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Helping Parents in the Toronto SDA Churches Understand and Deal With the Challenges of Adolescents and Work Towards a More Harmonious Relationship

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ABSTRACT

HELPING PARENTS IN THE TORONTO SDA CHURCHES
UNDERSTAND AND DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES
OF ADOLESCENTS AND WORK TOWARDS
A MORE HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: **HELPING PARENTS IN THE TORONTO SDA CHURCHES UNDERSTAND AND DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES OF ADOLESCENTS AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP**

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Date completed: July 2010

Problem

Parenting is a process which requests a great deal of flexibility and understanding. Both parents and child are engaged in the human developmental process; in most cases parents reach the midlife crisis more or less at the same time when the child reaches the adolescence phase. In most cases neither the parents nor the adolescent understand what is really happening in their lives. They begin to dislike each other and a conflictual atmosphere exists in the home. This lack of understanding brings about the breakdown in the relation parent adolescent. On the other hand parents usually have certain goals for their children and ideas about how these goals should be achieved, but the children in the adolescence phase have goals and intentions of their own as well. Thus when there is a

great difference between what the children do and what the parents expect them to do, this also causes a breakdown in the relationship between parents and adolescents. This project intends to elucidate some of the causes of this breakdown in the parent-adolescent relation and to propose certain elements of solution in order to help parents understand better their adolescents and maintain a more harmonious relationship with them.

Method

The research method adopted for this project was the survey. This was conducted among the parents of a number of churches in the Ontario Conference including my former congregation, the Woodbridge Seventh-day Adventist Church, to ascertain the problems they experienced with their adolescents and what information would be most helpful in developing and maintaining a good relationship with their adolescents. A variety of churches were selected because of the cultural-ethnic background of the membership in the Ontario Conference. The adolescents were surveyed as well, in order to obtain their perspectives on the problem. The general findings from the survey and general insights gained from the literature review were used to develop seminars geared towards addressing these specific findings. These seminars were held in the Filipino-Canadian Church and were presented to parents and adolescents. A process of evaluation was used to verify the learning experience of the participants and the level of their understanding of issues during the adolescence stage in order to ascertain the pertinence of the content of the seminars and the usefulness of the information shared.

Results

The parents who attended these seminars had their level of understating of the issues of adolescence increased and it is hoped that they are better equipped to deal with

their adolescents and thus maintain a harmonious atmosphere in the family. We found that the level of understanding on the issues about the adolescence phase has increased for a number of parents who attended the seminars.

Conclusion

Three seminars have been prepared in the context of this project, a survey has been administered to the participants before the presentation, and the same survey has been administered to participants after the presentation. A comparison of the pre- and the post-survey helped me to ascertain that education through seminars among the churches in the Ontario Conference can make a positive impact in the relations between the parent and adolescent. Nonetheless these three alone cannot address all the aspects of the dynamic of the relationship between parents and adolescents. This project opened the pathway for more work in this orientation. It is hoped that parents will benefit from the seminars and a harmonious relationship will be fostered in many families within the church.

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A dissertation
Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Nephtaly Dorzilme

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The thought of this project was born out of a simple observation made within a particular family. In that family, the parent-child-connectedness dynamic was very obvious until the child entered the adolescence phase. At that time, the relationship with the parents became so bad that that young person had to leave home. However at the age of twenty-one, the relationship resumed, and it apparently became even stronger. That scenario prompted me to reflect on the phenomenon of parent-adolescent relationships. I asked why that child could not live in harmony with her parents during the adolescence phase. Thus, this project became one of the greatest academic adventures I ever had. I greatly enjoyed the journey and the learning experience that took place during that time. Nevertheless, without the support of Dr. Alanzo Smith, my adviser, his patience and his guidance, this study would not have been completed today. I really enjoyed the Socratic approach you used which has always stimulated my rational thinking and illuminated my thoughts in writing this project. Thank you, Dr. Smith. I have learned a lot in the process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

My adolescence was rather a quiet one as compared to others of my generation. I look back to this period of my life with great satisfaction. It was less disturbing than that of my friends. For example, there was no “going away” experience such as that of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24). God, in his wisdom, probably saw that I might have lost my focus forever, so he spared me from temptations that I could not bear. The context of my family was not filled with the kind of pressures that often brings instability. My home provided a worshipful environment, my connection with church was strong and the influence of my spiritual mentor was strong as well. The media and contemporary technology did not have any overbearing influence on my family relationships and on my adolescence as compared to the pressures it brought on adolescents today in their relationships with their parents. These discrepancies constitute one of my primary motivations for this research. I am thankful to my God who provided me with emotional, spiritual, and cognitive equilibrium during these early years of my life.

Furthermore, over the years, I became fascinated with this phase of human life; I wanted to know exactly what happens in the child’s life during this unknown or misunderstood stage of life. At this stage, teenagers seem to take great pleasure in turning upside down the castle of life skills and good relationships that parents have taken the

time to build with them over the years since birth. They challenge everything parents say or do. This disruption seems to upset the parents who, for most of the time, do not get the whole picture of what is taking place in the adolescent's mind. Hence, they often lose the previously cordial relationship with their teenagers. Some lose it forever; but others manage to build a better relationship with them when they become young adults. In such cases, the time of disturbance passes, and as they reconnect as adults, every aspect of the parent-child relationship becomes new.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to discover and understand the reasons for the apparent breakdown of the relationship between parents and adolescents. A review of the current literature will be done in order to provide a theoretical framework for the study. There will also be a study of the relational patterns of and the issues experienced by parents and adolescents in my local congregation, the Woodbridge Seventh-day Adventist Church, and some other Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Ontario Conference. Information from the literature review and the findings of the study of these congregations will be used to develop and implement a workshop. The sessions will be designed to provide practical and useful guidelines for developing or improving and maintaining healthy and mutually beneficial parent-adolescent interpersonal relationships.

The importance of parent-child bonding has been well documented (Bridges, as cited in Bornstein, 2002; Chase-Lansdale, Wakschlag, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Kuczynski, 2003). Most children in the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Ontario Conference, experience this important relational target process during their early years. Many of these

families also follow the trend towards a weakening of this parent-child bonding during the adolescence years as the teenagers seek to upgrade their position of power within the family (Robin & Foster, 1989). Bretherton (1999) stated that although researchers have devoted considerable effort to assessing maternal sensitivity in parent-child relationship, the interpersonal communication between parent and older children has been relatively sparse. Anecdotally, I have heard, and observed, that the families of the Woodbridge Seventh-day Adventist Church and other churches where I served previously also experience this drifting away from each other. The result is that both the parents and the adolescents struggle with the tension that develops between them and with uncertainty about how to make sense of it. In many cases, it seems, too, that neither the parent nor the adolescent knows how to deal effectively with the distance that has come between them. Several reasons have been put forward as explanations for this problem. One reason relates to the physical, emotional and psychological changes that occur during the adolescent stage of life (Muuss, 1982). While some parents are not fully aware of the magnitude of these changes, others may be aware but are uncertain about what attitude to adopt toward these changes in their children. This situation is often compounded by the “busyness” of many parents’ lives, which leaves them less time to spend with their adolescent children. Consequently, many parents are unavailable, and this creates the potential for further disconnection at a critical period when the adolescent is changing drastically and requires appropriate guidance and direction.

Justification and Extent of the Project

This project arises from a firm belief that God’s ideal plan for the human race is to save us and our families (Acts 16:31). However, many parents fail to understand the

implications of maintaining a healthy relationship with their children as they become adolescents. Furthermore, life experiences have taught me that any breakdown between parents and adolescents affects the church family, adversely. A large number of teenagers quit attending church when they leave their homes as a result of parent-adolescent conflicts. This project is designed to help parents in our churches deal with the challenges of adolescents in the family and by so doing, contribute to more harmonious family living. It also holds the potential of increasing youth retention in the church as parents and adolescents enjoy better relationships.

In the process, I will seek to develop a theological foundation by exploring biblical insights and the writings of Ellen G. White on the subject of parent-adolescent relationships. A review of the literature on the relationship between parents and adolescents will help to provide sensitizing constructs that shape the study. By integrating information from the Bible, Ellen G. White, and the social sciences, the study aims to facilitate a clearer understanding of the concept of adolescence by exploring the changes that occur during adolescence and their impact on adolescent behavior and on parental responses to these changes.

Methodology

I will conduct a survey among the parents of a number of churches in the Ontario Conference including my current congregation, the Woodbridge Seventh-day Adventist Church, to ascertain the problems they experienced with their adolescents and what information would be most helpful in developing and maintaining a good relationship with their adolescents. A variety of churches were selected because of the cultural-ethnic background of the membership in the Ontario Conference. The adolescents will be

surveyed, as well in order to obtain their perspectives on the problem. The general findings from the survey and the insights I have gained from the literature review will serve to develop seminars geared towards addressing these specific findings. These seminars will be presented to parents and adolescents. A process of evaluation which will consist in verifying the learning experience of the participants and the level of their understanding of issues during the adolescence stage will help to ascertain the pertinence of the content of the seminars and the usefulness of the information shared.

These seminars will provide practical tools and information that will help parents to understand this period in the life of the adolescent. They will acquire a relevant and effective approach that they can use as they deal with the adolescent stage of life changes. The adolescents will have a better understanding of their own issues as well as the viewpoints of their parents. By increasing mutual understanding, it is hoped that both sides will be better able to make the necessary adjustments and thereby improve family relationships and the home atmosphere. The church is also expected to benefit when there is greater harmony at home. Finally, the results of this study will be made available to pastors and family life educators within the Ontario Conference to help families with improving relationship between parents and adolescents.

Instrument

In this qualitative study, the instrument used is not designed to be a questionnaire, but rather guiding questions (see appendix 1). The questions have come out of my years of experience as a father of two young-adult children, as a pastor, and from speaking with both adults and teens on the issues of parent-adolescent relationships. The literature review also exerted some influence on the types of questions asked (Robin & Foster,

1989). The questions are not geared towards quantifying the findings. Instead, they will help the researcher to draw inferences from the study.

To preserve confidentiality, the participants were not required to provide their names or other identifying information on their responses to the questions. In addition, the analysis of the responses will be done only by me. Also, the data gathered will be presented in summary form so as to protect the anonymity of all participants.

Procedure

A study will be done among the parents to ascertain the problems they experience with their adolescents and identify what information would be most helpful in developing and maintaining good relationships with their children. Adolescents between the ages of 13 to 17 will be surveyed, as well, in order to provide their perspectives on the problem. The process that was followed is outlined below.

A letter of Institutional Consent has been requested from the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before proceeding with the research. The Woodbridge Seventh-day Adventist Church Board was informed of my intention to conduct a study on parent-adolescent relationships among the families of the church. The risks and benefits of the study were outlined and it was emphasized that only those who wished to participate voluntarily would be involved. A public announcement about the project was made to the congregation via the church bulletin, inviting parents and adolescents to participate on a voluntary basis. In cooperation with their respective pastor, this same process was followed with the other churches involved in the project. A place and a time were designated to instruct those who wished to participate in this research.

The questions were reviewed in order to identify the concerns that seem to affect the relationship between parents and adolescents in these churches. The analysis has been conducted by me and data were presented in summary form in order to maintain individual anonymity and confidentiality. The issues and concerns that were identified by the participants have been incorporated into the seminars.

Definition of Family

Defining the concept of “family” may seem to be a simple task. Scanzoni, Polonko, Teachman, and Thompson (1989) defined the traditional family as two parents and a child or children as the prevailing paradigm of the family. However, families have changed in a multitude of ways in the twenty-first century and the field of family studies has become a complicated entity. Trost (1990) confirmed this complication in referring to the dilemma experienced by family researchers in seeking to offer a comprehensive definition of the concept of family. Trost (1990) noticed that not only do researchers differ on their view of the concept, but so do the members of the general population. People have a range of understanding about the concept of family; to some, family consists of close family members only, the nuclear family, while to others, family includes various other kin, friends, and even pets (Trost, 1990). Sebald (1977) explained that the traditional family with its legal rigidity and hierarchical structure has become outdated; emphasis is now on flexibility, looser integration, and greater individualism.

The complexity of defining this concept does not end with the determining of family membership, the definition is also linked to ideological differences. The concept of family can be studied in regards to several disciplines and areas of inquiry; it can be defined from the perspective of its structure, functions, situation, or development (Diem,

1997). Furthermore, Allen (2000) suggested that our assumption, values, feelings, and history shape the scholarships we offer, the finding we generate, and the conclusions we draw; therefore, there must be some ideological differences in the definition of the concept of family that must be driven by theory, history, culture, and situation. In line with this suggestion, Diem (1997) indicated that family can be defined either from the socio-economic perspective or in the situation of the interaction of its different members. Above all, Diem (1997) considered family as an old institution, almost as old as man himself.

Among the variety of definitions proposed by Diem (1997), I will limit the study to the notion of family as an institution and a circle of interaction. As an institution, family is seen as a traditional biological, procreative, and childrearing organization and the main point is the biological relationship among family members. As a circle of interaction, Diem (1997) centered the definition on the assumption of family-related role behaviors. While “institutionalists” focus on the presence of a biological mother and father and biological offspring to define family, “interactionists” do not rely on the presence of persons assuming the role of mother or father to define a group as family. Instead they focus on the performance of the family roles, not necessarily the biological or marital relationship.

Wikipedia Encyclopedia defines family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society and that it is entitled to protection by society and the State (Wikipedia, s.v. “family”). Eshelman (2003) indicated that a family is a group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who reside together in a household. Considering such a definition, we cannot imagine a family without a strong relationship among its

members. Family implies a group of individuals who have kinship with one another.

Burgess and Locke (1953) defined the family as “a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other, creating and maintaining a common culture.”

This definition seems to complete the previous one by adding the notion of communication, which is the force that maintains the process of bonding in the family.

Furthermore, DeGenova and Rice (2002) elucidated our understanding of the notion of family by describing family “as any group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, or any sexually expressive relationship in which the adults cooperate financially for their mutual support. The people are committed to one another in an intimate interpersonal relationship, and the members see their individual identities as importantly attached to the group with an identity of its own.” This definition brings some basic concepts in the dynamic of the family life relationship; they include financial cooperation and mutual support, commitment to one another, interpersonal relationship, and self identity. These concepts bring to the definition of family a more comprehensive scope. However, this definition also needs to be considered with certain reservations due to the fact that it encompasses all kinds of ties including cohabitating couples, gay couples and lesbian couples. These kinds of ties are the symptoms of a cultural crisis that tends to supersede the biblical foundation of marriage and the family altogether. For these reasons, we will retain only the aspects of this definition that are within the biblical parameters.

