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ABSTRACT

REIGNITING THE LIFECYCLE OF PLATEAUIING CHURCHES IN BRAZIL  
THROUGH A PRAYER-BASED INTENSIVE GROWTH APPROACH

By

Otoniel de Lima Ferreira

Adviser: Bruce Moyer

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: REIGNITING THE LIFECYCLE OF PLATEAUIING CHURCHES IN BRAZIL THROUGH A PRAYER-BASED INTENSIVE GROWTH APPROACH

Name of Researcher: Otoniel de Lima Ferreira

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Bruce Campbell Moyer, STD

Date Completed: May 2011

### Purpose of the Project

This project seeks to create and develop a comprehensive prayer-based evangelism strategy to reignite the lifecycle in plateauing churches in Brazil. Through this project, pastors, church leaders, members and new members will be motivated and equipped to experience a better prayer life.

### Method

The method used for this study was based on qualitative research: a review of prayer as it is presented in the Bible, theoretical texts on prayer, and practical books written by prominent Christian authors, and a comprehensive study of the lifecycle of some Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brazil. These profiles were studied and data

collected in order to better understand the strategies currently being practiced and identify those needed to help reignite churches.

### Results

The research indicated that prayer and spiritual nurture are critical to the development of a prayer ministry. Prayer was found to be a priority for administrators, local leaders, and laity in successful churches. The steps needed to develop a culture of prayer and evangelism were identified. It was substantiated that, given that culture refers to a way of life, whatever the church does must be done in light of the intense desire to save the lost. One of the most successful outreach, supported by literature and the study of the Adventist churches in Brazil, is that of prayer-based evangelism.

### Recommendations

The following steps must be followed in order to provide the components of a prayer-based evangelism in Brazil: (1) Develop a prayer-based intensive growth strategy in order to reignite the lifecycle of churches that are plateaued or in a decline toward death. (2) Acknowledge that we are all in need of a Savior and that “sinners reaching out to sinners” in an atmosphere of prayer is the culture needed. (3) Clarify the steps that can be incorporated by any group of seekers of an intensive prayer life. (4) Motivate the church to fulfill the great mission of sharing God with others. (5) Make the process practical. (6) Encourage relationship building among the members as preparation for interacting outside the church community.

### Conclusions

The intent of this project was to show that the ministry of evangelistic prayer as a base in the church increases the likelihood that all other ministries will work better. Also,

faithfulness and stewardship will increase, as the prayer ministry becomes a part of the culture of a church. The resulting spiritual life of the members will be reflected in the growth of the church, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Prayer-based evangelism includes putting into practice the following: prayer, spiritual nurture, evangelism, and discipleship.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

REIGNITING THE LIFECYCLE OF PLATEAUIING CHURCHES IN BRAZIL  
THROUGH A PRAYER-BASED INTENSIVE GROWTH APPROACH

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

by  
Otoniel de Lima Ferreira

March 2011

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adviser,  
Bruce Campbell Moyer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Dmin Program  
Skip Bell

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dwight Nelson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, SDA Theological Seminar  
Denis Fortin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wagner Kuhn

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date approved

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Historical Context of This Study**

I was born in Terra Boa, Parana, Brazil, in 1967, exactly the year of my parents' conversion to Adventism. Actually, my family comes from a Catholic background. When my mom decided to be baptized, my grandfather got so upset that he would not even greet her when passing by. It was a big struggle for the family where my mom was once known as the favorite daughter. Because of her decision for the truth, she became unrecognized and ignored.

#### **My Childhood**

There were nine brothers and sisters in the family; my childhood was so good because of the diversity of activities we could have together living in the countryside. Our living sources were taken from the ground, growing coffee, rice, and/or beans. Sometimes in the southern part of Brazil the weather is so cold, and as we worked on a coffee plantation, I remember that most of the time we lost all the harvest; without the profit from the coffee, we did not have enough money to buy the main necessities needed for a big family. Rice and beans are the main food in Brazilian homes, and, without that, we suffer a lot. When we had frost in the winter, even the rice would not produce anything at all. I saw my mom on several occasions cooking unripe bananas for us, so we

would not starve because of the intense winter and the lack of a structure in which to live in cold weather. We do not remember this time of the year as a nice moment; nevertheless, we had fun when the sun appeared to warm us up. We used to go outside and play a lot. Poverty did not hide our happiness, and I think we were happy because my father had two secrets.

