars than when they filled out
the “before” survey. This could be interpreted as an increased involvement in ministry because members not involved would have a tendency to leave the question blank. Indeed, many of these members had accepted increased job responsibilities when officers were chosen by the nominating committee. For example, a deacon became an elder; another deacon began working with inactive members; someone who had no church office became finance committee chairperson; a new member began serving on the social committee; and several worked with the evangelistic meetings and Spiritual Guardian program. Since these individuals became active they would be more likely to fill out the section dealing with “support and encouragement for my ministry.”

Another variable that may account for the increased number responding to this section of the survey was the addition of a question in the “after” survey regarding the involvement in ministry the previous year: “In the year 1999-2000 church year, I was involved in the following ministry/s or church office/s. (Please list all.)” It may be that this triggered thoughts about the “support and encouragement” that the “before” survey did not.

The next observation is that the mean scores dealing with training went down. Training support was reported at 8.44 for the “before” survey. The “after” survey was 6.08. This is not what would be expected after an intervention, particularly one that seemed to address the training variable so clearly and so effectively. One reason for this may be that the training seminars, Making Friends for God and Prayer Warriors, were more general than specific. “Training” may be understood by our members as something
more specific to a particular area of responsibility such as men’s ministry or Sabbath School.

**TABLE 9**

**COMPARISON OF SBB SURVEY & EQUIPPING & COMMUNITY BUILDING SEMINARS EVALUATION—MINISTRY SUPPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Diff</th>
<th>2-Tail Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have received support and encouragement for my ministry. Yes – No (Please circle one) If Yes, to what extent did each of the following give you support: encouragement for your ministry:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>-2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on my ministry</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation on my ministry</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>-1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scale: “Little” 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 “Great”*

“Feedback on my ministry” and “Affirmation of my ministry” both showed a drop in the mean score in the “after” evaluation. A much higher percentage actually filled out the same item on the “after” survey than they did on the “before” survey. Something had obviously changed in the one-year interval between completing the two surveys. One change of course was the intervention, the two equipping and community-building
seminars, *Making Friends for God* and *Prayer Warriors*, and other related activities reported in this chapter.

Scores on the two items “Feedback on my ministry” and “Affirmation of my ministry” were quite high in the “before” group. Since the number who filled out this “before” section was only half as many as filled it out in the “after” evaluation, it may be that those who filled out these items on the “before” survey made up the leadership core of the church. They are the ones who are most involved in planning, administration, and ministry and, therefore, get much attention and nurture from the pastor and each other. Several factors may have influenced the lower “after” scores of the larger group:

1. As pastor I was totally immersed in coordinating a wide variety of programs and probably did not have as much time to support and affirm those who had recently taken up leadership responsibilities.

2. It is likely that the core leadership may not have realized the necessity of their intentionally supporting and affirming these recently activated members. It is vital that ministry leaders nurture those who work on their teams.

The results reported on “connectedness” are encouraging as they are fairly high on both the “before” and the “after” surveys. Please see Table 10. The mean scores increased slightly but not significantly. Participants feel connected to other members in the following ways: “Personal friends” 7.93. Numerous studies show that unless members are connected with at least seven friends during the first six months that they are in a
church, the likelihood of them leaving is high.\textsuperscript{1} "Participation in a small-group" was 7.96, which would be expected since they had just had two small group experiences. There is a closeness and sense of belonging when people meet together regularly and share common goals and purposes. "Consultation with church leaders" was 7.80, a positive indication of team building. The evaluation indicates that the level of community is good, but there is still the need to continue to cultivate true "connectedness."

The comparisons between the \textit{SBB} Survey and the "Equipping and Community Building Survey," reveal the effectiveness of relational strategies and the importance of teaching church members the biblical principles of body life. The study and group discussions of the \textit{Spiritual Body Building Lessons} provided an important foundation and background for members, a kind of launching pad which created a "window of opportunity" for positive change to take place. The equipping seminars enhanced and extended the original work done in the \textit{SBB} groups.