The family as an institution provides for the rearing and socialization of children and the care of the aged, sick, or disabled. It legitimatizes procreation, and regulates

sexual conduct in society (DeGenova & Rice, 2002). It passes on the cultural heritage of the group; meets the deep emotional needs of both children and adults and provides for their social, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual development; and develops sound relationships among the family members (Laycock, 1978). Anderson (1982) explained that family means much more than consanguinity where blood ties provide the only basis for belonging. Family is where you are loved unconditionally, and where you can count on that love even when you least deserve it.

It appears almost impossible to arrive at a universal definition that is viable when applied to all. Most experts in the field have concluded that there is no single definition of what family is. The definition of the family will vary based on situational requirements (Troost, 1990).

However, a clear understanding of these sociological aspects of the concept of family in this project is essential since a good quality of relationship between parents and adolescents is critical to preserving the family's stability.

Family as a System

In a scientific approach, the families can be seen as social systems of members held together by strong bonds of affection, who exercise mutual control over each other's contingency arrangement (Robin & Foster, 1989). *Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Webster, s.v. "system") defined a system as an orderly interconnected complex arrangement of parts forming a unified whole, which maintains a basic level of equilibrium. Theoretically, family system is not the sum total of the actions of all the individual members, but rather the interaction of all family members operating as a unit of interrelated parts. In summary, family system perspective is a holistic approach in

which the different members of the family are held together by strong bonds of affection in a state of equilibrium within their boundaries (Balswick & Balswick, 1991).

A family unit can also be defined in the perspective of the system theory. In the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Heylighen and Joslyn (1999) described “Systems Theory” as the trans-disciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena, independent of their substance, type, spatial or temporal scale of existence. It investigates both the principles common to all complex entities, and the models which can be used to describe them. Scott (2002) explained that biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the founder of this theory, was concerned about the growing compartmentalization of science: “The physicist, the biologist, the psychologist and the social scientist are encapsulated in a private universe, and it is difficult to get word from one cocoon to another.” Bertalanffy argued that certain general ideas could have relevance across a broad spectrum of disciplines. In particular, they endeavored to show that many of the most important entities studied by scientists (nuclear particles, atoms, molecules, cells, organs, organisms, ecological communities, groups, organizations, societies, and solar systems) are all subsumable under the general rubric of system. According to Bertalanffy’s argument, system theory would be more concerned with problems of relationships, of structures, and of interdependence, rather than with the constant attributes of object (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Bertalanffy’s work on General Systems Theory (GST) found wide applicability in such fields as community planning, computer programming, and social sciences (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The family systems theory stems directly from the general system theory and indicates that the family interaction environment significantly affects the individual

development of children and adolescents (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). By the close of the twentieth century, the family systems theory had become one of the major theoretical foundations guiding empirical investigations into the study of families and from which clinical interventions and programmatic work with families were developed (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The family system theory was introduced by Bowen in 1952 (Bryannan, 1999). Bowen suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family. Since the family is an emotional unit, each member can influence the other members by their behaviors or actions. Nichols and Schwartz (2001) indicated that Bowen recognized that family, or any group for that matter, was greater than the sum of its parts.

The family system theory is ideally suited to the study of harmonious and orderly relationships among the different members in the family. In order to incorporate our study in a theoretical framework, we will consider some concepts of this theory and establish their importance in the context of parent-adolescent relationships. Two primary concepts of the family systems theory that relate to understanding family rules and relationships are the mutual causality and feedback loops (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004).

Mutual causality refers to the belief that no single part or individual in a system can organize or control the whole system, but rather it is through the reciprocal interaction of members as a whole, that family rules begin to form (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004). Mutual causality means the members of the family system affect each other evenly without one individual being able to manipulate the system itself (Becvar &

Becvar, 1996). Thus the basis of the relationship among the members of the family is formed. Friedman (1985) explained that because they are interdependent; each member of the family system affects every other member.

The concept of feedback loops refers to the process whereby the system adjusts itself to maintain equilibrium based on the feedback it receives, whether positive or negative (Buckley, 1967). As a result of the feedback process, the family system is constantly correcting itself in order to maintain homeostasis. It is in the context of the feedback process that members of the family (husband and wife, or parents and children) can develop strategies to maintain a balanced or harmonious relationship. The feedback process helps members of the system to integrate other concepts such as communication, adaptability, role structure, cohesion, and affective responsiveness (Balswick & Balswick, 1991).

Since its introduction, this theory has gained wide acceptance among family therapists and sociologists (Balswick and Balswick, 1991). Nichols and Schwartz (2001) observed that the Bowen family systems therapy has by far the most comprehensive view of human behavior and human problems of any approach to family treatment. For this reason, the family system theory becomes even more important than the behavioral models (Robin & Foster, 1989). Balswick and Balswick (1991) explained the importance of the family system theory as a reflection of the inadequacies of the cause- and-effect mechanistic models of social behavior.

Robin and Foster (1989) observed that behavior oriented theorists tend to explain family dynamics in terms of molecular contingency arrangements, social learning, and behavior change, while family system theorists explain the same process in terms of

circular, cybernetic systems. Family is not only the sum total of the action of all the individual members, it is also the interactions of all family members operating as a unit of interrelated parts. The family system theory considers the individual within the context of the relationships that exist in the family unit (Balswick & Balswick, 1991).

Friedman (1985) stated that system thinking helps to focus on the processes and the interactions among the elements of the system instead of focusing on the data. Consequently, when applied to family dynamics, system thinking helps to capture the emotional phenomena in the family in terms of process relationship. System thinking helps us to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the relationship that exists between husband and wife on one hand, and the relationship between parents and children on the other hand. It becomes even more crucial to our understanding when children reach the stage of adolescence. In fact, Robin and Foster (1989) described adolescence as a period of exponential, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes. These changes profoundly affect the homeostasis of the family system.

Balswick and Balswick (1991) explained that once children reach adolescence, increased pressure is put upon the family system to accommodate itself to increased demands for flexibility. Adolescence is the time when children begin to differentiate and separate from the family, and it is also the time when parents begin to reach midlife, which is a source of stress for the parents. These two phenomena work together to generate great tension in the relationship and this upsets the family system. The members of the family need to understand the process of these phenomena and be prepared to face the disturbance caused by these changes. Given all of the factors, considering the family

unit in a systemic perspective offers a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic parent-adolescent relationship. The family system theory, therefore, remains the basis of our reflection in this study. We will consider the biblical foundation for parent-adolescent relationship in the next section.

This chapter provides an overview of the scope, the extent of this project, and a definition of the family in the context of parent-adolescent relationships. In the next chapter, we will study the theological foundation for parent-adolescent relationships. Chapter three deals with the adolescence stage in human development; chapter four will focus on developing a need assessment, its application to the participants and the analysis of the results. This will lead to the preparation of seminars and the implementation of the seminars in chapter five. Finally, in chapter six and seven I will do an evaluation and I will highlight some implications and recommendations for parent-adolescent relationships and draw the conclusions.

CHAPTER II

A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE PARENT ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP

Biblical Review

Kostenberger and Jones (2004) observed that families often find it helpful to focus on superficial remedies in the sphere of sociology and psychology when facing problems in the home. However, they believe that the true cause of problems in the family involves factors other than sociology and psychology and those family members often overlook the real cause of their problems. Balswick and Balswick (1991) support this view. They state that the relationship God established with Israel has proven to be the most fruitful model for the development of a theology of the family relationship (p. 19). The concept of relationship is very important to God. God is love and His creation becomes the object of His love. God refers to Himself as the husband of Israel (Isa 54:5). The same image is interpreted in the New Testament where Christ is the bridegroom and His bride is the church. God is also represented as a parent in the Bible; we will discuss this particular aspect in subsequent sections.

God's ideal for His relationship with Israel and with the human race in general is rooted in the institution of marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:21-25). Kostenberger and Jones (2004) explained that one must seek to understand from a biblical perspective what it means for a man to leave his father and mother and

cleave to his wife and that the two become one flesh. Kostenberger and Jones (2004) indicated that God has established a sublime relationship between the two and that is a representation of the relationship that God chooses to have with the human race.

The concept of covenant is fundamental to a theological understanding of family. God's model of relationship with the human race is covenantal, and originates from the Garden of Eden. Although the word covenant is not used in the Bible specifically in relation to Adam, we know God commanded Adam, saying, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen 2:16-17). God expected him to obey, and if he and his wife had obeyed, the curse of death would not have come into effect in their lives. Thus, a covenant was established between God and the first couple in the Garden of Eden. This observation is confirmed in the book of Hosea. In reference to the transgression of Ephraim and Judah, the prophet reported the word of God in those terms: "Like Adam they have broken the covenant, they were unfaithful to me there" (Hos 6:7).

The pattern of covenantal relationship that we observed in Eden seems to establish the foundation for the relationship between God and the human race in general. This reflection leads to the understanding that God's way of relating with the human race is through a covenant. Robertson (1980) indicated that God has entered repeatedly into covenantal relationships with human beings through the Scripture; He established a covenant relationship with Noah (Gen 6:18), Abraham (Gen 15:18), Israel (Exod 24:8), David (Ps 89:3), and the new covenant with Israel (Jer 31:31). Jesus also spoke of the Last Supper in covenantal language (Luke 22:20).

A covenant is a bond that binds people together (Robertson, 1980). God is love (1 John 4:8), and if God's character is one of love, His relational covenant with human beings is a bond of love, as well. It would be interesting to develop this concept of covenant at length; however, this would lead beyond the scope of the subject for this project. Instead, reflections will be limited to the fact that the nature of the relationship between God and the human race is covenantal, and this remains the most fruitful model for the development of a theology of family relationships. Anderson (1982) applied this concept of covenant to human relationships including those of husband and wife, and parents and child. Balswick and Balswick (1991) argued that since this model is established by God as the basis of family relationship, the parent-adolescent relationship must also evolve from this model. Chartier (1978) also views God's relationship with humans as the model for parent-child relationships, and from this perspective, parenting children will be characterized by loving, caring, responding, disciplining, respecting, knowing, and forgiving. These reflections from Anderson, Chartier, Balswick and Balswick lead to the conclusion that it is God's will that parent and adolescent establish a harmonious relationship based on the divine model. Parents should learn from this divine covenant model to know how to react and protect the relationship between them and the adolescent, even when the adolescent would fail to be faithful to his part of the covenant.

The concept of "adolescent" is not mentioned in the Bible. It was not until 1904 that this term was first used by G. Stanley Hall (Collins, 1980). However, throughout the Bible, one can identify principles of parent-child relationships and their applicability to various phases of human development, including the adolescent stage. Some of these are developed in the following paragraphs.

God is a compassionate Father (Ps 103:13), a provider of good things to His children (Luke 11:13), and He is faithful to forgive (1 John 1:9). However, He is also a Father who punishes the children whom He loves (Heb 12:5-6). He is a Wonderful Counselor, a mighty God for whom nothing is impossible or too big (Isa 9:6; 46:9-11; Eph 3:20). As a parent, God sets limits (Gen 2:17), explains the consequences (Deut 11:27), rewards the obedient children (Gen 22:18), invites us into open discussion (Isa 1:18-20), praises good characteristics in his children (Job 1:8), disciplines with love (Heb 12:6), and forgives wrong doing in such a way that encourages growth. Every parent should refer to that biblical model in order to understand the type of relationship they should build with their children. These biblical verses describe God's characteristics as a parent and His relational nature. They have been written for our instruction as parents so that we may adopt the same model to build a harmonious relationship with our adolescents in the home and in the church family. Furthermore, the prophet Isaiah compares God with a mother who brings comfort to the children of Israel (Isa 66:10-13). The relationship between God and the human race as illustrated in the Bible is a parental relationship. It is a covenantal model in which man, the child, is only required to love and obey God (Deut 5:1-22, 6:1-4).

The basic responsibility of children towards their parents is to honor them as it is clearly stipulated in the fifth commandment (Exod 20:12). The verb "honor" (כָּבֵד: Kabed) means to be heavy, severe, or dull. It refers to the idea of being numerous, rich, admirable, praiseworthy, being worthy of high regard. Balla (2003) explained that "honor" or "reverence" can be seen as an overarching duty. Many other duties are related to it in such a close way that we can regard them as concrete realization of the duty of

“honor.” Henry (1988) suggests that honoring father and mother sums up all the duties of the child towards the parents including esteeming them; obeying their lawful commands; complying with their bidding and refraining from doing what they forbid; showing love to them and submitting to their counsels and corrections; and providing support and comfort in their old age. The concept of honoring parents involves many ramifications. It is an important biblical concept; Paul qualifies it as the first commandment with promises (Eph 6:1-3). Because of its importance, it is worthwhile to mention certain actions of a child that dishonor the parents. Roy Gane (1997) reported that Patrick Dale underlined some verses that prohibit negative actions against the parents such as striking (Exod 21:15), cursing (Exod 21:17), despising (Deut 27:16), and disobeying and rebelling (Deut 21:18-21). Obviously, such actions will break the harmony in the relationship between a parent and a child, and the conflict can become even more intense during adolescence.

Balla (2003) found that this concept was widespread among the Greek, Latin, and Jewish communities and it included honor and respect due to older people in general: respectful speech, obedience, loyalty and gratitude, provision in old age and for the funeral. Finally, in the Bible, Jesus acknowledged the validity of the Ten Commandments and referred specifically to the fifth one as the key to the relationship between a parent and a child (Matt 15:5-7). Balla (2003) notes that the Gospels reveal that Jesus and the early church observed the fifth commandment. Their example is a clear-cut model for children in this age.

This section succinctly considered the biblical foundation for the parent-adolescent relationship. It sought to establish that the Bible outlines the roles and duties of each party in the parent-child relationship within the context of a covenant, based on

the divine model. In this covenant model, the Bible uses many relationship terms including forgiveness and redemption (Col 1:12-14), reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18), making peace (Rom 5:1), and adoption (Rom 8:23). These expressions were used in the Bible in order to help humans understand the nature of the relationship God, the Father intends to maintain with us, and helps us learn from it in relating to our children.