## Two Secrets of My Father

### **The First Secret**

My father was a man of prayer; I saw him innumerable times kneeling beside his bed or in the living room with the Bible open and praying for a long time. I never saw my father at home on Wednesday nights because Wednesday night in Brazil is prayer meeting time in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If some relatives or friends tried to visit us on Wednesday at 8:00 p.m., he and my mommy would give them the key to the house and say, “you are welcome in our house. Here you have the key to our house; you can stay at home resting or you can come with us to the church for the prayer meeting, because this is the most important thing in our life.” Usually, the people went to church with us. Every Wednesday, my father would stand up in the church and ask almost the same prayer request. The prayer request was especially for his children. My father died when he was 72 years old, and he was a man passionate about prayer.

### **The Second Secret**

The second secret was that, in spite of the poverty, in spite of the lack of money to buy rice and beans for the family, even no money to buy clothes or toys for the kids, my father appeared at home at the beginning of each quarter with the Sabbath school lesson

for all of us and for himself, as well as the meditation book for evening worship. At that time I did not understand why every time Father went to town and I asked him for a tricycle or for some toys, he did not buy them for me. He never bought anything I asked for because he had no money, but he would find money to buy all of us the Sabbath School lesson study guide, Bibles, and the reflection books for worship, as well as the Spirit of Prophecy books. Today, I understand he did the best he could for us, and I thank him recognizing the priority he chose for us. Not only did I not understand the buying of the books, Sabbath school lessons, and Adventist magazines when he had no money to buy the stuff we wanted, but every Friday he used to call one of his sons and ask him to help separate the tithe and the offerings that he should take to the church on Sabbath. He was a faithful servant. He used to recite verse 33 of Matt 6, which says, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

### The Family Status

We were one of the poorest families in the town and in the church, and today we are not rich, but people don't understand how my father got money to give a good education to all members of the family. There are seven children still alive—two passed away because of two tragic accidents—but each of us has at least a college degree. We are a noble family, and we are still growing. We have a lot to learn, but I praise the Lord for the father He gave me. Because of his faithfulness, we are all blessed; there are two pastors in the family, three teachers, one nurse, and two lawyers. Who paid all the school fees for all of us? It was God's blessings and the heritage of my dear and faithful father, *Osorio Clementino Ferreira*.

## My Youth Background

My teenage years found me a little bit rebellious. I did not like being poor. I used to think that life was unfair to me. Why did other people have this or have that and we did not? I started to complain against God. In order to help with the expenses at home, and also to be able to buy the things I wanted to have, I started working hard very early. But I continued to complain about everything until my companionship was not the best. My parents' prayers on my behalf and the principles that they taught me were very important and protected me from the evil one when I was 16 years old. I started thinking about what to do with my life. I never thought I could be a minister, although I wanted and desired it with all my heart.

My older brother went to college, and I liked to call him the hero of the family because he became a victim of poliomyelitis, and could not walk and had a lot of challenges. In spite of these challenges, in order to go further and achieve a dream, when nobody believed that he could, he believed and went to the seminary, became a teacher, and a pastor. When I saw that God was blessing him, it was a big motivation for me. I thought, if God is blessing my brother He can bless me as well.

## Going to the Seminary

I made my plans to go to the Seventh-day Adventist internal college someday but I didn't know how to pay the school fees. It was very expensive and our finances were not in any condition to even buy tickets to go by bus to Sao Paulo. By prayer, God provided the money and we went one by one to the internal college in Brazil. It was an amazing experience to all of us. When I got to that place, it seemed that I was arriving in

heaven. Everyone was so kind, I had my own bed, and in the cafeteria I could take any food I needed. Things that I had never eaten before were on my plate every day. Worship and the music that we sang were like we were singing with thousands of angels. I would say, without hesitation, that entering the ministerial training of the Adventist educational system was the best decision I ever took in my life.

### The Curse and the Blessing

Attending high school in a Seventh-day Adventist internal institution was the experience that changed my life. I didn't know at the time that I would become a pastor until I lost my scholarship, the Curse, and I had to go canvassing (selling Christians books), the blessing. I had to lose my timidity and go knocking door to door to earn money in order to return to school. I have to confess that the leader training me did not believe I would do well, and he said, "You have to train more before you can go out." For me, it was a moment of probation and trial, but God was beside me, coaching me for the ministry. The first day I went out knocking on doors, trying to sell books, my legs were shaking, my voice was trembling, and I could hardly do the presentation. God was with me, and that first day a lady bought the first book, called, in Portuguese, *Forças Misteriosas que atuam na mente humana*, meaning, "Mysterious Strengths that act in the Human mind." She was a spiritualist. She shared that she was facing many problems in her family life, and she saw in the book the solution for them.