TABLE 10

COMPARISON OF SBB SURVEY & EQUIPPING & COMMUNITY BUILDING SEMINARS EVALUATION–COMMUNITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Score Before</th>
<th>Mean Score After</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Diff</th>
<th>2-Tail Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel “Connected” to other members of the church. Yes – No (Please circle one) If Yes, to what extent does each of the following give you a sense of “connectedness” with other members:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal friends</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a small-group</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship dinners</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midweek Service</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.561</td>
<td>.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with church leaders</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Score: “Little” 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 “Great”; N=32

Spiritual Body Building Group

Another Spiritual Body Building group, facilitated by two church elders, was launched in November 2000. Sixteen members came to the introductory session. After three weeks, the group finally settled in with eleven participants, five of whom are newly baptized members. The group meets in the home of a couple who lives near the church. The very fact that the meeting is in someone’s home sets the stage for community. Last
week participants all brought a food beginning with “S” for a potluck supper. The group is growing closer as they share weekly times of study, discussion, and planned activities.

Leaving

Leaving is a part of ministry. I served in my previous district for eight and a half years. I thought we might be in Brandon even longer, but after only four and a half years we are moving to another conference to take up responsibilities in a new church. After I preached my last sermon here, I stayed in the area for two months to finish writing this dissertation. It felt unusual, but satisfying, to sit in the pew and participate in worship with our capable head elder coordinating the service.

As I contemplate leaving, I think often of our faithful members, people I have enjoyed and loved, people I will miss. I also think about our new members, twenty of them from our evangelistic crusade, another five from personal Bible studies, and I feel a sense of peace. Over the past few months they have bonded with more established members. All of them are in church on Sabbath except for one who, it seems, never really wanted any more than just to be baptized. Most of these people are somewhat involved, participating, and growing. Do I worry about them? Yes! Do I worry about the church? Yes. But then I remember the journey we have been on together for the past four and a half years as we have experienced what it means “to be” church. I am encouraged by what our head elder said to me when he heard we were moving: “Pastor, we can never go back to the way we were before. You’ve taught us so much.” The church has changed; it will go forward. The credit belongs totally to the Holy Spirit who taught us together.
Last Sabbath the elder said from the pulpit, “We will greatly miss Pastor Pauli and Becky and the love they brought to the Brandon church. Pastor Pauli showed us the importance of organization.” Ironically, organization does not come easy to me. Therein is the value of teams. I had simply gathered around me men and women who understand organization and administration. Their gifts have blessed the church and evidently made me look competent.

The elder’s statement reminded me of my personal journey from a pastor who thought he could do it all alone, to one who has experienced the joy and fulfillment of community in the body of Christ. I am humbled at what God has done as we have looked to Him and followed His principles in equipping our members. I bow my head in gratitude asking God to keep the Brandon Church united in true community, to use them in loving service, and to bless them with an abundance of His grace until Jesus comes again.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This dissertation gives an overview of my understanding of God’s purpose and plan to restore His people to a community of oneness with Himself and with each other. It highlights God’s work in and through certain individuals and movements for the accomplishment of this purpose.

In Old Testament times, God worked through Abraham to establish a family community based on faith (Gen 12:1-3; Rom 4:4). Later, Moses was called to lead God’s people out of bondage in Egypt and to establish them as a people set apart as a worshiping community (Exod 3:10-12). Once the Israelites were finally established in the land of promise, they insisted on conforming to the ways of the surrounding nations by demanding a king. This act led to further fragmentation and moved the nation away from God’s ideal of oneness. However, it did provide a metaphor pre-figuring the Messiah’s kingly rule (Jer 23:5-6; Matt 2:6).

The New Testament reveals the Creator of community modeling what is meant to live in community on a human level (John 1:1-2, 14, 18.) Jesus lived in the community of the family until He heard the call of the Spirit to begin His public ministry (Luke 2:51; Matt 3:13). He chose twelve disciples “to be with Him” (Mark 3:13) and declared that
those who heard and obeyed the word of God were His family: brother, sister, and mother (Mark 3:33-35). Jesus emphasized the importance of community by sending His disciples out two by two (Luke 10:1). He focused on the small group as the community where He would especially be present, made up of people whose united prayers He would hear and answer (Matt 18:19-20).

The early church was birthed in a community of oneness. The Bible states, “they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the church expanded rapidly, but it was still characterized by a continual practice of community (Acts 2:42-47). The early believers also evangelized in community, brother accompanying brother (Acts 3:1).