With the biblical foundation for the parent/child relationship in place, the next section of the chapter considers insights from the writings of Ellen G. White. Specifically, this section will examine White's perspectives on family life.

Ellen G. White's Insights

In general, the writings of Ellen G. White concur with the biblical teachings including the principles of the model parent/child relationship. In reference to her writings, White (1903a) said that little heed is given to the Bible, and that the Lord has given a lesser light (her work) to lead men and women to the greater light (the Bible). Hence, it is possible to retrieve from these writings many insights that will enlighten the biblical foundation for a parent-adolescent relationship. The term "adolescent" is not found in the writings of Ellen G. White, but the words "youth" and "young people" occur frequently.

First and foremost, White (1955) confirmed the basic characteristic of the covenantal relationship between humanity and God the Father by indicating that God has given to human beings alone, the crown of His creation, a conscience to realize the sacred claims of divine law, and a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good; prompt and perfect obedience is required of all people. In the same context, it is suggested that

parents should establish relationships with their children based on the divine model (White, 1955).

White (1955) said that “the rules which should regulate the lives of parents and children should flow from a heart of infinite love, and God’s rich blessing will rest upon those parents who administer His law in their hearts and upon the children who obey this law” (p. 40). It is also suggested that the first care of the parents should be to establish good government in the family. The words of the parents should be law, precluding all arguments or evasions. Children should be taught from infancy to obey their parents implicitly (White, 1954). These reflections indicate that obedience to parents is an important aspect in the parent/child relationship and it is even more important when the child reaches the stage of adolescence.

White (1913) gives the prescription to maintain good balance in the parent/child relationship. Parents are not to indulge blind affection, neither are they to manifest undue severity. They should never cause pain to their children by harshness or unreasonable exactions. They should administer the rules of the home in wisdom and love, not with a rod of iron. Children will respond with willing obedience to the rule of love. We should commend our children whenever we can and make their lives as happy as possible. The home should be the most attractive place in the world for the children, and the mother’s presence should be its greatest charm.

White (1952a) suggested that parents should be involved in the lives of their children. Parents should become children with their children, making everything as pleasant for them as possible. In other words, parents must seek to know their children in order to foster a harmonious relationship with them. Parents should devote the evenings

to their families, perplexity and worries of the day should not interfere with these special moments (White, 1923).

In general, parents tend to react negatively to certain behaviors that their children exhibit. Even parents who have gone through a typical childhood tend to adopt a judgmental attitude towards their children. This is one of the reasons that brings disharmony in the parent/child relationship particularly during adolescence.

White (1952a) pointed out that “parents should not forget their childhood years, how much they yearned for sympathy and love, and how unhappy they felt when censured and fretfully chided. They should be young again in their feelings and bring their minds down to understand the wants of their children. Yet with firmness, mixed with love, they should require obedience from their children” (p. 388).

I have suggested some recommendations for children regarding their duties in relating with their parents. In a most solemn manner, the Lord has enjoined upon children their duty to affectionately respect and honor their parents. On the other hand, He requires parents to train up their children and with unceasing diligence to educate them with regard to the claims of His law and to instruct them in the knowledge and fear of God (White, 1872/1948).

The obligation resting upon children to honor their parents is of lifelong duration. If the parents are feeble and old, the affection and attention of the children should be bestowed in proportion to the need of father and mother. Nobly, decidedly, children should shape their course of action, even if it requires self-denial, so that every thought of anxiety and perplexity may be removed from the minds of the parents (White, 1952a, p. 360).

Above all, let children be taught that true reverence is shown by obedience. God has commanded nothing that is unessential, and there is no other way of manifesting reverence as pleasing to Him as obedience to that which He has spoken (White, 1903a, p. 244). The honor and the reverence a child manifests to the parents form the basis of the relationship among them and this is even a responsibility the child shall continue until death. White (1952a) commented on children's responsibility towards parents, and stated that our obligation to our parents never ceases. Our love for them, and theirs for us, is not measured by years or distance, and our responsibility can never be set aside (p. 360).

A succinct review of the literature revealed that Ellen White covers various aspects in the dynamics of the parent-adolescent relationship. By deduction, several key concepts have been identified.

1. *Covenantal Relationship*: This concept is clearly described when Ellen G. White stated that God gave to man a conscience to realize the sacredness of His laws and that a prompt and perfect obedience is required of man. The same principle is also established in the parent-adolescent relationship. Ellen G. White stipulated that children should be taught from infancy to obey their parents implicitly.

2. *Reciprocal Affection*: Ellen G. White stated that parents should show affection and love to their children and this should be mutual in the parent-adolescent relation.

In many families there is a great lack in expressing affection one for another. While there is no need of sentimentalism, there is need of expressing love and tenderness in a chaste, pure, dignified way. Many absolutely cultivate hardness of heart and in word and action reveal the satanic side of the character. Tender affection should ever be cherished between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. Every hasty word should be checked, and there should not be even the appearance of the lack of love one for another. It is the duty of everyone in the family to be pleasant, to speak kindly. Cultivate tenderness, affection, and love that have expression in little courtesies, in speech, in thoughtful attentions. The best way to educate children to respect their father and mother is to give them the opportunity of seeing the father

offering kindly attentions to the mother and the mother rendering respect and reverence to the father. (White, 1952a, p. 198)

3. *Communication*: Ellen G. White suggested that parents should devote time and attention to their children. We deduce that such an approach would provide opportunity for harmonious relationships and open communication.

Parents should encourage their children to confide in them, and unburden to them their heart grieves, their little daily annoyances and trials. Thus the parents can learn to sympathize with their children, and can pray with and for them that God would shield and guide them. They should point them to their never-failing Friend and Counselor, who will be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. (White, 1952a, p. 191)

4. *Identification and Implication*: Parents should learn how to identify with their children by keeping in mind their own childhood. They should seek to get involved in their personal lives so that they may be able to provide proper guidance in time of need. Parents should encourage in their children a disposition to be open and frank with them, to come to them with their difficulties, and when they are perplexed as to what course is right, to lay the matter just as they view it before the parents and ask their advice. Who are so well calculated to see and point out their dangers as godly parents? (White, 1952a, p. 191).

5. *Edification*: The concept of edification can be clearly recognized in the following statement.

The family firm should be well organized. Together the father and mother should consider their responsibilities. Together they should work for the highest good of their children. There is to be no variance between them. Never should they in the presence of their children criticize each other's plans or question each other's judgment. . . . It is not only our privilege but our duty to cultivate gentleness, to have the peace of Christ in the heart and as peacemakers and followers of Christ to sow precious seed that will produce a harvest unto eternal life." (White, 1977, pp.155, 156)

6. *Adoration/Family Worship*: Above all, the writings of Ellen G. White underlined the importance of adoration as the starting point of the relationship among family members. White (1954) stated that every family should raise its altar of prayer, realizing that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. “If any persons in the world need the strength and encouragement that religion gives, it is those who are responsible for the education and training of children. . . . Fathers, mothers, you need to seek God morning and evening at the family altar, that you may learn how to teach your children wisely, tenderly, and lovingly” (p. 517).

These insights from Ellen G. White help to expand the understanding of the divine perspective regarding the relationship between parents and children, including during adolescence. They also represent pathways to explore for further study in seeking to help parents deal with the challenges of adolescents. The next section will consider the psychological foundation of adolescence.

CHAPTER III

UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS

Changes in Adolescence and the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

From its inception, the scientific study of adolescent development has always had as part of its implicit and explicit agenda the goal of describing, explaining, predicting, and ameliorating the behavior. However, the trend now is toward studying the adolescent in context instead of describing individual development and functioning such as logical thinking, identity development, moral reasoning, self-esteem, sexual attitude, etc. Researchers have shifted their interests towards studying the context in which these developments take place including family, peer group, school environment, and work place (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Biological Changes

Adolescence has been described as a phase of life beginning in biology and ending in society. It is the period within the life span when most people's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing from what is typically considered childish to what is considered adult-like (Lerner & Spanier, 1980). Wolman (1998) also mentioned that the adolescent years are the years of difficulties and conflicts between the social roles of childhood and adulthood. Contemporary adolescents are biologically adult and tend to act as adults, but their socio-cultural development does not

prepare them for adult life; Wolman concludes by saying that adolescence is a period of normal maladjustment. This chapter will explore the biological, social, and cognitive changes associated with adolescence and how they impact the parental relationship. Several terms are used interchangeably to refer to this life stage. Lay people frequently use the term *teenager* which includes only the ages of thirteen to nineteen, and this term frequently carries negative connotations. Some people use the term *juvenile* but this is often associated with delinquency; others simply employ the term *youth*. However, Muuss (1982) indicated that it is important to distinguish *adolescence*, which refers to the psychological process of development, and *puberty*, the physical process of development and the onset of sexual maturation. Puberty is defined as a period of transformation from a stage of reproductive immaturity to a stage of full reproductive competence. This phenomenon of physical changes in the body is called *pubescence* and it coincides with the start of the period of *adolescence*, the psychological process of maturing which span the years of twelve to nineteen. The changes that occur during this period differ according to the gender.

Changes in boys. These include skeletal growth, enlargement of testes, straight pigmented pubic hair, early voice changes, ejaculation, kinky pigmented pubic hair, and maximum annual growth increment, appearance of downy facial hair, and appearance of axillary hair, late voice change, coarse pigmented facial hair, and the appearance of chest hair (Collins, 1980).

Changes in Girls. These include skeletal growth, breast development, straight pigmented pubic hair, kinky pigmented pubic hair, maximum annual growth increment, menstruation, and the appearance of axillary hair (Muuss, 1982).

These changes have some significant effects on the adolescent's life. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (as cited in Caspi & Moffit, 1991) revealed that girls mature twelve to eighteen months earlier than boys. Other studies have shown that early maturation is considered more advantageous for boys than girls (Caspi & Moffit, 1991). Albert, Walsh, and Jonik (1993) found that biological changes in adolescence affect behaviors such as aggression, mood swings, and heightened sexual feelings, which explains the high rate of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among eleventh and twelfth graders. It has also been found that these statistics are lower among the adolescents who want to avoid pregnancy in order to fulfill educational and occupational aspirations (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehart, 2000). Finally, it is worth mentioning that cultural factors such as social norms, religious beliefs, expectations of gender roles, and acceptable age of becoming sexually active can modify the effects of biological changes in adolescents (Caspi & Moffit, 1991). These biological changes significantly affect the relationship between parents and adolescent. It is important that parents become aware of these changes in the hormonal systems and then be equipped to deal with them without breaking the emotional connection with the adolescent.

Cognitive Changes

Cognitive change is the development of thinking and the organizing system of the brain that takes place during the adolescence. Cognition involves the maturation of language, problem solving skills, memory development and reasoning. These changes are normally recorded in the brain of the teenager and prompt them to question or challenge everything that they knew before, as if they were out to redo their own world.

It is almost impossible to study the concept of cognition in adolescence without

referring to Piaget. Many other psychologists have studied this important part of the human life span and have contributed to the theoretical understanding of adolescence. This includes authors like Erick Erickson, Freud, Arnold, Gesell, Peter Blo, and Lawrence Kohlberg, just to name a few (Muuss, 1982). Jean Piaget is perhaps the most significant contributor to our present understanding of the cognitive aspect of adolescent development. Piagetian Theory covers the cognitive development and the qualitative changes of the intellectual structure of human beings from birth to maturity. (Piaget, Inhelder, & Parsons, 1958) indicated that there are four stages of development in the child. These stages help to understand the ways children think, retain knowledge, and adapt to the environment.

1. The first stage is identified as *Sensorimotor*. This stage lasts from birth to two years of age. This name refers to the fact that the child uses his senses to enter in contact with his environment.

2. The second stage is the *Preoperational* stage. It lasts from two years to seven years of age. In this stage, the child begins to use symbols and words to explain his environment and maintain a relationship with the world around him. The child begins to make mental representation of things around him. Symbols are used to represent things. The child begins to draw to express his thought about something else, and he begins to use words in their proper sense. He begins to develop social behavior, socio-centric speech of conceptual thought, and in the later part of this stage, he begins to manage intuitive thought.

3. The third stage, identified as *Concrete Operation*, goes from seven to eleven years of age. The child continues to use symbols to represent things, but now he is also

able to manipulate these symbols in a logical way in concrete situations such as problem solving.

4. The last stage is called *Formal Operation*. It begins from the age of twelve and continues until adulthood. Children at this stage are capable of thinking logically and critically, and reason hypothetically in abstract subjects. It is, in fact, the ultimate stage proposed by Piaget that leads into the adolescence period (Piaget et al., 1958).

Muuss (1982) reported that there is a direct correspondence between the structure of logic and the structure of the adolescent's cognitive operations. There is a developmental approximation of the operational thought process of the adolescent to the formal system of modern logic. At this stage, the adolescent gains the ability to reason in terms of verbally stated hypotheses and no longer in terms of concrete object and their manipulation. The maturation of the system is basically fulfilled, the adolescent is able to use his experience through interaction with physical reality, and he is open to the influence of the environment through cognitive adaptation, accommodation, and equilibrium. Several relevant terms associated with the process of cognitive development are explained in Piaget's theory:

Schemas are what Piaget considered a child's knowledge is composed of: basic units of knowledge used to organize past experiences and serve as a basis for understanding new ones (Piaget et al., 1958).

Cognitive adaptation to the environment is the process by which the adolescent assimilates information and knowledge from his environment. It is also the process by which he sets his own experience in such a structure that fits into the present intellectual organization. To assimilate the knowledge from the environment means to master and to

possess this knowledge in such a way as to turn it into the terms of ones' own cognitive experience.

Cognitive accommodation refers to the process of internal change in the cognitive structure by incorporating the new experiences and knowledge that had been previously assimilated. Adaptation and accommodation environmental experiences create what we could call cognitive structure. The term assimilation is also used to refer to this same process of taking new information by incorporating it into existing schemas.