### Canvassing Changed My Life

Sharing Christ with those in need, through the canvassing work, made me feel good and also made me think about being a missionary for the rest of my life. I realized

that helping people solve their problems made me happy. At that time I discovered that when a human being helps another, he is accomplishing God's purpose for his life. The desire to serve came to my heart and in my mind it was like a brightness enlightening the darkness of the night. As I kept working through the summer, the conviction that God was calling me to minister was growing and, in the end, I came to my family explaining that I would be, by God's grace, a minister for His glory. I finished high school studies and started Theology studies in the same seminary in Sao Paulo, Brazil. There was a great joy in my heart and, when I was walking on the pathways of the campus, in my mind I was saying, "I am the luckiest guy in the world!" This is the way I still think today, considering the fact that I am continuing to work in God's business.

#### The Moment of Crisis

Time went by in the seminary, and in the middle of the second year a discouragement came to my heart. I was wondering about God's call. Observing the difficulties of the studies and also the way sometimes things happen in the administration of the church, I started asking myself, "Am I really willing to go through those types of situations and stand firm in the purpose of the ministry?" Somehow, I was almost ready to give up and study for some other career. Actually, I was looking for a miracle in my life; to pay the college fees was not easy. I had to work and study and, as a result, my grades were not very good. Then, one day when I was talking to a girl, I think the devil spoke through her in order to stop me from going on in God's plan. She told me, "You are studying theology, but you are not going to be a pastor. You do not look like a pastor; try to do something else." Once I started thinking about what she said, I began to question

God's call, and I began to have doubts about being a pastor. Her statement contributed to my desire to flee away from the commitment of God's call.

### Prayer in the Crucial Moment

As the summer came, I went to a city called Florianopolis to work as a student literature evangelist, canvassing, selling books, in order to get money to go back to school. Florianopolis is an island and there are 42 beaches around it; each one more beautiful than the other. One Sabbath evening, a singing group was scheduled to perform at the Central church, and we went in order to enjoy the music. While they were singing, some of them shared their testimonies in between the songs. One young lady shared a powerful testimony of how God had performed a wonderful miracle in her life. I was sitting in the last pew, just watching, and a prayer came to my mind, "Lord, why do miracles just happen to somebody else and never to me? Perform a miracle in my life so that life will make sense to me." In my desperate situation of indecision, I was pleading for God to intercede in my favor. The meeting ended and we went home. On Sunday we took a day off and went to one of the most beautiful and calm beaches called Jurere. It is a family place. There were no strong waves and it displeased me a little. I like beaches with big waves. Anyway, we had a lot of fun together playing soccer, volleyball, and swimming. The time went by and we had to meet the team at a certain time; just fifteen minutes before, the waves started growing. I told my brother and another friend, "Let's go for five more minutes. We can have fun on these better waves."

## Miracle on the Waves

We went out on the first wave. It was a big one! Actually, my friend and I were pulled by it into a deeper part of the sea. As we tried to go back, the more we swam, the more we went to deeper parts. Swimming against the wind was in vain and I became really afraid of dying, but I didn't want to demonstrate to my friend that I was afraid. I had learned in Pathfinders that when you are about to drown, you should never be terrified; but I was. Even though I was frightened, I tried to tell my friend to calm down. And, for the first time in my life, I asked desperately for rescue help. I realized that on my own I could not go back to the beach anymore. I needed help from someone else, but there was no lifeguard on duty on that beach. No one with a good mind would have the courage to go into the water at that moment. Two guys were asking for help and nobody dared to go into the sea. The tide was rising. I heard my friend asking for forgiveness for his sins as he sank down to the bottom of the sea. Then, I was alone, trying to survive. I was very desperate.