The Apostle Paul followed the example of Christ and the early church by equipping members in community. He not only took a fellow worker with him on his missionary trips but worked the cities by developing missionary teams of men and women for prayer, support, counsel, and encouragement (Acts 13:2-3; 18:1-3).

Paul’s concept of the body is an inspired metaphor of how church members are to relate to each other (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-31). The interdependency and “connectedness” of all the parts of the human body provide an illustration for Paul’s strong arguments relative to true biblical community (1 Cor 12:26-27). His practical “one another” texts set a high standard for living Christ’s love in the church.

Unfortunately, after Paul’s death the church not only strayed from doctrinal truth but also from the simplicity of genuine community (Acts 20:29-30). Having turned away from truth and light, it was left with error and darkness. Hierarchical church organizations
headed by priests gradually replaced the concept of the “priesthood of all believers” within
the body; stately church buildings replaced small home churches.

God has continued to pursue His plan of restoring communities of faith. He raised
up reformers, scholarly, fearless men and women who rediscovered long-neglected truths
which once again influenced church organizational structures and even church buildings.
Equipping church members in community was understood and implemented by the
followers of Martin Luther and lay leaders who worked with John Wesley.

The continuation of the reformation resulted in the raising up of a last-day people
“who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev
12:17). God began by restoring to them not only many neglected truths of Scripture but
also a form of ministry and evangelism that was largely led by lay people. He used the
counsels of Ellen G. White, one of the early founders of the Seventh-day Adventist
Church, to continually point the church back to biblical principles of ministry.

One of the major topics emphasized throughout the long ministry of Ellen White
was the need for equipping church members in community. Her practical counsel on this
topic was accepted during the early years of the Adventist church, but later, as the church
grew and prospered, equipping church members was strangely neglected. Professional
pastors settled over congregations and provided most of the member care. Professional
evangelists conducted “reaping” meetings where little if any “sowing” was done. As a
result, the church in the Western world has lost its zeal and its fire. It has also experienced
minimal growth.

At the same time that most Adventist churches in North America are “stuck” in a
lukewarm condition, a number of churches in various other denominations, and some non-denominational churches, are successfully involving large numbers of the laity in nurture and outreach ministries. The Adventist church in North American has much to learn from some of these other Christians about faithfully living out an authentic Christian lifestyle of community and involvement in ministry. However, some Seventh-day Adventists are praying earnestly for the Holy Spirit to bring about the long-promised revival of the “latter rain” which will exceed in magnitude the experience of Pentecost (Jas 5:7-8). Since we are living now in what we believe is the age of the Spirit, the great need of the church is to appropriate the power that has been available ever since Pentecost (Acts 2:38-39). That power is available for witnessing today to an extent that can hardly be imagined. It is power for living a life of authentic community that reaches out to meet the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ, and beyond to those who do not know the love of God (Acts 2:42-45).

**Recommendations**

Christian community is centered in the personal presence of Christ; therefore, Christ must live in the heart of each member if the church is to experience the community of oneness that He envisioned for it. The closer people get to Him, the closer they are to each other. Christ must be the beginning, the middle, and the end of all equipping efforts.

With that assumption, the following recommendations are made:

1. The church at every level, from the General Conference to the local church, must commit itself to the primary task of making disciples.
2. Equipping disciples should be seen as an intentional process that does not end with baptism. It must be carefully planned to lead the new member to whole hearted involvement in the community of the church and in ministry.

3. Colleges, seminaries, and pastors’ meetings should be structured for community. Pastors must experience true community before they can nurture genuine community in their churches.

4. The *Spiritual Body Building Lessons*, or similar field-tested materials contextualized for the Adventist church, should be introduced to all pastors and church leaders. SBB has been shown to be highly effective in bringing about positive change in the way members relate to ministry and to one another.

5. Pastors should establish a leadership team in the church where equipping in community can be experienced. From this model group, other groups will develop.

6. Equipping should be done in a community where members feel loved and accepted and, therefore, they will know that it is a safe place to bring family and friends who are wounded, empty, and lonely.

7. Every church should have an integrated system of ministry placement. The system should include spiritual-gift assessment, matching persons with task, training and performing ministry, affirmation and recognition, and evaluation. Planning must be an ongoing activity and a major concern of the church leadership which is responsible to provide ministry and nurturing opportunities.