Cognitive equilibrium is the harmony between sensory information and accumulated knowledge. It is a balance between the structure of the mind and the environment. This equilibrium breaks whenever the individual encounters a new set of knowledge that requires a new adaptation, assimilation, and accommodation for renewed equilibrium to take place. This process causes the individual to develop thinking skills and to become more critical in thinking as the brain matures, organizes, and assimilates the data from the environment (Muuss, 1982).

The process of thinking and organization within the brain forms the concept of cognitive development and it usually takes place at puberty. The biological development basically drives the movement from one cognitive stage to the next. However, Laugsen, Dugas, and Bakwski (2003, citing Dahl), point out that cognitive development correlates with age and experience, but not necessarily with sexual maturation. Puberty sometimes comes on earlier, gives the child a sexually mature body with sexually activated brain circuits, but the child may display a relatively immature neurobehavioral system. Therefore, the key indicator to cognitive development in a child is the ability to think logically, plan, and reason regarding the events that occur in his environment.

Cognitive changes in the adolescent occur imperceptibly. At this stage, the adolescent becomes more interested in concepts such as justice, fairness, and rights. These changes in thinking allow teenagers to question their parent's authority and rules (Galotti, Kosberg, & Farmer, 1991). Unfortunately, parents do not always realize the magnitude of these changes, and that is the root of most problems and misunderstanding in the parent-adolescent relationship.

Psychology of Adolescence and the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

The concept of psychology of adolescence must be studied in reference with a theory of adolescence. The theory that fits best is the developmental theory. Numerous theories of development have been proposed to study the period of adolescence. These include theorists such as Rousseau, Darwin, Hall, Freud, Erickson, Piaget, Vygotsky, Kohlberg, Arnold Gesell, and Kurt Lewin to name a few (Muuss, 1982). These theorists and psychologists have contributed to our understanding of the psychological dynamic of adolescence. A detailed study of these theories is outside the scope of this project; instead we will consider a few in order to gain some insight into adolescent psychology.

Rousseau (1762) became famous as a French educator, and his book *Emile* was one of the most significant on education for the 18th century. It was translated into English by Allan Bloom in 1991. Rousseau described the stages of child development and their implications for education and his work was foundational in presenting a clear understanding of child and adolescent psychology. In fact, Davidson (1970) indicated that the educational system of Rousseau forms an integral part of a complete theory of human life.

Before Rousseau, the notion of "adolescence" as a separate physical, cognitive,

and psychological stage was not validated. According to Aries (1973), childhood and adulthood were the recognized stages of life then, and there was a complete misunderstanding of the childhood period. Before the 15th century, it was believed that a child came into the world as a miniature adult, and the difference between the child and adult was only quantitative, with no qualitative difference between the two stages. Childhood covered a very short span of life. As soon as the child could manage by himself, he was graduated from childhood, considered an adult, and was expected to fulfill adult responsibilities. Aries (1973) indicated that during the 15th century, traditional society identified the ages of life based on the functions to be performed. They were: Toy's age, School's age, Romantic age, War age, and Sedentary age.

This pattern underscored the biological stages and the social functions of the child and completely ignored the psychological aspect, which was not considered to be important. Davidson (1970) indicated that Rousseau (1762) has made a significant contribution in this regard. He explained that childhood education should not be seen from an adult point of view as this approach is harmful for the child. The child needs to grow naturally according to the developmental process of life. Muuss (1982) reported the four stages in the process: Infancy, which begins from birth to five years of age, the Savage stage which goes from five to twelve years old, the Awakening of Rational Formation, from twelve to fifteen years old, and the fourth stage, which goes from age fifteen to twenty, which he called Adolescence proper. He concluded by pointing out that these stages correspond to certain periods of life and carry with them some specific tasks, behaviors, and attitudes. This new approach opened the way to a better understanding of the notion of child and adolescent psychology.

Darwin (1859) used the theory of natural evolution to explain physiological changes in the process of human development. According to Darwin (1859) every living organism from the simplest organic structure to the most complex, including man, is brought together under the order of natural explanation. He stated: “As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever branching and beautiful ramifications” (Darwin, 1859). Although Darwin’s theory is in total opposition to the biblical notion of creation, the psychological implications resulting from his biological concept of development were accepted, elaborated, and applied to adolescent development by Hall (1904).

Tanner, Albert, and Hall (2003) indicated that it was widely held among adherents of evolutionary theory that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,” meaning that the biological development of each individual reenacts the evolutionary development of the human species. Hall (1904) was among the first adherents of evolutionary theory who explained that the psychological development of each person was viewed as reflecting the evolutionary history of humanity. Thus, according to Hall, the individual relives the development of the human race from early animal-like primitivism through a period of savagery, to the more recent civilized ways of life that characterize maturity.

As a result of Hall’s argument, some developmental psychologists have considered human development as a matter of becoming less similar to animals, and more similar to God. Koteskey (1980) explained that at birth, the human infant is very similar to an animal except that he or she has more potential. Human development is considered

as a process of actualizing this potential; the child, for example, will gradually internalize the rules and the values of his society as he interacts with other people. This helps us to understand the process of human development in a more positive perspective. Change will take place as the child moves to the next stage of life (Koteskey, 1980).

Hall (1904) seems to follow the above line of thinking and in the actualizing process; the period of savagery would correspond to the adolescent stage of life. He explained that physiological factors caused development to take place and these factors are genetically predetermined. Therefore, the psychological behavior displayed by the individual in the stage of adolescence is also predetermined and social environment has little influence on the individual. Hall explained that the unacceptable types of behavior are predictable; they result in the predisposition of physiological drives and they must be tolerated knowing that they will disappear as the individual moves to the next stage in the process of development. Hall (1904) identifies four developmental periods in his theory: Infancy, Childhood, Youth, and Adolescence. This period of Adolescence begins at twelve years of age and ends between the twenty-second and twenty-fifth year and is described as a period of *Sturm und Drang*, “Storm and Stress,” as a time of universal and inevitable upheaval. In fact, the scientific study of adolescence was initiated by Hall (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004) when he defined adolescence as a separate phase of development marked by antisocial behaviors and attitudes that invariably result from a rush of hormones and changes in physical development (Hall, 1904).

Like Hall, Gesell (1933, as cited in Murchison, 1967) explored the theory of adolescent development. He used, instead, the concept of “growth” which he defined as a process of organization. Growth is a unitary and integrative process which results in

physical and emotional maturation. He believed that maturation is internal and cannot be facilitated by external factors. In explaining the behavioral and emotional changes from one age to the next, he described “growth” as a spiral process with various cycles and stages at each age. Like Hall, Gesell explained that behavioral problems and deviation in adolescence will be outgrown. Therefore, he advises parents against the use of emotional methods of disciplines and recommends that parents make the baby “with its inborn wisdom a working partner” (Gesell, 1933).

According to Gesell, a clear understanding of adolescence begins with the understanding of child development and the process of maturation. As I review the theories of Gesell and Hall’s, it is clear that they explain the psychology of adolescence from a biological point of view and they gave little attention to the environment.

Nonetheless, Lerner and Spanier (1980) explained that the theories of adolescent development are classified into three major categories: nature theories, nurture theories, and interaction theories. The nature theories of adolescent development refer to the biological transformation or the person’s nature as the source of adolescent development. These theories claim that environment and external experience have a certain impact on the quality of behavior. Nurture theories explain that external experience, learning, and environment are the primary sources of influence and behavior change in adolescent development. Interaction theories indicate that the interplay of biology and environment has an important role in adolescent development.

Developmental theorists indicated that children must pass through several stages on the road to becoming adults. These stages are characterized by certain developmental tasks, the first of which is the process of individuation of the adolescent from the parents.

Havighurst (1951) identified at least nine developmental tasks involved in this process of individuation. They are

1. Accepting one's physique and accepting a masculine and feminine role.
2. Developing new relationship with age-mates of both sexes.
3. Gaining emotional independence from parents.
4. Achieving assurance of economic independence.
5. Selecting and preparing for an occupation.
6. Developing intellectual skills and concepts for civic competence.
7. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior.
8. Preparing for marriage and family.
9. Building conscious values in harmony with an adequate scientific world.

These developmental tasks are the signs of a normal growth of the adolescent, the "road map" of what to expect from any child in that stage of life. Selbad (1992) pointed out that modern Americans are inclined to add a new developmental task: the necessity for the young to develop communicative skills.

The process of individuation of the adolescent from the parents can be emotionally painful for the family. Robin and Foster (1989) explained that the family's boundaries will be challenged and will require increased flexibility to permit age-appropriate independence as children reach the adolescence years. The parent-adolescent relationship must shift to permit adolescents to move in and out of the system. Once parents understand this psychological aspect in the relationship, they will be able to prevent most of the turbulent situations. This independence-seeking behavior or this process of individuation of the adolescent represents the psychological foundation for the

parent-adolescent relationship; the manner in which the parents react to the challenge of the adolescent individuation will determine the level of harmony in the relation.

Psychologist Bandura (1964) argued that the process of individuation during adolescence does not generate as much conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship as Hall (1904) tends to describe with the concept of *Sturm und Drang*, “Storm and Stress,” a time of universal and inevitable upheaval. Bandura (1964) explained the discrepancy between his research findings and the traditional theory by the distortion of mass-media sensationalism, generalizations from biased samples (such as data based on deviant adolescents), the rigidity of theoretical approach, and self-fulfilling prophecy.

Although Bandura’s observations have merits, it still remains a fact that the process of individuation during adolescence is painful and creates a high level of tension between parents and adolescent. Balswick and Balswick (1991) elucidate the discrepancy between Hall (1904) and Bandura (1964) by observing that the individuation process begins usually at the time the parents also approach midlife, which often involves stress of its own. Many difficulties arise when the stressful stages of adolescent and midlife occur simultaneously. Whether we consider the stormy decade as fact or fiction, the adolescent stage remains a difficult period for both the parents and the adolescent. It is worthwhile to give psychological attention to such periods of human development. In the next section, we will consider the sociological foundation for parent-adolescent relationships.

Sociology of Adolescence and the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

According to Weber (1897), the concept of “Sociology” refers to the study of the social action among people as they interact with one another in varied, psychological,

structural, cultural, historical, and economic contexts. Inasmuch as the family is the most important social unit, the relationship between parents and adolescents must include a sociological foundation. The term Adolescence comes from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means “to grow up, to grow into maturity;” the reference to growth is nonspecific and it could apply to physiological, psychological, or sociological growth (Collins, 1980; Muuss, 1982). In the sociological sense, adolescence refers to the experience of passing through the unstructured and ill-defined phase that lies between childhood and adulthood (Sebal, 1977). The family represents the context in which the sociological growth of adolescents takes shape.

From birth, the child begins a process of acquiring the social skills needed to become a social being. This process is called socialization, and it takes place in the context of parent-child relationship. Eshelman (2003) explained that the focus of socialization concern is not only the young child, but also the teenager, the young adult, and even the parents, all of whom need to be socialized to parenthood in the context of the family. This process of socialization, which involves both the child and the parents, constitutes the sociological foundation for their relationship. It takes place concurrently with the process of individuation and seems to reach a crucial point at the stage of adolescence when the level of interdependence between parent and adolescent tends to decrease (Balswick & Balswick, 1991). The concept of interaction between biology and environment coined by Lerner and Spanier (1980) in the theory of adolescent development elucidates our understanding on the sociological foundation of the parent-adolescent relationship. The adolescent can only construct a personal identity in the context of relationship with others, and this relationship involves social expectations.

Davis (1991) defines socialization as the process by which individuals learn the ways, ideas, beliefs, values, and norms of their culture and make them part of their personality. Davis (1991) sees development as a continuous process of learning socially acceptable behavior reinforcement and punishment (Muuss, 1982). This theory suggests that parents have a duty to convey the values, beliefs, norms, and culture to the children to be assimilated during their growing process. However, the issue is to understand how the process of socialization affects the adolescent stage. What really happens at this stage? How does the tension between acceptable behavior reinforcement versus punishment work when the child reaches the stage of adolescence?

Van Gaalen and Dykstra (2006) reported that family sociologists have become increasingly aware of the fact that the family relationship undergoes various changes during the process of socialization. These changes generate conflicts among the members of the family particularly when children reach the stage of adolescence. Conflicts between older and younger people are a perennial issue because of never-ending social changes and changes that youth experience in their own development.

Scott (1965) explained that the structural differentiation in industrial society has brought a system of education wherein the more technical aspects of socialization are removed from the family. Because of this reality, the family, the basic agent of socialization, is inherently disposed to conflict, and the potential for conflict increases as the content of what is taught outside the home diverges from what parents teach in the family. This phenomenon becomes more obvious when children begin to attend college or university during adolescence.

Another social factor that generates conflict among parents and adolescents is the fact that individuals who have gone through the typical teen years and adolescent condition undergo major changes in attitude as parents. When they face their offspring who exhibit the same behavior styles as they did during their earlier years, they react from the vantage point of parents, and not from that of the teenager (Sebald, 1992).

From this perspective, Sebald mentioned several factors including lack of communication, lack of understanding, and rebellious resistance to parent's authority that affect the sociological foundation of the parent-adolescent relationship which is an issue in intergenerational relationships. The complexity of this issue is increased by the rapidly changing society which means that each generation experiences a different social climate. In addition, young people without vesting any interest in the existing social and economic order of their parents tend to change customs and values as part of claiming their distance from the family culture as they go through the process of individuation. It is important that parents become aware of this dynamic in order to manage the conflict and maintain their relationship with adolescents. In the next subsection, I will succinctly consider the notion of crisis in adolescence.

Crisis in Adolescence and the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Adolescence is a critical stage in human development; it involves a process of individuation which requires a certain level of maturity in the adolescent (Balswick & Balswick, 1991). However, most of the time, it happens that some young person achieves that maturity physically before he achieves it emotionally or psychologically. This creates an internal tension which is generally defined as a "crisis of identity" in adolescence. According to Marcia (1967), the criteria for attainment of a mature identity are based on

two essential variables: crisis and commitment. Crisis refers to the fact that the adolescent is involved in choosing, among many options, his occupation, and his personal belief and commitment refers to the degree of personal investment the adolescent expresses in his occupation or in his beliefs (Muuss, 1982). A crisis may be thought of as an acute response to events wherein homeostasis is disrupted, one's usual coping mechanisms have failed, and there is evidence of significant emotional distress or functional impairment (Everly & Mitchell, 1999, as cited in Everly, 2007). During the transition between childhood and adulthood, because of the various changes that take place in their lives, adolescents find it rather difficult to build a life structure and to handle properly any decision-making process on their own (Levinson, 1978). Thus, the identity crisis occurs during the transition between childhood and adulthood.