## The Prayer and Commitment

When I started in prayer asking God to save me, I told Him at that moment that if He would save me I would definitely work for Him for the rest of my life. That was the deal; the answer was immediate. Suddenly, I felt as if a big hand touched me and redirected me. I did not have enough strength to swim any more. But without any effort, God was pushing me toward the sand. I got out of the water, thanking God for the great miracle that saved my life. After that, I had the assurance that He would help me to complete my studies and would help me to become a good pastor. So I went back to



school with my face shining, filled with the happiness of a person who really knows what he wants and where to go. I am convinced that God really hears us. In my ministry, prayer has become a part of all that I do, especially regarding twinning souls to Jesus.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Church growth experts (McIntosh, 2001) suggest that most churches go through a normal lifecycle. They go through a period of birth and growth followed by a period of plateau, and then eventual decline and die (pp. 25, 26). Recent observations have proven that some of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brazil are following this cycle. As a result of Conference investment in church planting and evangelism there has been fast-paced birth and growth in many regions of the country. While these younger churches are in the exciting stages of birth and growth, some other churches in several places are beginning to plateau. If this trend continues unchecked, the churches that have begun to plateau will inevitably begin a slow decline toward death. Previous pastoral experiences with plateauing churches suggest that one of the potential contributing factors to churches reaching this state is the lack of a prayer-based intensive growth approach that keeps the members on fire for their own salvation and the salvation of others.

### **Statement of the Task**

The task of this project is to develop a prayer-based intensive growth approach to help churches in Brazil reignite their lifecycle, considering that prayer is one of the instruments that Christians have been given to use in the fight against the snares of Satan and to impede him from causing discouragement and failure in the life of an individual or even in the life of the church and the organization.

## **Justification for the Project**

A Seventh-day Adventist expert in church growth, Russell Burrill (2009) suggests that “spending time contemplating the life and death of Jesus” and “praying for God to give them the passion of Christ for the lost ” would create a culture of evangelism and a strong passion to save the lost (p. 21).

Consider that some churches in Brazil have begun to plateau and, if this is left unchallenged, the end result will be decline and death as it has been seen in some other countries such as North America and Europe. When the members lose the focus of the mission, even their prayers do not help much because there is a lack of desire and passion to see the church growing and to seek the lost and bring them to church.

Previous pastoral experiences with plateauing churches suggest that one of the potential contributing factors is the lack of a prayer-based intensive growth approach. Such a strategy is needed in order to create a culture of evangelism and an intensive church growth and to reignite the church’s lifecycle if necessary.

## **Description of the Project Process**

Theological reflection is centered on two primary themes. (1) The connection between prayer and spiritual revival and (2) the connection between prayer and intensive church growth approaches, both in light of the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). For more clarification of this theoretical-practical project, the current literature has been reviewed. This includes books, dissertations, articles, and reports written on prayer with the purpose of reigniting a church’s lifecycle. Also, some study has been given to the prayer-based intensive growth used by the pioneers of the Seventh-

day Adventist Church, considering that sometimes we have to, as Gary L. McIntosh (2001) says, “look back in order to leap forward.”

In order to provide credibility, data was collected about prayer ministry in Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brazil. Additional data regarding the prayer ministry of other denominations in Brazil was obtained for comparison. In addition, an evaluation of the growth of the churches that have a serious prayer ministry was included to explore the effects of prayer.

A revival strategy based on the biblical references of *forty Days of Prayer* has been contextualized for use in local churches throughout Brazil and also in North America. In order to form a culture of evangelism and passion for saving the lost, a weekend seminar was developed to teach church members the importance of revival and intercessory prayer.

To train members of a church and cast the vision of evangelism is good, but to equip them is most necessary. To evaluate the experience, a special survey was conducted during a *forty days of prayer* in order to give the church the support needed to reach new believers in their homes or wherever they were. Sharing testimonies is one of the best mediums of praise. Acknowledging what the Lord has done motivates others. A report on the experience was developed to share with other churches at the end of the year.

### **Expectations from the Project**

In his recent book *How to Grow an Adventist Church*, Russell Burrill, (2009, p. 21) recommends that leaders pray to the Lord, asking for passion for the lost (p. 21). He

makes reference to a letter written by Ellen G. White in 1894, and included in *Medical Ministry* (1963). He mentions that she “claims that the workers should grasp the promises of God, concerning prayer, interceding for the lost. She says, ‘If God has promised, He will attend’” (pp. 244, 245).

The goal of this project is to motivate leaders and laity to attain a better comprehension and practice of prayer ministry. Also, the project was prepared to help church leaders and their local congregations to better understand God’s will for the church and produce inner personal passion for saving the lost.

The author of this project believes that, when a church, through spiritual growth, adopts the culture of evangelism and gets passionate for saving people, it will grow and reignite the lifecycle of the church.

This project was prepared for churches in Brazil, but this model can be followed wherever there are churches in decline or plateaued. This project, if implemented, will teach the church to pray for the revitalization of their congregations.