8. More emphasis should be placed on building friendships within the church. This can be done by teaching relationship-building concepts and listening skills.
9. Equipping should focus on small-group dynamics and on-the-job training for various ministries.

10. Every member in ministry should receive support from his/her ministry team and other church leaders.

11. A variety of small-group options should be a part of every church. Since ministry and member care take place naturally in small groups, every member should be encouraged to take an active part in a small group.

Conclusions

The book of Revelation declares that before Jesus comes a second time, His church, the bride of Christ, will unite in sharing the gospel invitation (Rev 22:17). Herein is envisioned a people filled with the Spirit of God and totally involved in extending the invitation for others to come and drink of the “water of life.” The text states that the one who hears is also to say “come.” In other words, people will not only come to Christ but will, in turn, bring others to Him. For this prophecy to be fulfilled, a renewed emphasis must be placed on spiritual gifts, the priesthood of all believers, and the necessity of equipping church members in community.

Including every member in ministry will require the same kind of organization and interaction that is seen in the human body. A ministry-placement system that is both intentional and coordinated will need to be put in place. Training, planning, and performing ministry will require constant feedback and evaluation that will enable the church to move towards its desired goal of producing disciples. Members will no longer
feel unneeded or unwanted. Knowing that they are gifted, called, and a part of an
important ministry will give them a sense of significance and belonging. Christ, as the
head of the body, will empower His church to give the invitation everywhere. The earth
will be “illuminated” with His glory (Rev 18:1-2), and at Christ’s coming, the recovered
community of oneness will be secure forever (Rev 21:3).
APPENDIX A

SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING SURVEY
SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING SURVEY

1. When did you go through the Spiritual Body Building(SBB) Group?  
   Who was the teacher?

2. What were the most positive aspects of the SBB lessons and group experience for you?

3. How much did the SBB help you in the following areas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced openness and honesty in the group</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced caring and bonding in the group</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gained insights from group discussions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of the purpose of the church</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of the role of pastor</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding that every member is a “minister”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of the assurance of salvation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of spiritual gifts</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of my own personal spiritual gifts</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What expectations did you have after going through SBB and to what extent were your expectations met?  
   Of yourself? ____________________________   
   The group? ____________________________    
   The church? ____________________________    

   What would have been most helpful to you at the close of the SBB? ____________

5. Did you fill out the assessment questionnaires? Yes – No (Please circle one)  
   If Yes, please mark which one/s.  
   [ ] Spiritual gift  
   [ ] Ministry experience  
   [ ] Temperaments  
   [ ] Abilities review  
   [ ] Fulfillment profile  
   [ ] Conviction survey  
   [ ] Time analysis

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Please indicate to what extent each assessment questionnaire was helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual gift</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry experience</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperaments</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abilities review</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfillment profile</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction survey</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time analysis</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did anyone go over the assessment questionnaires with you personally? Yes – No
If Yes, please put a check mark next to the surveys listed above that someone actually went over with you.

6. As a result of the SBB: (Check All that Apply)
   - I was confirmed in the ministry I was already doing.
   - I found a new ministry.
   - I was convicted that I was stretched too thin and needed to cut back.
   - I was convicted that I could be involved more.
   - Other: ______________________________________________

Please fill out #7 if you are active in a ministry:

7. I have received support and encouragement for my ministry. Yes – No (Please circle one)
   If Yes, to what extent did each of the following give you support/encouragement for your ministry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People to help</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on my ministry</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation of my ministry</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. I feel “Connected” to other members of the church. Yes – No (Please circle one)
   If Yes, to what extent does each of the following give you a sense of “connectedness” with other members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a small group</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship dinners</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midweek service</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with church leaders</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Name ___________________________ Date ____________

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APPENDIX B

BRANDON CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND BAPTISMS, 1991-2000
Fig. 1. Membership at Brandon SDA Church. 1991-2000.

Fig. 2. Number of baptisms at Brandon SDA Church 1991-2000.
APPENDIX C

BRANDON CHURCH DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Fig. 1. Racial composition of the Brandon SDA Church, 2000.