Erikson (1968) proposed a theory of adolescent identity crisis in which he described eight stages of the lifespan until old age and death. Each stage is conceptualized as a crisis which needs to be resolved before the child is prepared to move to the next. From birth to one year, the crisis to be resolved is between Basic Trust and Mistrust. From ages two to three, it is Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. Between four and five, it is Initiative vs. Guilt, and between six and twelve years of age, it is Industry vs. Inferiority.

The fifth stage is related to adolescence—13 to 19 years of age—and the crisis there is between Identity vs. Role Confusion. This stage is characterized as a time when the young person begins to explore and examine psychological characteristics of self in order to discover who he or she really is, and how to fit in his/her social world. During this critical stage of human development, the young person then becomes vulnerable to

the most difficult crisis. Steinberg and Morris (2001) indicated that recent research has supported Erikson's theory on this point. However, they argued that the time table varies; the bulk of identity "work" occurs in late adolescence and even in young adulthood, in some cases. Therefore, it is important that parents become aware of this reality and learn how to deal with young people in such a way as to keep a positive relationship with them. Furthermore, Balswick and Balswick (1991) observed that the adolescent crisis occurs in most cases at the time the parents also approach midlife, which often involves stress of its own. This factor also requires careful attention from parents in their interaction with the adolescents.

Establishing an Understanding of Adolescence

In this project, I sought to study this stage of adolescence in the context of the parent-adolescent relationship in order to understand the characteristics of this relationship, and help parents face its challenges successfully. One should not underestimate the adolescent period with all its challenges. However, the notion that adolescence is inherently a period of difficulty and of problematic behavior should not prevail in dealing with adolescent. In the course of the literature review, I have gathered information that helps me establish a personal understanding of this period of human development and I believe others will benefit from it as well. In conclusion, I will succinctly mention some tips that represent my understanding of the adolescent period.

1. Adolescence is a time of growth in independence and autonomy in preparation for adulthood.
2. Since the adolescent's goal is to become fully independent, parents should recognize this trend and learn to move along harmoniously with the adolescent.

3. Adolescents will claim and demonstrate their autonomy with or without parental participation.

4. Adolescence is not necessarily a period of *storm and stress* as described by Hall (1904). Hormonal factor is not necessarily a determinant for adolescent behavior.

5. Recent studies indicated that puberty is not characterized by “raging hormones” and the turmoil once associated with puberty was exaggerated (Brooks-Gunn & Reiter, 1990).

6. Parents should not automatically associate delinquency with adolescent years. In many cases, the problems were evident as early as preschool age (Moffitt, 1993). Recent research explained that because a problem may be displayed during adolescence, it does not mean that it is a problem of adolescence (Steinberg and Morris, 2001).

7. Steinberg and Morris (2001) reported that recent research has indicated that many of the problems experienced by adolescents are relatively transitory in nature and are resolved by the beginning of adulthood with few long-term repercussions.

8. Adolescence has been characterized as a time when individuals begin to explore and examine themselves psychologically in order to discover who they really are. Therefore, during this stage of life, individuals become vulnerable to the most critical crisis in human development (Erikson, 1968).

These pointers help to demystify some erroneous beliefs about the period of adolescence. They also help to reduce the unnecessary fear that some parents manifest toward the adolescent stage. This gives parents a better perspective from which they can deal with their adolescents in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with them. Indeed, adolescence is a time for parents to enjoy a deeper and richer relationship with

their children and for both parents and young adults to grow toward working in partnership as they face the issues and challenges of life. Having established these facts about the adolescent stage and its impacts on the parent-adolescent relationship, I will describe, in the next chapter, the methodology that I applied in order to prepare seminars to help parents deal with some of the issues that adversely affect the parent-child relationship during the adolescent stage.

CHAPTER IV

PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Description

A preliminary survey was done among parents and adolescents in five churches in the Ontario Conference (see appendix 1). The preliminary survey was administered prior to the start of the Mid-day service. The survey involved a sequence of thirteen questions and was developed on a scale of frequency which varies from (Always, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never); the objective of the survey was threefold:

1. To gain insights into the conflicting issues parents are experiencing between themselves and their adolescents.
2. To understand better the dynamics of the relationship between parents and adolescents and the nature and causes of the problems they were facing.
3. To determine whether or not my ministry was meeting some of the felt needs of my congregants.

The questionnaires were distributed to parents who have children between the ages of 13 and 17, and children between the same ages. They were told that the survey was voluntary and without compulsion. They were reminded that the survey must be anonymous and that strict confidentiality would be observed in dealing with the data gathered from their responses. Sufficient time was given for the survey to be filled out; at the end of this period, the survey was collected by my designated helper. One hundred

and ten questionnaires were distributed; eighty-six were returned: sixty-two from parents and twenty-four from adolescents.

The survey was designed to elucidate the following factors:

1. Harmony in the parent-adolescent relationship,
2. Communication style between parents and adolescents,
3. Conflict resolution pattern,
4. Anger management,
5. And the level of understanding of the parents about the adolescent stage in human development.

These factors were selected because they are essential in the context of the parent-adolescent relationship. Kuczynski (2003) also indicated that parents have a certain short and long term goals for their children while children have goals and intentions of their own. There is often a great difference between what children do at the adolescent stage and what parents expect them to do. Such differences result in parent-adolescent conflict in which the parents use their authority to pressure the adolescent into conforming to parental expectations on one hand; while on the other hand, adolescents seek to upgrade their positions of power within the dominance hierarchy from a subordinate to a more egalitarian status. Thus, the structure of the family becomes significantly altered (Robin & Foster, 1989).

Analysis and Observation From the Preliminary Survey

Using a qualitative approach, the data from the survey were analyzed in order to identify variables that could help me understand the causes of possible conflicts between

parents and adolescents. Overall, the survey revealed a number of challenging issues between parents and adolescents such as

1. Frequent heated arguments arising over insignificant issues between parents and adolescents.

2. Adolescents who frequently refuse to comply with parents' expectations.

3. The frustration of parents not understanding why there was so much confrontation with adolescents.

4. Adolescents who get into mood-change motion.

5. Parents who indicate that they received very poor cooperation from their adolescents.

6. Parents who admit that they were unable to cope with and explain what is happening with their adolescents.

7. Adolescents who resent the notion that their parents are too prompt to give a lecture instead of talking with them.

8. Parents and adolescents who fail to maintain a good line of communication.

Very few parents expressed the idea that they have good cooperation from their adolescents most of the time. The majority of parents indicated that they were unable to cope with and to explain what is happening with their adolescents when, suddenly, adolescents get into mood-change motion. The majority of the parents revealed that they did not have an open communication with their adolescents and that they did not always know of their whereabouts. Basically, these data indicate that the harmony in the relationship between these parents and their adolescents is rather weak, fragile, unstable, and in some cases, pathetic. Even if there is an apparent sense of balance in the

relationship, the harmony is not always there and open communication is repeatedly missing.

Most parents communicated the fact that adolescents think parents do not defer to the adolescents' personal opinions. In other words, parents do not always listen to adolescents in any given conversation, but tend to impose their opinion. The survey also revealed that, most of the time, adolescents got upset in the midst of a conversation and walked away, slamming the door. Most parents indicated that the household rules and family principles were the origin of their conflicts. Although the majority of the parents pointed out that they allowed their adolescents to have dialogue with them over different issues, most of them admitted at the same time that they tended to give a lecture to their adolescents instead of speaking in a pleasant tone with them.

Adolescents indicated that they always get along with their parents; most of them admitted that the relationship with their parents was not always stable. Nevertheless, very few indicated that their parents think they have no respect for their opinion. In other words, the adolescents showed respect for their parents under normal circumstances. They agreed that they argued very often with parents, but aggression or violence was not involved in these heated arguments; they caused friction, but the relationship is not necessarily broken. Adolescents found that giving a lecture was apparently easier for the parents to do than teaching or counseling. That seems to be one of the causes that sometimes turned their conversations into sour arguments. According to most adolescents who participated in the survey, parents fail to understand the relationship which may exist between physiological changes in adolescence and mood swings in their behavior. It became clear that most adolescents do not share an intimate relationship with their

parents. Overall, they think the rules in the family are the cause of most arguments in the family.

In reviewing these data, it appears that the parents who participated in this study are experiencing a number of concerns in their relationships with the adolescents. Overall harmony was rather unstable in these families. There is room for improvement; there is an obvious lack of understanding of the adolescent stage from the parent's side, a lack of communication and positive approach in communicating with adolescents, and a real concern over the rules and principles in quite a few homes of the parents who participated in this survey. Having identified these issues in the parent-adolescent relationship, I will attempt to provide some recommendations and guidance to help the parents understand their adolescents better so that they may work toward a more harmonious relationship with them. Chapter five will present the outline for three seminars which seek to achieve that objective.

CHAPTER V

PARENTS/ADOLESCENTS PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE AND AWARENESS SEMINAR

The content of this chapter consists of the pre-seminar survey and the awareness seminar outlines. In these outlines, I sought to address some issues that I gathered from the results of the preliminary survey. I do not believe there are any experts who can provide all the answers to the challenges that exist in the dynamic of the parent–child relationship. Parenting is a very specialized field; it deals with human beings in their developmental life span in an ever-changing society. What worked for my parents may not necessarily work for me as a parent, and what works for me may not work for the contemporary parent next door. Parenting is not a static field; parents must grow socially and emotionally as their children go through the different stages of human development.

We have the privilege of raising two children; my wife and I are glad to say that we went through the turbulent streams of adolescence without any major challenges. Our children are now young adults and our relationship with them remains very strong. Nevertheless, I am fully aware of the challenges that both parents and adolescents are facing during the adolescent phase. The seminars will include data from the preliminary survey, research from the Bible, and from the literature review. Indeed, the seminars were prepared with the desire to help parents understand the adolescent phase of their children

and to maintain a harmonious relationship with them even during this challenging phase of human development.

Description of the Participants

A purposeful group of five churches was selected from the Ontario Conference because of the cultural ethnic blend of these churches. The participants were Black French speaking, Filipino English speaking, Black English speaking, and Caucasian English speaking. Fifty parents participated in the seminars.

Instrument

The pre-survey that was used consisted of thirteen questions with four possible responses. A scale of one to four was used, (1 being the lowest level of understanding and 4 being the highest). The participants were asked to select the number that most accurately reflects how they understand what is happening in the relationship between parents and adolescents in their respective family. The purpose of this instrument was to ascertain the nature and the type of problems that exist between parents and adolescents and to identify understand the intrigues that occur in the relationship during the adolescence stage.

Procedure

Arrangement was made to conduct the seminar at a particular church hall and a reminder was sent to pastors and members of the churches involved in the study about the date, the place, and the precise time. On the day of seminar, the purpose of the survey seminar was explained to the participants. They were reminded to give only one answer to each question; they were also reminded not to write their names on the questionnaire.

Fifteen minutes were allowed for the completion of the questionnaire. At the end of that period of time, the researcher collected the responses and the seminars began. The following table shows the results and the number of responses for each question before the presentation.

Table 1

Results of Level of Understanding Before the Seminars

Number of Responses	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Question 1. - I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent.	27	10	7	6
Question 2. - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent thinks I have no respect for his/her feelings.	25	8	10	7
Question 3. - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset with me in any conversation.	22	12	10	6
Question 4. - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent becomes aggressive when she/he is upset with me.	29	8	9	4
Question 5. - I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments.	26	10	5	9
Question 6. - I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent to negotiate rules in the family with me.	26	11	4	9
Question 7. - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving a lecture.	24	12	8	6
Question 8. - I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset.	20	10	10	10
Question 9. - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules.	23	10	9	8
Question 10. - I am having difficulty getting my adolescent to share her/his personal concerns with me.	26	9	3	12
Question 11. - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent.	24	13	5	8
Question 12. - I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts of my adolescent with him/her.	27	11	7	7
Question 13. - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her intimate relationships with me.	26	6	11	7

Seminar #1—How to Become Your Children’s Best Friend

Methodology

A warm welcome and a few words of appreciation were extended to all participants for their support to this project. This introduction was followed by a short devotion inviting God’s presence into the session, and then the participants were asked to give their undivided attention to the presentation, and to reserve their questions and comments for the end as a specific time was allotted for this purpose.

Objective

This Seminar aims to highlight some fundamental factors in the relationship between parents and children in general and their implications during the adolescent stage. It is hoped that parents will learn the importance of building a proper relationship with their children and how to maintain the quality of the emotional bond as the child develops physically and emotionally toward the adolescence phase.

Outline of Seminar

Introduction

Friendship evolves through a relationship. In order to become your children’s best friend, you must know how to maintain good relationships with them.

The story is told about a little girl who approached her father’s desk as he was diligently writing. She stood there a while, but the father did not notice her until she asked the question, “Daddy, what are you doing?” Without looking up, he replies, “Oh never mind, Honey. I am just doing some planning and organizing. On these pages are the names of all the people I need to visit and talk with and all the important things I have

to do.” The little girl hesitated and then asked, “Am I in that book, Daddy?” (Covey, 1997). That father was so busy making a living for the family that he failed to look after the little details that are very important, such as taking time to build up a friendship and a harmonious relationship with his daughter.

I. A Biblical Foundation of Relationship—Romans 14:19

“Therefore let us **pursue** the things *which make* for **peace** and the things by which **one may edify another.**”

A. Pursue . . . peace

1. Pursue: to engage in a persistent search.
2. We pursue something that does not necessarily come automatically.
3. Peace does not always exist in human relationships. Pursue things which make for Peace.

B. Mutual Edification

1. Building up (oikodomèn): building as a process.
2. How do we build each other up—edify someone?
3. Edification vs. Destruction (self-esteem, positive contact).

C. Peace + Mutual Edification = Harmonious Relationship

1. Paraphrase: Let us pursue the things which help to maintain a harmonious relationship with one another.
2. Application: Husbands and wives: pursue the things which help to maintain a harmonious relationship between you.
3. Parents and children: pursue the things which help to maintain a harmonious relationship among you.