### **Limitation of the Project**

Considering the value of the subject and its spiritual amplitude, it would be the prayer of the researcher that the project would not have any limitations, but some are unavoidable.

First, although we have many tools, such as the Bible, spiritual books, Bible dictionaries, Bible commentaries, and practical and scientific experiences, it will never be enough to exhaust the unlimited theme of prayer and church intensive growth.

Second, this dissertation project will be limited to some of the plateauing and declining churches in Brazil, although, if contextualized, the project can be implemented in some others cultures as well.

Third, the main aim of the dissertation project is not to provide the definitions of prayer and church growth, though working definitions are suggested to help with the comprehension of the topic.

Fourth, the practical project presented in Chapter 4 is not saying that prayer alone will change any church, but will enable people to use it as a tool to detect where the church or the individual needs to change and be healthy in order to revive or intensify grow.

The last limitation of this project is that the author recognizes his imperfections considering his cultural academic background, and his weakness of living in a sinful world.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Prayer:* I agree with Derek Morris's (1987) definition, who says that prayer "is one's awareness of and personal response to God's presence, which involves a person-to-person communication with Him. . . . It is participation in a dialogue not only of words but also of lives that has been begun by God" (p. 7). There is one abstract but profound definition by White (1915) who says that "Prayer is the breath of the soul" (p. 254). We cannot live without breath; neither can the spiritual life survive without prayer.

*Prayer-based:* An interdenominational composite word used to reinforce the meaning of prayer as a foundation to do something powerful for the Lord.

*Church-intensive growth:* a term used to emphasize the growth of a church that is growing fast.

*Church growth movement:* Founded by Donald A. McGavran (1897-1991) “McGavran was born in India of missionary parents. Influenced by the Student Volunteer Movement, he returned to India and served in India in 1924 to serve with the Disciples of Christ in a variety of missionary capacities. . . . Returning to the United States in 1957, McGavran established the Institute of Church Growth in Eugene, Oregon. . . . In 1965, he became the founding dean of the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary” (Mulholland, 2000).

*Prayer evangelism:* In Claydon’s view (2004, p. 8) “Praying in God’s purpose, and praying towards God’s purpose for the world evangelization” (p. 8) is prayer evangelism. In other words, these prayers should be made to accomplish God’s desire, not a selfish prayer that only talks about our own interest. He adds, “Prayer in evangelism is prayer for the unsaved, asking the Lord to draw them to himself (John 6:44) to open their ears to understand the truth (Matt 13:19) and to open their eyes to see the light of the gospel” (2 Cor 4:4). I would say that evangelism without prayer brings little results, and prayer without evangelism is a selfish prayer. They function together.

*Laity:* Defined by Webster (2011) as “the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy,” but more pointedly as “the mass of people as distinguished from those of particular profession or specially trained.”

*Forty Days of Prayer:* The name of a book based on a movement of prayer that has the purpose of forming a habit in the life of the Christian. In this dissertation project, it is used to reference the prayer ministry of those who want God to guide in their lives

and make their ministry meaningful. The concept is based on the biblical term used by God several times in Scripture, in relationship to some particular character such as Moses, Noah, Jonah, and Jesus. It was always used with the intention to develop something great and significant in their lives.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRAYER AND INTENSIVE CHURCH GROWTH

In order to gain a more accurate comprehension of prayer and church growth, this chapter will explore the different types of prayer found in the Bible. An analysis of the theological foundations of the relationship between prayer and intensive church growth will be presented. A review of the following sources will be included: the Bible, Bible dictionaries, historical writings peculiar to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and scholarly works. This chapter will also analyze prayer as it appears in the whole Bible, exalting its power toward God's people to fulfill their mission.

#### **Types of Prayer**

According to experts on prayer (Blythe, (2006), there are at least 50 approaches to prayer including practices, traditions, and times. In this section, there are reflections on some of the basic types of prayer registered throughout the Bible.

#### Liturgical Prayer

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, 2003 ), the noun "liturgy," coming from the Latin *Liturgia* and from the Greek *leitourgia*, means public service. The term liturgy is often capitalized and refers to a component of the



Eucharistic rite or a rite or body of rites prescribed for public worship, a customary repertoire of ideas, phrases, or observances. Also, the liturgical prayer is usually public, such as the “Morning Prayer” offered during morning mass in the Catholic Church or during the regular morning worship in churches of the Anglican Communion.

The website Marina Christian Fellowship (2010) defines Liturgical prayer as “a set way of praying,” often using prayer books. The website says, “Praying in this way provides a framework for prayer as there are preset scriptures, psalms, and written prayers to pray each day.”