Fig. 2. Age composition of the Brandon SDA Church, 2000.
APPENDIX D

BRANDON CHURCH TITHE, 1991-2000
APPENDIX E

THE SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE
SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING
EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date:

My reaction when I first heard about the Spiritual Body Building series
   a. Not another program
   b. Ho-hum
   c. I'll give it a try
   d. We need something
   e. Excitement
   d. Other __________

How do you feel about the content of the lessons?

How would you evaluate the group experience?

What did you like best about the group experience?

In what ways did the group experience affect your life?

What did the group leader do well and what can he improve?

Other comments:

Thank you for your help!
APPENDIX F

BRANDON CHURCH BODY LIFE SURVEY
BRANDON CHURCH BODY LIFE SURVEY
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

The *Spiritual Body Building* lessons present Biblical principles for a healthy church. Please indicate how you see yourself *now* as compared *before* you went through the *Spiritual Body Building* group. (Please put an “0” around the number which represents your attitudes and behaviors *before* SBB and an “X” on the number for where you see yourself *after* SBB.

1) I have the assurance of salvation and a growing relationship with God.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

2) I make it a point to try and talk to visitors who attend our church.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

3) I offer to sit with a member or guest who is sitting alone.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

4) I invite members and visitors to share a meal with me and my family.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*
   Have you shared a meal in your home with another member in the last eight weeks? Yes – No

5) I think the pastor’s ministry is more important to God than my ministry.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

6) I make it a point to contact or visit a member who I know is sick or hurting.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

7) I drop a card of encouragement or phone to express appreciation to other members.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

8) I respond to some slight, frustration, hurt, or put-down with love.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

9) I can be open and honest in sharing my thoughts and feelings with fellow church members.
   Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

10) I welcome group support when working on a church project.
    Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

11) I carefully and prayerfully consider my spiritual gifts before accepting an office or ministry opportunity in the church.
    Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

12) I realize that the spiritual success of the church depends upon every member using his/her spiritual gifts in loving ministry to members and visitors.
    Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

13) I look forward to times of fun and fellowship with other church members.
    Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

14) I have a sense of belonging in the church.
    Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*

15) I experience love from others in the church.
    Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Often*
APPENDIX G

SPIRITUAL BODY BUILDING GUIDELINES/COVENANT
Body Building Group Guidelines

1. I desire to become a mature, balanced disciple of Christ, growing in my relationship with God and effectively using my spiritual gifts and talents in ministries of love.

2. I am committed to giving the group high priority, sensing that God is willing and able to do something special for our church and for me personally.

3. I will set aside quality time to study each week's lesson in an unhurried manner and reflect on its meaning. I desire to minister to the other group members through my presence by regularly attending the weekly meeting and being on time.

4. I welcome the group's support and guidance in my attempt to understand God's vision for the church and my own life.

5. I commit myself to respect the views of other group members and maintain strict confidentiality regarding any personal information that is shared.

My Covenant

After reading the Body Building Group Guidelines, I accept the opportunity and challenge of being a responsible group member. By God's grace I will order my priorities in such a way that I can do my part in helping the group grow in its understanding of God's will and purpose. By word and example, I will endeavor to encourage group members in our mutual search for greater fulfillment and joy.

Signature _______________________________________ Date __________
APPENDIX H

GROUP COVENANT
GROUP COVENANT
TEAM GROUP LEADERS
Brandon Church

Is a covenant necessary for group leaders? What are the advantages? Any disadvantages?

Read over the following covenant. Discuss the various points. Which should be amended or dropped? What needs to be added? Express your feelings about making a covenant.

Where does trust come into a covenant?

Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, as fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Eph 5:1,2

As TEAM Group leaders, desiring to be faithful to Christ in our relationship with each other, and to model the love and unity as demonstrated by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, do covenant the following:

* To attend Wednesday evening TEAM meetings for twelve weeks, Feb 2 - April 19, and to make this our highest priority (unless out of town business or death in family.)
* Live a life of praise to God for His blessings
* Encourage and bless each other
* Respect, honor, and trust each other
* Discuss problems rather than bury them
* Speak well of each other
* Make time for fellowship, worship, and prayer time together
* View all ministries as interdependent and needing prayer and support
* Like clay, be willing to be molded and changed by the Potter

Name: __________________________________________

Date: ____________________________

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APPENDIX I

GROUP LEADERS EVALUATION
Evaluation
GROUP LEADERS SESSIONS

Please answer the following questions based on the 12 group leaders sessions which were held in connection with the *Making Friends for God* and *Prayer Warriors* seminars.