4. A harmonious relationship does not happen by chance. It requires hard work.
5. The ideal plan of God is to save human beings in the context of the family. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved you and your household” (Acts 16:31).

II. Family: A Training Centre

A. Healthy Relationship begins in the Family

1. Our family environment shapes our personality, our way of thinking, and our feelings. Our actions, including our reflection and our speech, reflect the background of the home in which we lived.
2. Our home influences our career choice, the choice of our partner, and even our political orientations and our values for life.
3. The family is a classroom to acquire knowledge and skills which we need to live outside the family, that is, in society (Parrot & Parrot, 1998).
4. Harmonious relationships should begin in the family context.
5. The family duty is one of the few permanent roles in life, perhaps the only truly permanent role. In the end, life teaches us what is important, and that is family (Covey, 1997).
6. Family is a non-negotiable entity. There is no substitute for the relationship between a parent and a child. Day care does not replace the provision for the relationship between a parent and a child.
7. Covey (1997), referring to Bronfenbrenner, insists on the importance of the parent-child relationship: you cannot pay someone to do for a child what a

parent will do for free. Even excellent child-care can never do what a good parent can do.

8. When a marriage relationship is weak, it becomes almost impossible to build a healthy relationship with the child. The great problem in our society today is that marriage is often no longer a covenant or a commitment. It is simply a contract between two consenting adults, a contract that is sometimes considered unnecessary and easily broken. In such a context, children are lost in the tension between two bitter parents or torn apart between them (Covey, 1997).

9. If Seventh-day Adventist families were what God intended them to be, our churches would not reach the state they are in today. In 2008, a study that was conducted for the North American Division found that the average age of the church members varies between 57 and 58 years old. This simply means that the Generation X is not in the church anymore.

10. Such a revelation suggests, among other things, that SDA families failed to transmit the religious values which would contribute to maintaining a healthy relationship among the members of the families.

11. Dudley and Kangas (1990, quoting Treston et al.) reported that the basic adolescent value attitudes have their grounding in the home rather than in such institutions such as the church or the school.

B. Definition of the Parent-Child Relationship

The parent-child relationship, the interaction between the parent and the child, consists of a combination of behaviors, feelings, and expectations that are

unique to a particular parent and a particular child. It involves the daily interface that takes place between the child and the parent. These rapport are translated by actions and reactions that connect the child with his parents. Such a connection may bring about positive or negative outcomes that are affective in nature, and with indelible consequences. The parent-child relationship involves the full extent of the child's development, including adolescence.

C. The Value of the Parent-Child Relationship

1. Parents must learn how to establish and maintain healthy relationships with their children so that they may influence their personality and their religious life in a positive way.
2. Parents must seek to establish a harmonious relationship with their children because the relationship is the only thing that remains when the nest becomes empty.
3. When parents fail to do so, the children become the victims of the social environment: "Vacuum effect."
4. Society is no longer a partner in the family relationship.

III. The Psychological Foundation of the Parent-Child Relationship

A. Theory of Attachment

Attachment theory is based on the idea that an infant's first attachment experience (initially to his or her mother) profoundly shapes the social, cognitive, and emotional developments that follow (Bowlby, 1969).

From this initial base, the infant develops a variety of skills that are essential to

healthy development: self regulation of emotions (Egeland and Erickson, 1999), socialization, a sense of mastery and competence, and an internal working model of how relationships with others work (Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995), including relationships with parents, with peers, and eventually, with romantic partners.

This theory elucidates the fact that an attachment between a mother and an infant is positive when it is sensitive, responsive, and nurturing, but it becomes negative if it is inconsistent, neglectful, and insecure. Then the infant experiences confusion and apprehension; such an attachment is most likely to bring adverse outcomes in future relationships as the child continues to grow into the different phases of human development.

The conclusion can be drawn that

1. The parent-adolescent relationship does not happen overnight.
2. In order to have a stable and harmonious relationship, parents must start an early interaction with the child and develop an increasing attachment with the child as he or she grows into the adolescence phase.

Thus, the apparent breakdown that takes place in the parent-adolescent relationship in some families is, rather, the consequence of some misunderstandings in the parent-child connectedness during the early years of the child.

B. When Should the Parent-Child Relationship Begin?

Tièche (1971), French educator from Piaget School, says, the training of a child begins even before birth. We also know that training takes place in the context of the relationship between the parents and the child. Such reflection suggests that the relationship between the parents and the child should begin from birth.

Chase-Lansdale et al. (1995) explained, in the context of the “Attachment Theory,” that a mother who responds with sensitivity and consistency to her child’s needs, sends a series of messages to her infant that build trust, security, and bond: “I am here for you,” “You may count on me,” “I am interested in you,” “Your action matters.” “You are loved.” These messages will create a dynamic in the relationship between the child and the mother that will last. Even babies know when they are not welcomed in the family; thus, the parent-child relationship begins from childhood.

C. Dimensions in the Parent-Child Relationship

The relationship between the parents and the child must have a solid foundation in order to resist the turbulences that will emerge with the developmental phases of the child’s life, especially during the adolescence stage. Covey (1997) used the analogy or metaphor of an Emotional Bank Account.

1. Emotional Bank Account

This represents the quality of the relationship you have with others. In the context of the parent-child relationship, the Emotional Bank Account would symbolize the foundation that fosters the relationship. Parents can deposit in the Emotional Bank Account such items as affection (warmth), identification, edification or (building up) communication, implication (involvement), adoration (family worship).

2. Affection/Warmth

Express love, sympathy, empathy, genuineness, and an intense, lasting affectionate bond to the child.

3. Identification

Help the child to identify with your values, knowing that values are not

necessarily taught to our children; they are caught by them. The family should maintain a variety of traditions that give each member a sense of identity and belonging. Parents should create a mission statement that identifies the family.

4. Edification/Building Up

Show genuine support to the child; help the child build his or her future in setting attainable goals. Help him build self esteem, and learn to forgive the child as God forgives you. Develop a genuine and lasting friendship with the child; showing unconditional acceptance all the time.

5. Communication

Establish an open communication and a cooperative problem-solving system in the family. Establish the principles and clarify the policies, establish the parameters, expectations, and accountability.

6. Implication/Involvement

Get involved in the child's day to day life. Learn how to share his time of pain or joy, victory or defeat, success or failure. Discuss her various activities at school or at church. Build up friendship with his parents' friends. Know her whereabouts and her daily schedule.

7. Adoration/Family Worship

Transmit religious values and the principle of personal devotion to the child, even from babyhood.

D. Obstacles to the Parent-Child Relationship

1. Impacts of the Industrial Revolution on the family unit

a. Nuclear family versus extended family.

- b. Family is no longer a unit of production.
- c. Factories took the worker and the work out of the home and moved them into the work place.
- d. Family members were left behind.
- e. Family crisis began with this paradigm shift.
- f. This has a deep impact on the relationship between parents and children.
- g. The dismantling of the nuclear family, loss of faith in religious structures, governmental institutions, and political leaders as the source of authority and guidance.
- h. Rapid changes in our culture.

All these facts adversely affect the family, as well as the relationship between parents and children.

2. Consequences

- a. No more home schooling, but children go to school.
- b. No time for parents and children to play together; children go to the park or to the recreation center.
- c. Both parents work.
- d. Children take most meals in the cafeteria at school or at McDonald's.
- e. The influence of the Media.

E. Stages in the Parent-Child Relationship

- 1. Childhood: parent director
- 2. Adolescence: parent counselor

3. Young Adult: parent partner
4. Adulthood: reversed dynamic of parenthood

IV. Divine Purpose in the Parent-Child Relationship

- A. Father and Son are One (John 10:30)
- B. Children a heritage from the Lord (Ps 127:3-5)
- C. God's ideal plan is to save you and your household
- D. God takes the initiative to reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents (Mal 4:5-6)

Interactive Group Work—Seminar #1

In 1 John 3:1, the Bible states that we are children of God, therefore God is our parent. Find some aspects of the Parent-Child Relationship that God Himself established in the following passages. Each biblical passage refers to an aspect of the relationship that God maintains with us as his children: Gen 2:17, Deut 11:26-28, Gen 22:18, Matt 25:23, Heb 12:6, Job 1:18, Isa 1:18-20, 2 Kgs 18:11-12. (See Appendix 3).

Seminar #2—Understanding Your Teenagers for a More Harmonious Relationship With Them

Objective

This seminar intends to

1. Help parents understand the incidents of the adolescence phase.
2. Help parents identify some factors that may cause conflicts between them and their adolescents.
3. Provide parents with suggestions and skills on how to maintain a lasting and harmonious relationship with their adolescents.

4. Parents who attend this seminar will receive sufficient information to understand the incidents of adolescence, learn how to deal with some challenges of this difficult period, maintain a harmonious relationship with their adolescents and, at the same time, protect the homeostasis in the family system.

Outline of Seminar

Introduction

A. (Facts or Myths Exercise)

B. The Problem

C. Adolescent Concerns:

1. Hormonal reactions
2. Struggle for independence
3. Peer pressure
4. Concern for identity

D. Parental Concerns:

1. Struggle with autonomy issues.
2. Type of discipline.
3. Issues worth fighting about.
4. How to maintain a positive relationship with an adolescent.
5. How to face the challenges of adolescence without breaking the family system.
6. Parent's point of reference: "I remember when I was an adolescent."

I. Understanding Your Adolescent

A. Definition of Adolescence:

1. A chronological period within the life span that involves complex changes in biological, physiological, and sociological functioning.
2. A period that coincides with the beginning of puberty and that culminates in adulthood.
3. Changes occur so quickly that the adolescent does not have time to adjust to them.

B. Consequences:

1. Disruption in the relationship between parent and adolescent.
2. A new shift in the family system which requires some adjustment on both sides: on the side of other members of the family, as well as on the adolescent's side.
3. Each age and stage in the child's development has its specific goals and tasks.
4. For infants, it is to eat, sleep, and explore their world.
5. For adolescents it is to become their own person with their own group of friends. Balswick and Balswick (1991) used the term *individuation* to explain these facts about adolescents.

C. Biological Component in Adolescent

1. Puberty is the stage in the young person's development when the body starts to become physically mature.
2. Puberty is divided into three subcategories.
3. Pre-pubescence begins with the first signs of physical maturation and ends with the beginning of pubic hair growth.

4. Pubescence begins with the appearance of pubic hair and ends when pubic hair growth is complete.
5. Post-pubescence fertility and ability to reproduce are set
6. Puberty
 - a. Affects the adolescent's behavior and his social interaction.
 - b. Impacts her emotional functioning and consequently, the parent-adolescent relationship is affected.
7. Other Issues in Adolescence
 - a. Identity
 - b. Responsibility
 - c. Authority
 - d. Conformity
 - e. Individuation

D. Observations Regarding Adolescents

1. Depressed Mood
 - a. Curve of despondency starts at eleven years of age and rises steadily to the age of fifteen, then falls steadily until the age of twenty.
 - b. Caused by suspicion of being disliked, weakness of character that cannot overcome, hopeless love, social cognitive development (Hall 1904; Petersen et al., 1993).
2. Delinquency
 - a. Marked increase from ages twelve to fourteen
 - b. Steep increase in crime of all kinds

- c. Steep decline by the age of eighteen
- 3. Two Types of Delinquency
 - a. Adolescence-limited delinquency
 - b. Life-course delinquency
 - c. Factors: heredity, bad parental conditions, bad home environment, unhealthy infancy and childhood (Hall, 1904; Moffitt, 1993).
- 4. Sensation Seeking
 - a. Love of excitement strong during adolescence
 - b. Excitement seeking may take the form of intellectual or moral enthusiasm or it can manifest in the form of sexual, or alcohol craving (Arnett, 1994; Hall, 1904)
- 5. Concerns Among Peers
 - a. Relational aggression (girls)
 - b. Physical aggression (boys)
 - c. Tongue vs. fists
- 6. Brain Development During Adolescence
 - a. All brain cells appear at birth
 - b. Brain reaches full weight by age 12-14
 - c. Dendrites Phenomenon (Fibers connecting brain cells)
- 7. Adolescents Are Unique

Each adolescent has an individual developmental trajectory that is determined by the dynamic relationship of his unique biological, psychological, and socio-cultural influences

8. Storm and Stress (Hall, 1904)
 - a. Basically, the adolescent is neither a good nor a bad kid. He/she is simply going through a fragile and vulnerable period of life.
 - b. The way the family members react to these changes usually creates some perturbation in the relationship with the parents.

II. Family System and Parent-Adolescent Relationship

A. Definition of System

1. A system is an orderly interconnected arrangement of parts that belong to one body
2. A whole unit which is composed of interrelated individual parts.
3. Family is seen as a system held together by strong bonds of affection.
4. Individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather, as a part of their family. Adolescents must be understood in the context of their family.
5. When children reach adolescence, increased pressure is put on the family system to accommodate itself to increased demands for flexibility (Balswick & Balswick, 1991).
6. Children reach adolescence at the time when parents begin to reach *midlife*, which is a source of stress for the parents (Balswick & Balswick, 1991).
7. These two phenomena work together in generating great tension in the parent-adolescent relationship and this upsets the family system.

III. Basic Skills for a Harmonious Parent-Adolescent Relationship

A. Problem-solving skills

1. Acknowledge your mistakes: apologize when it is fitting
2. Communication skills: project, plans, whereabouts
3. Find out how to transmit these skills to the adolescent in a positive manner into the tradition and the belief system of the family
4. Be compassionate and empathetic toward them in such a way that they will come to be compassionate and empathetic with themselves and with others.
5. Be forgiving
6. Be considerate
7. Seek to understand more than just to be understood

Adolescents are struggling to understand themselves. If they have the feeling that their parents, their peers, and their siblings are trying to understand them, they will be encouraged and will try to cope and make courageous choices about their world. (Holmes, 1995)

IV. How to Maintain a Harmonious Relationship With Your Adolescent

A. Parenting Style and Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Baumrind (1966) recommended an authoritative parenting style over authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful parenting styles.