1) In conducting your small group, how helpful to you were the leadership sessions in the following areas? (Please circle)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning together</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the seminar concepts</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing small group dynamics</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing group leadership issues</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal sharing (community)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praying together (community)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing of the previous session</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) How important do you think group leaders sessions are to building community and equipping members in the church?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3) What do you think would improve the group leader’s sessions?
GROUP COVENANT

MAKING FRIENDS FOR GOD

Our groups are for discussing, sharing, encouraging, and praying. As we listen carefully, respect each other, and tune-in to each other we will become more like a family sharing around the table. This is really God's plan for His people—"having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind," "striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil 2:2; 1:27)

( ) Yes, I covenant to attend the remaining four sessions of the Making Friends for God seminar (except for illness, out of town business, or a death in the family).
APPENDIX L

PRAYER WARRIORS (PROMOTION)
PRAYER WARRIORS
A Study Guide by Ron Halvorsen

STARTS SABBATH MARCH 4
5:30-6:40 pm in the Fellowship Hall
6:40 pm Brown Bag Supper and time of fellowship
7:15 pm Waters Evangelistic Meetings begin

You will receive a study guide in victorious prayer for groups. You will find thirteen chapters - one chapter for each week March 5-May 27. Studying the chapter during the week will prepare you to share in the discussion and prayer time in your group.

( ) YES, I WANT TO JOIN THE PRAYER WARRIORS Group for study and prayer. Please order me one of the workbooks.

Name ________________________________

Telephone Number ________________
APPENDIX M

EVALUATION—EQUIPPING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING SEMINARS
Evaluation
Equipping and Community Building Seminars

A majority of our Brandon church members who went through one of the Spiritual Body Building groups expressed a desire to continue the experience of “community” which they found in the original group. Also there was an interest on the part of some to better prepare for whatever ministry God had for them, personally. A number of events and activities were planned with this in mind. Please fill out the questionnaire below relative to these.

**MAKING FRIENDS FOR GOD small group training seminar.**

1) I attended the Making Friends for God group seminar. (Please circle one)  Yes – No
   
   If No, for planning purposes please share the reason you did not attend: (Check as many as apply)
   
   Scheduling conflict ( )
   Attended previously ( )
   Not informed ( )
   Too tired ( )
   Not interested ( )
   Other ( )

   If Yes, how many of the 5 sessions did you attend? _______

2) How would you rank the group experience in the following areas?
   
   Group leader Lacking 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding
   Group participation Lacking 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding
   Connectedness (community) Lacking 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding

3) How helpful has the group training seminar been in your witnessing?
   Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great

4) How important to the group experience was eating the meal together?
   Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great

5) To what extent did this seminar help you to be more effective in your role in the church?
   Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great

Comments: ________________________________________________________

**PRAYER WARRIORS small group seminar.**

1) I attended the Prayer Warriors group seminar. (Please circle one)  Yes – No
   
   If No, for planning purposes please share the reason you did not attend: (Check as many as apply)
   
   Scheduling conflict ( )
   Attended previously ( )
   Not informed ( )
   Too tired ( )
   Not interested ( )
   Other ( )

   If Yes how many of the 12 sessions did you attend? _______

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2) How would you rank the group experience in the following areas?
   - Group leader: Lacking 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding
   - Group participation: Lacking 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding
   - Connectedness (community): Lacking 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding

3) How helpful has the seminar been in your prayer life and personal ministry?
   - Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great

4) How important do you think *Prayer Warriors* was in the success of our evangelistic meetings?
   - Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Great

Comments: ____________________________________________________________

**MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT and Evaluation**

1) In the 1999-2000 church year, I was involved in the following ministry/s or church office/s.
   (Please list all) _________________________________________________________

2) How long have you been a member of the Brandon Church? _______

3) I have received support and encouragement for my ministry. Yes – No (Please circle one)
   If Yes, to what extent did each of the following items give you support/encouragement for your ministry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People to help</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on my ministry</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation of my ministry</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: _______</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) I feel “Connected” to other members of the church. Yes – No (Please circle one)
   If Yes, to what extent does each of the following give you a sense of “connectedness” with other members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal friends</th>
<th>Little 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a small group</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship dinners</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midweek service</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with church leaders</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: _______</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Name ___________________________ Date ______________

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY!
APPENDIX N

SPIRITUAL GUARDIAN PROGRAM EVALUATION

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SPIRITUAL GUARDIAN PROGRAM
EVALUATION

How successful do you think you were in following up with the new member/s assigned to you?