Authoritative Parents

1. Provide a safe and loving home environment.
2. Let their adolescent get the sense of being specially valued.
3. Show compassion, cheerfulness, and interest in their adolescent's life.

4. Appreciate adolescents for who they are, enjoy spending time with them, and always show appreciation for their help.
5. Receive full respect from their adolescents because they respect them as well.
6. Love their adolescents unconditionally.
7. Allow age appropriate independence and assertiveness.
8. Do not fear the change of bodies or the change of friends.
9. Expect instability and mood swings.
10. Let their adolescents know that they are always there for them.
11. Create an atmosphere of honesty and mutual trust.
12. Develop a relationship that encourages their adolescent to talk to them.
13. Teach responsibility for their belongings and the adolescent's belongings.
14. Teach basic responsibility for household duties.
15. Give opportunity to adolescents to take on responsibility.
16. Teach the importance of accepting limits.
17. Teach the importance of thinking before acting.
18. Maintain a family atmosphere all the time. (Be a family)

B. Communicating With Your Adolescent

1. Issues in Communication.
2. Difficulty in having a cordial conversation.
3. Difficulty in having a healthy discussion on any topic.
4. Difficulty in getting adolescents to share their personal issues with parents.

a. The Problem

- (1) Childhood vs. Adolescent
- (2) Individuation/Independence
- (3) Autonomy/Control
- (4) Pattern of Speech with the adolescent must change
- (5) Question/Answer:
- (6) How was school today? ... Fine
- (7) What did you eat for Lunch? ... Food
- (8) Where have you been? ... Out

b. Tips on Communicating With Your Adolescent

- (1) Adopt new pattern of speech
- (2) Question vs. Affirmation
- (3) The best way to get your adolescent to talk to you is make sure you do not ask them a question (Leman, 2002)
- (4) Asking questions is threatening
- (5) Use open questions instead of closed questions
- (6) Be open and non judgmental
- (7) Learn how to engage your adolescent in conversation
- (8) Show love, acceptance
- (9) Build mutual trust/friendship

C. Home Atmosphere

1. Every Christian home should have rules; and parents should, in their words and deportment toward each other, give to the children a precious,

living example of what they desire them to be. Purity in speech and true Christian courtesy should be constantly practiced (White, 1952, p. 16).

2. Teach the children and youth to respect themselves, to be true to God, true to principle; teach them to respect and obey the law of God. These principles will control their lives and will be carried out in their associations with others. They will create a pure atmosphere (White, 1952, p. 16).

Seminar #3—How to Live in Harmony With Your Adolescents

In Seminars #1 and #2, I have taken an informative approach that seeks to help parents understand the dynamic in the adolescent stage. Seminar # 3 is rather pragmatic, providing basic instructions to help parents maintain a more harmonious relationship with their adolescents.

Objective

Parents who attend this seminar will learn to prevent certain conflicts in the relationship with their adolescents. They will learn some “don’ts” and “do’s” in order to maintain a psychological stability in the relationship.

Outline of Seminar

I. Harmony vs. Conflict

A. Living together, a source of conflict

1. No progress in human relationship over the centuries; causes of conflicts remain the same.
2. Parent-adolescent relationship, no exception
3. Conflict: an opportunity for growth in any relationship

4. Not all conflict can be resolved: Resolution vs. Management

B. Genealogy of Conflict

1. Desires
2. Demands
3. Judgmental Attitude
4. Punishment

C. Dynamic in the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

1. Parental Desire
2. Parental Demand
3. Judgmental Attitude
4. Punishment

II. Different Aspects of the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Connection; Monitoring; Psychological Control; External Control

A. Aspect #1—Connection

1. Backdrop against which all other interactions take place.
2. Must be consistent, positive, characterized by warmth, kindness, love, and stability.
3. Helps children develop social relationship with parents and even with other adults.
4. An asset

B. Aspect #2—Monitoring

1. Is crucial to successful parenting.
2. Helps avoid troubles in the relationship.

3. Helps parents to know the friends of their children, their whereabouts, and what they do in their free time.
4. Helps adolescents resist the temptation of falling into illegal activities.
5. Must display kindness, warmth, a caring attitude; must not be intrusive.
6. Monitoring involves
 - a. Setting Parameters—Rules to live by
 - b. Identifying the causes of conflicts
 - c. Establishing an Arbitration system

Arbitration: A once-a-week time the family sets aside to discuss issues openly, objectively, and fairly that concern members of the family, and rules and parameters the family is supposed to live by.

C. Aspect # 3—External Control

1. A method used by parents to gain compliance in the relationship.
2. Works with children: childproof the home for safety.
3. Compels unwilling obedience.
4. Does not always work with adolescents.
5. Old Methods vs. Something New
6. Be innovative in dealing with the Control issue in the relationship.

D. Aspect #4—Psychological Autonomy

1. Exists in the parent-adolescent relationship when parents genuinely respect their adolescent's ideas, even when the ideas are contrary to their own.
2. Encourages independent thinking and the expression of original ideas and beliefs.

3. Validates feelings and expresses unconditional love.
4. Differs from psychological control.
5. Psychological control is characterized by:
 - a. Changing the subject
 - b. Making personal attacks
 - c. Withdrawal of love
 - d. Inducing guilt to constrain the intellectual, emotional, and psychological expression by the adolescent which is incongruent with the parent's way of thinking
 - e. Psychological control does not foster harmony in the parent-adolescent relationship.

III. Patterns in the Parent-Adolescent Relationship

A. Destructive Patterns

1. Complaining
2. Criticizing
3. Nagging
4. Blaming
5. Punishing
6. Threatening
7. Inducing guilt
8. Bribing
9. Rewarding to control

B. Constructive Patterns

1. Listening
2. Supporting
3. Trusting
4. Encouraging
5. Respecting
6. Communicating
7. Accepting
8. Negotiating
9. Praying together

C. Shifting the Parenting Approach With Adolescence

1. Change your aim
2. Change what lies beneath your rules
3. Change the way you listen to your adolescent
4. Change the content of your conversation
5. Change your attitude about parenting
6. Pursue eagerly what makes for harmony (Rom 14:19)

IV. Ultimate Reason for Harmony

We are children of the heavenly King, members of the royal family, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The mansions Jesus has gone to prepare are to receive only those who are true, who are pure, and who love and obey His words. . . . If we would enjoy eternal bliss, we must cultivate religion in the home. . . . Peace, harmony, affection, and happiness should be perseveringly cherished every day, until these precious things abide in the hearts of those who compose the family. (White, 1952a, p. 279)

CHAPTER VI

POST-SURVEY RESULTS: EVALUATION

Since these seminars were prepared with the desire to help parents understand the adolescent phase of their children and to maintain a more harmonious relationship with their adolescents, the survey was instrumental in identifying some factors that might cause the breakdown in the parent-adolescent relationship. In order to evaluate the impact of these seminars, the following steps were taken:

1. These seminars were presented to the selected group of five churches in the Ontario Conference which includes parents of adolescents and some adolescents.
2. Before the presentation of the seminars, the participants were asked to do a pre-survey with the hope that this would give an idea about their level of understanding of the issues in the relationship between parents and adolescents. All answers were collected and put in an envelope and sealed.
3. The presentation was made. At the end, a period for questions and answers or pertinent comments was allowed.
4. At the end of the third seminar, the participants were asked to fill out the same questionnaire that was given at the beginning of the first seminar. The answers were put in a separate envelope with the note “post survey” written on it, and sealed.

5. An analysis of both surveys was done by the researcher and comparisons were drawn. It was hoped that by comparing the two surveys, the researcher would see if there was any learning experience that took place during the presentations, and if there was any variation in the level of understanding of the participants about the adolescence stage and the issues concerning parent-adolescent relationship. For each question the participants had a scale of 1 to 4 to choose from with 1 being the lowest level of understanding and 4 being the highest level of understanding. After the questionnaire was completed, the responses were divided into two categories. Responses 1 and 2 were grouped together and represented the participants who had difficulty understanding the issues between parents and adolescents. Their level of understanding of the issues between parents and adolescents were considered below the average. Responses 3 and 4 were grouped together and represented the participants who had little or no difficulty understanding the issues between parents and adolescents. Their level of understanding of the issues between parents and adolescents were considered average or above average.

Overall, these results have shown that the seminars made a positive change in the level of understanding of the participants about some of the issues of parent-adolescence relationship. Since the objective of this study is to help parents understand some of the challenges of adolescence, the results from the post-questionnaire were examined, compared, and contrasted with the pre-questionnaire. This was done in order to verify whether or not learning among the parents took place during the seminars and to ascertain the level of their understanding on each item on the questionnaire. Tables 2 and 3 below show the comparison and the progression in the number of responses for each question given by the participants before the presentation of the seminars and after. Table 4

reflects the percentage of increase of the level of understanding that took place during the presentation in regards to each question. Because levels 1 and 2 represent the participants who had the most difficulty understanding the issues between parents and adolescents and their level of understanding of the issues between parents and adolescents were considered below the average, responses representing these levels were selected for the study. Table 4 reflects the results of the pre- and post-survey of levels 1 and 2.

Table 2

Results of Level of Understanding Before the Seminars

Number of answers	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Question 1 - I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent.	27	10	7	6
Question 2 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent thinks I have no respect for his/her feelings.	25	8	10	7
Question 3 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset with me in any conversation.	22	12	10	6
Question 4 - I am having difficulty understanding why adolescent becomes aggressive when he/she is upset with me	29	8	9	4
Question 5 - I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments.	26	10	5	9
Question 6 - I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent to negotiate the rules in the family.	26	11	4	9
Question 7 - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving a lecture.	24	12	8	6
Question 8 - I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset.	20	10	10	10
Question 9 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules.	23	10	9	8
Question 10 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her personal concerns with me.	26	9	3	12
Question 11 - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent	24	13	5	8
Question 12 - I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts of my adolescent with him/her.	27	11	7	7
Question 13 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her intimate relationships with me.	26	6	11	7

Table 3

Results of Level of Understanding After the Seminars

Number of answers	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Question 1 - I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent.	12	15	16	4
Question 2 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent thinks I have no respect for his/her feelings.	16	9	17	5
Question 3 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset with me in any conversation.	12	15	14	6
Question 4 - I am having difficulty understanding why adolescent becomes aggressive when he/she is upset with me.	17	13	12	5
Question 5 - I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments.	10	14	15	7
Question 6 - I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent to negotiate the rules in the family.	12	19	10	5
Question 7 - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving a lecture.	16	12	13	5
Question 8 - I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset.	13	11	15	7
Question 9 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules.	12	12	15	8
Question 10 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her personal concerns with me.	9	13	15	7
Question 11 - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent.	13	13	14	6
Question 12 - I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts of my adolescent with him/her.	15	14	17	3
Question 13 – I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her intimate relationships with me.	10	11	12	13

Table 4

Pre-and Post Seminar Results (Levels 1 and 2) Pre-Seminar Post Seminar

Questions from Pre/Post Questionnaire	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2
Question 1 - I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent.	27	10	12	15
Question 2 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent thinks I have no respect for his/her feelings.	25	8	16	9
Question 3 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset with me in any conversation.	22	12	12	15
Question 4 - I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent becomes aggressive when he/she is upset with me.	29	8	17	13
Question 5 - I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments.	26	10	10	14
Question 6 - I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent to negotiate the rules in the family with me	26	11	12	19
Question 7 - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving a lecture.	24	12	16	12
Question 8 - I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset.	20	10	13	11
Question 9 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules.	23	10	12	12
Question 10 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her personal concerns with me.	26	9	9	13
Question 11 - I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent.	24	13	13	13
Question 12 - I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts of my adolescent with him/her.	27	11	15	14
Question 13 - I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her intimate relationship with me.	26	6	10	11

Result and Analysis of the Thirteen Survey Questions

In an effort to interpret the results of the surveys, the following procedure was used. In each of the thirteen questions, the score of level 1 and the score of level 2 were added together and a percentage obtained from the total number of responses. For example, the pre-survey scores for levels 1 and 2 in question 1 were 27 and 10. These scores added together equal 37. The post-survey scores of 12 and 15 total 27; there were 50 responses in all, therefore, 37 of 50 equals 74% and 27 of 50 equals 54%.

1. I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent:

In the pre-survey, 74% of those responding said they were having difficulty understanding how to get along with their adolescent; however, in the post-survey, there were only 54%. This was an increase of 20%, therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for parents.

2. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent thinks I have no respect for his/her feelings:

In the pre-survey, 76% of the participants indicated that they were having difficulty understanding why their adolescent thinks they have no respect for their feelings, but in the post-survey, only 50% felt that way. There is an increase of 26%, indicating that the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for parents.

3. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset with me in any conversation:

In the pre-survey, 68% of the participants said they were having difficulty understanding why their adolescent gets upset with them in any conversation. After the presentation, only 34% had this difficulty. This represents an increase of 50% as a result of the awareness seminar, indicating that the level of understanding for the parents had increased.

4. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent becomes aggressive when he/she is upset with me:

In the pre-survey, 74% of the participants indicated they had difficulty understanding why their adolescents become aggressive when they are upset with them,

while 60 % had this difficulty after the presentation. There is an increase of 14% in the participants who benefited from the awareness seminar in their level of understanding.

5. I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments:

In the pre-survey, 72% of those responding indicated that they had difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments. The post-survey indicated that only 48% had this difficulty. This was an increase of 24%. Therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for the parents.

6. I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent to negotiate family rules with me:

In the pre-survey, 74% of the responders said they were having difficulty negotiating family rules with their adolescent. In the post-survey, only 62% had difficulty. An increase of 12% occurred because of the awareness seminar.

7. I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving him/her a lecture:

In the pre-survey, 72% of those responding indicated that they had difficulty understanding how to discuss with their adolescent instead of giving him/her a lecture; in the post-survey, only 56% had that difficulty—an increase of 16%. Therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for the parents.

8. I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset:

In the pre-survey, 60% of the participants said they had difficulty understanding how to communicate with their adolescent; in the post-survey, only 48% had difficulty,

an increase of 12%. Therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for the parents.

9. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules:

In the pre-survey, 66% of the participants said they had difficulty knowing how to get their adolescent to obey the rules; in the post-survey, there were only 48%. This was an increase of 18%, indicating that the awareness seminar had increased the level of understanding for the parents.

10. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her personal concerns with me:

In the pre-survey, 70% of those responding indicated that they had difficulty knowing how to get their adolescent to share their personal concerns with them; in the post-survey, there were only 44%. This increase of 26% indicated that the awareness seminar had increased the level of understanding for the parents.

11. I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent:

In the pre-survey, 74% of the participants said they had difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with their adolescent; in the post-survey, there were only 52%, an increase of 22%. Therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for the parents.

12. I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts of my adolescent with him/her:

In the pre-survey, 76% of the participants said they had difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts of their adolescent with him/her; in the post-survey, there were

only 58%, an increase of 18%. Therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for the parents.

13. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her intimate relationships with me: In the pre-survey, 64% of those responding said they had difficulty knowing how to get their adolescent to share his/her intimate relationships with them; in the post-survey, only 42% did so. An increase of 22% took place; therefore, the awareness seminar increased the level of understanding for the parents.

These data lead to the conclusion that the parents who attended these seminars, in the same environment and under the same conditions, have acquired some skills that will help them understand the challenges of the adolescent stage. It is true that the percentage increase is small in some cases; however, one must bear in mind that change is a slow process, and the seminars were just brief treatments to a longstanding problem. One of the advantages of the seminars is that the parents were better equipped on how to develop a more harmonious and lasting relationship with their adolescents. It is hoped that these parents will have the flexibility to grow with their children as they face the transition from adolescence to the young adult stage. Their children may leave the home, but the relationship and bonding they have developed with them will remain steadfast. It is hoped that these parents will continue to develop their skills in the parent-adolescent relationship by applying the information provided during the seminars and by gathering more information about the topic of parent-adolescent relationship, so they may successfully cope with this difficult period of human development.

Limitations and Contribution of the Study

The following factors and or variables created certain limitations to the study:

1. The study did not include all ethnic groups. Therefore, any conclusions drawn will have its limitations.
2. The participants were intentionally selected from a controlled environment (the Church). Therefore, their tolerance for and acceptance of the seminars might have been different from that of the general population.
3. The participants were, to some extent, homogeneous regarding their belief system: they were all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As such, their level of understanding and their experience with their adolescents may not necessarily represent the level of understanding and the experience of all parents in the community.
4. The sample size, when compared to the population of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Ontario as well as to the general population, is small. The researcher was limited to the churches he had access to. Therefore, conclusions drawn are merely inferences, suggestions, and recommendations, but not scientific facts.
5. Only the responses of levels 1 and 2 were considered in this project. These two levels gave the researcher a better insight into the nature and gravity of the problem. Nevertheless, levels 3 and 4 also provide some information that could assist in understanding the problem between parents and adolescents.
6. The fact that only the parents were observed provides another limitation. Seeking to understand the perspective of the adolescents in order to prepare seminars geared to help them maintain good relationship with their parents remains an important field of study to be explored.
7. There is no classification regarding the parent gender: adolescent-father relationship or adolescent-mother relationship. There is no classification regarding the

type of family: single parent and blended family. These aspects represent fields of study that can be explored to enhance knowledge and expertise in the dynamic of the relationship between parents and adolescents.

However, despite its limitations, this study provides insights into a number of possible subsequent studies as mentioned previously:

1. It is hoped that this study will help parents understand the challenges of adolescence and maintain a harmonious relationship with their adolescents as the research indicated.

2. It is also hoped that these seminars will help parents, teachers, pastors, and family life educators grasp a better perspective of the issues of parent-adolescent relationships within the family unit.

3. One of the purposes of this study is to help parents adapt to a proactive approach in the relationship between parent and adolescent.

4. Parents who receive this information even before their child reaches the adolescent phase will be better prepared to face the stormy period of adolescence known as the “crisis of adolescence.”

5. Finally, these seminars bring a specific contribution to the field of adult education in providing hands-on materials that can be used by other professionals in the field to help parents enhance and maintain a harmonious relationship with their adolescents.

CHAPTER VII

IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In my experience as a parent and in my ministry, I have observed a breakdown in the relationship between parents and adolescents in various families. Also, I have gained insights from literature review that helped prepare these seminars. Through empirical procedures, I sought to measure parents' increase in understanding of vital information which would improve their relationships with their adolescents, after being given seminars regarding the difficulties in understanding they had reported. In this project, I have found that on the one hand, there was a lack of understanding and a certain apprehension from the parents about that period called "adolescence" in human development. On the other hand, I found that most parents did not have proper skills to deal with that difficult passage of life. Having noticed these points, I have sought to provide some elements of solution through the review of the literature and through personal experience and reflection. This process resulted in shaping these seminars which intend to contribute to a better understanding of the adolescent phase and will help parents maintain a more harmonious relationship with their adolescents. These three seminars do not intend to solve all aspects of the problems in the parent-adolescent relationship; parenting is such an immense and complex field that no one can pretend to have condensed all the solutions into one project. Nevertheless, it has been shown that

parents who have attended these seminars have gained a better understanding of their adolescents and intend to do better in their relationships with them.

Implications

During this research, my observation led me to conclude that many parents fail to comprehend in detail the process of human development and specifically, the adolescent phase. This implies that

1. Family life educators, pastors, and family life coordinators in various churches throughout the Ontario Conference should assume the important task of educating the parents in their congregation in a proactive manner in what to expect in parent-child relationships during the adolescence phase and how to deal with some issues that will occur.

2. Family life educators, pastors, and family life coordinators should acquire a better understanding of the structure of the family unit in the twenty-first century and adopt a proper strategy to help parents realize the necessity of building a proper relationship with their children from infancy.

3. Parents should be aware of the dynamic of relationships in the family as a system and that the changes during the adolescent phase will affect the homeostasis of the whole system.

The dynamic of relationships in the family as a system can be very complex; most parents would need guidance in order to withstand the pressure and stress that the adolescent stage may bring upon the parent-adolescent relationship.

In order to illustrate the dynamic that takes place in the context of family relationships, I will refer to the Circumplex Model developed by Olson, Sprenkle, and

Russell (1979). Olson et al. (1979) used the concepts of *Cohesion*, *Adaptability*, and *Communication* to describe such dynamic. *Cohesion* refers to the emotional bonding that parents feel towards their children. It is the degree of closeness that may exist between parents and the children. There are four levels of cohesion: disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed.

Adaptability is defined by the ability of the family system to change its power structure, its roles, its rules, and its relationship in response to stress, circumstances, and changes that occur in the individual life of any member of the family. *Adaptability* may fluctuate on a continuum from rigid to structured, to flexible to chaotic. *Communication* is the third dimension in the dynamic of relationship in the family; it contributes to strengthening the bond among the members of the family and establishing a good balance of the cohesion and adaptability among them. The dynamic of good communication must express clarity of perception for the receiver and clarity of expression for the sender. Such dynamic is crucial in helping the members realize a balanced cohesion and adaptability which are very important for a harmonious relationship among them.

Recommendations

With such an understanding, I recommend that

1. Parents seek to learn how to have a balanced cohesion (connectedness) with their children and especially so during the adolescent phase.
2. Parents learn how to maintain a level of adaptability that is not rigid nor chaotic, but structured with enough room for flexibility to endure stressful situations and changes that will occur in the parent-child relationship and specifically during the adolescence stage.

3. Parents seek to learn how to maintain good communication skills specifically during the adolescent stage in order to keep good cohesion and proper adaptability for the sake of the parent-adolescent relationship dynamic. Adolescence is the period in which communication between parents and child seems to become more difficult.

4. Parents seek to practice the authoritative parenting style as described in seminar two.

In this project, I have dealt mostly with the problem from the parent's perspective. The objective was to help parents deal with the challenges of adolescence and help them build a more harmonious relationship among them. Further studies need to be done to consider the details of the problem from the perspective of the adolescents.

Conclusion

This study has confirmed that there was a breakdown between most parents and their children once these children reach the stage of adolescence. The study revealed that there was misunderstanding on the part of the parents as well as on that of the adolescents. The results of the survey have helped to identify some of the causes of the breakdown between parents and adolescents. However, the focus of the study was on the parents. The results of the survey combined with the review of the literature and my personal experience in the ministry have contributed to the preparation of these three seminars. The seminars were an attempt to help parents understand the challenges of adolescence and to maintain a harmonious relationship between them and their adolescents. The results of these seminars indicated that there has been some positive impact on the level of understanding of the participants in the study. While this study revealed a positive result in the level of understanding of the parents on the issues of

adolescence, it remains clear that that these three seminars alone cannot address all the aspects of the dynamic of the relationship between parent and adolescents. It is hoped that this project would open a pathway to similar research, which will serve to continue to help parents and adolescent have a more harmonious relationship among them.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDING QUESTION FORMS FOR PARENTS AND ADOLESCENTS

Guiding Questions for Parents (Survey)

This Guiding Question Form is designed to elicit information on the relationship between parents and adolescents. Please read carefully all statements and kindly circle the word that describes best your relationship with your adolescent (always, sometimes, seldom, never). **Please do not write your name.**

AL=always, SM= sometimes, SD= seldom, NV = never

1. I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent. AL- SM- SD- NV
2. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent think I have no respect for his/her feeling AL- SM- SD- NV
3. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset at me in any conversation. AL- SM- SD- NV
4. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent becomes aggressive when he/she is upset at me. AL- SM- SD- NV
5. I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments. AL- SM- SD- NV
6. I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent negotiate rules in the family with me AL- SM- SD- NV
7. I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving a lecture. AL- SM- SD- NV
8. I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset. AL- SM- SD- NV
9. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules AL- SM- SD- NV
10. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her personal concerns with me AL- SM- SD- NV

11. I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent AL- SM- SD- NV
12. I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts with my adolescent AL- SM- SD- NV
13. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent share his/her intimate relationship with me AL- SM- SD- NV

Guiding Questions for Adolescents

This Guiding Question Form is designed to elicit information on the relationship between parents and adolescents. Please read carefully all statements and kindly circle the word that describes best your relationship with your adolescent (always, sometimes, seldom, never). **Please do not write your name.**

 AL=always, SM= sometimes, SD= seldom, NV = never

1. I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my parents. AL- SM- SD- NV
2. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents think I have no respect for their feelings and opinions. AL- SM- SD- NV
3. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents get upset in any conversation with me. AL- SM- SD- NV
4. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents isolate themselves in their rooms after an argument with me. AL- SM- SD- NV
5. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents tend to be aggressive when upset at me. AL- SM- SD- NV
6. I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of our arguments. AL- SM- SD- NV
7. I am having difficulty understanding how to negotiate the rules in the family with my parents. AL- SM- SD- NV
8. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents prefer giving me a lecture instead of discussing issues with me. AL- SM- SD- NV

9. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents fail to understand my change of mood and behavior. AL- SM- SD- NV
10. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents are seeking to build a relationship with me now. AL- SM- SD- NV
11. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents need to discuss puberty and sexual issues with me. AL- SM- SD- NV
12. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents get frustrated when they do not know my whereabouts AL- SM- SD- NV
13. I am having difficulty understanding why I should share my intimate relationship with my parents AL- SM- SD- NV

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE—TEST FOR PARENTS AND ADOLESCENTS

Questionnaire -- Test for Parents

The purpose of these guiding statements is to help the presenter determine the level of understanding in the dynamics of the relationship between parents and adolescents. On a scale of (1 to 4), please indicate your understanding of these issues in the parent- adolescent relationship (1 being the lowest level, 4 being the highest). Circle the number that describes best your level for each question.

1. I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my adolescent. 1—2—3—4
2. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent think I have no respect for his/her feeling 1—2—3—4
3. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent gets upset at me in any conversation. 1—2—3—4
4. I am having difficulty understanding why my adolescent becomes aggressive when he/she is upset at me. 1—2—3—4
5. I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of arguments. 1—2—3—4
6. I am having difficulty understanding why I should allow my adolescent negotiate rules in the family with me 1—2—3—4
7. I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss with my adolescent instead of giving a lecture. 1—2—3—4
8. I am having difficulty understanding how to communicate with my adolescent when he/she is upset. 1—2—3—4
9. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to obey the rules 1—2—3—4
10. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent to share his/her personal concerns with me 1—2—3—4
11. I am having difficulty understanding how to discuss puberty and sexual issues with my adolescent 1—2—3—4
12. I am having difficulty knowing how to discuss the whereabouts with my adolescent 1—2—3—4

13. I am having difficulty knowing how to get my adolescent share his/her intimate relationship with me 1—2—3—4

Questionnaire - Test for Adolescents

The purpose of these guiding statements is to help the presenter determine the level of understanding in the dynamics of the relationship between parents and adolescents. On a scale of (1 to 4), please indicate your understanding of these issues in the parent- adolescent relationship (1 being the lowest level, 4 being the highest). Circle the number that describes best your level for each question.

1. I am having difficulty understanding how to get along with my parents. 1—2—3—4
2. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents think I have no respect for their feelings and opinions. 1—2—3—4
3. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents get upset in any conversation with me. 1—2—3—4
4. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents isolate themselves in their rooms after an argument with me. 1—2—3—4
5. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents tend to be aggressive when upset at me. 1—2—3—4
6. I am having difficulty understanding why the rules in the family are the cause of our arguments. 1—2—3—4
7. I am having difficulty understanding how to negotiate the rules in the family with my parents. 1—2—3—4
8. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents prefer giving me a lecture instead of discussing issues with me. 1—2—3—4
9. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents fail to understand my change of mood and behavior. 1—2—3—4
10. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents are seeking to build a relationship with me now. 1—2—3—4
11. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents need to discuss puberty and sexual issues with me. 1—2—3—4
12. I am having difficulty understanding why my parents get frustrated when they do not know my whereabouts 1—2—3—4

13. I am having difficulty understanding why I should share my intimate relationship with my parents

1—2—3—4

APPENDIX 3

SEMINAR GROUP ACTIVITY

Gen 2:17 -----

Deut 11:26-28 -----

Gen 22:18 -----

Matt 25:23 -----

Heb 12:6 -----

Job 1:8 -----

Isa 1:18-20 -----

2 Kgs 18:11-12 -----

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