Unsuccessful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Successful

What support or help could have made it more successful?

Number of contacts with your person/s...( ) Estimate the number

What I found most fulfilling in the Spiritual Guardian program.....

What I found most challenging in the program.....

What I would change about the program.....

Other comments:

Your Name ________________________________

Person you followed up? ____________________

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FISHERS OF MEN PLANNING SESSION
August 6, 2000
Schedule

9:00  Sunday Brunch

9:45  Devotional: Christ by the sea, calling disciples to be “fishers of men.”

10:00 Draw something in the church structure that represents a positive
      experience you have had in the Brandon Church the last 12 months.
      Share that with your group.

10:15 Write out how you were “caught” for Christ and His church. Share
      that with your group. (3 minute maximum per person. Have a time
      keeper)

      Look for and discuss what lessons we can learn from the stories

      Suggest each person make a personal prayer request for their own
      spiritual need. Pray for the person’s request on your right.

10:30 Review the Brandon Church mission statement. Suggest a shortened
      form.
      How can your ministry team help fulfill our church’s mission?

11:00 Ministry teams share their goals (previously set by teams)

      The “body life” game. Debrief

11:45 Closing devotional. Re-commissioning by the sea. John 21

12:00 Evaluations
APPENDIX P

EVALUATION - FISHERS OF MEN PLANNING SESSION
EVALUATION
FISHERS OF MEN PLANNING SESSION

How would you rate the planning session overall?
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Excellent

How helpful was the session to you and your ministry in the church?

What suggestions do you have for improvements?

Other comments?
APPENDIX Q

TIME LINE FOR EQUIPPING CHURCH MEMBERS IN COMMUNITY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEPT</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Group</td>
<td>Leadership Group</td>
<td>Making Friends Seminar</td>
<td>Prayer Warriors Seminar</td>
<td>Public Evangelistic Series</td>
<td>Bible Marking Class</td>
<td>Meal + Children/Youth programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


________. *The Lay Driven Church, How to Empower the People in Your Church to Share the Tasks of Ministry.* Ventura, CA: Regal, 1997.


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VITA

PAULL E. DIXON

PERSONAL:
Marital Status: Married for 37 years to Becky
Children: Two grown daughters

EDUCATION:
2001 Doctor of Ministry, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
1981 Master of Public Health, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California
1969 Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee

CERTIFICATIONS:
1993 16 Personality Factor Inventory, Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Champaign, Illinois.
1994 PREPARE/ENRICH Instructor, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

WORK EXPERIENCE:
2001- Pastor, Johnson City, Tennessee.
1996-2000 Pastor, Brandon Church, Florida
1988-1996 Pastor, Portland Church, Maine
1992-1996 Associate Family Life Director, Northern New England Conference, SDA
1984-1988 Pastor, Matthews Church, North Carolina
    Health/Temperance Director, Carolina Conference, SDA
1986-1988 Associate Family Life Director, Carolina Conference
1981-1984 CEO, Carolina HealthCare, Inc., a non-profit health promotion
    organization, Asheville, North Carolina
1976-1980 President, Sarawak Mission, Southeast Asia Union
1975-1976 Pilot/Ministerial leader, Sarawak Mission, Southeast Asia Union
1971-1975 Pastor, Greensboro Church, North Carolina
1969-1971 Pastor, Union Church, South Carolina
1967-69 Commercial Pilot, Time Airlines

PUBLICATIONS:
1995 Co-author, PARTNERS FOR LIFE, marriage enrichment seminar
1995 Contributing author to Family Life Plan Book, General Conference, SDA
1992 Contributing author to the Family Wellness Seminar, Andrews University
1975 Author, Door to the Cities, Temperance Department, General Conference
    of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, DC.