The Greek word transliterated as *kyrie* meaning “Lord” (accompanied by *eleison*, meaning “have mercy”) was used in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as “a short liturgical prayer that begins with or consists of the words “Lord, have mercy.” This type of prayer is found in the Bible, mostly in the Psalms. One scholar from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, William Oscar Emil Oesterley (1925), suggests that “the Writer of Psalms had obviously no other intention than to bring into his composition some of the key notes of the great liturgical prayer, which shows that he was very familiar with it” (pp. 57, 58). Oesterley may be right because, as the Bible describes it, David was frequently at the Temple and knew the liturgy of the synagogue.

The commentator (Drane, 2000) states that “the book of Psalms is, in effect, the liturgical handbook of the Jerusalem Temple. It is a specialized form of poetry, and includes prayers, litanies, and songs, often with instructions for the musicians and detailed directions for dancers and other worship leaders” (p. xx).

One of the occasions when liturgical prayers appear in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is when the preacher, before the sermon, kneels down in front of the congregation

to pray while the parishioners sing a liturgical song, both praising and petitioning God's presence and His blessings. This idea is mentioned in a book by Marshal Shelley (1995) which says the following:

In some liturgical services, it is common for the congregation to sing a hymn before the sermon. During the singing, the preacher kneels and prays for himself. As he consecrates himself to the work of the Spirit, the congregation becomes aware the preacher works under divine accountability and what they are about to hear is God's living Word for them. (p. 102)

The following is an analysis of some of David's liturgical prayers in the book of Psalms, particularly Psalm 123:3; 86:1; and 41:1.

### **David's Liturgical Prayers**

Liturgical prayer is also a public expression concerning an interest of the whole congregation, especially when the entire group of worshipers are vulnerable and desperately in need of some help. The commentator Matthew Henry (1996) suggests that Psalm 123:1-3 was probably written when the people of God were facing challenges because of the Babylonian captivity, though he states, that it was not the only time Israel met trials and problems. Commenting on these verses, Matthew Henry points out that "The psalmist begins as if he spoke for himself only (v. 1), but presently speaks in the name of the church." And he concludes saying, "In singing it, we must have our eyes looking up to God's favor with a holy concern, and then an eye down to men's reproach with a holy contempt" (Mathew, 1996). I believe this is a classic reference to liturgical prayer.

Although liturgical prayer is a public expression concerning an interest of the whole congregation, it can be expressed alone and personally as well. A liturgical prayer

is reported in Psalm 86:1-17. This is not a public prayer, but a personal prayer of David's. One, however, with attributes that comprise the liturgical prayer. This is a prayer in which the writer, with deep emotion, combines petitions and praises, with urgency in the plea for help, and now overjoyed with hope, in view of former compassions. A need is mentioned and there is praise. I believe (Edersheim, 2003) was right when he said:

That liturgical formulas were used not only in the Temple, but in the daily private devotions, cannot be doubted. The first trace of them appears so early as in the arrangement of the *Psalms*, each of its first four books closing with a 'eulogy,' or benediction, and the fifth book with a psalm which may be designated as one grand doxology. Although it is a task of no small difficulty to separate the ancient prayers of Temple-times from the later additions, which have gradually swelled into the present Jewish prayer book, it has, in great measure, successfully been accomplished. Besides such liturgical formulas, some prayers taught by celebrated Rabbis have been preserved. It was in accordance with this practice that John the Baptist seems to have given forms of prayer to his followers, and that the disciples asked the Savior to teach them to pray. (p. 154)

James Smith (1996) states that "the Book of Psalms stands virtually in the middle of the sixty-six books which comprise the Christian Bible." Athanasius, the 4<sup>th</sup>-century theologian (as cited by Smith), called them "Psalms, an epitome of the whole Scriptures." Smith suggests, "Most of the Psalms consist mostly of prayer offered to God, not oracles from God" (p. 97). Although the prayers were not oracles from God, he insists that "these prayers were sanctioned for use in temple worship and were able to be canonized" (p. 98). These facts make it liturgical and sacred.

Psalm 86 gives evidence of being a liturgical prayer, and, according to the commentator (Paschall, 1972), it is a prayer of a person experiencing a deeply felt need. He was devout, utterly humble, and sincerely trustful. At the beginning (vv. 1-7) and at the conclusion (vv. 14-17), he petitions God for help. He linked these supplications with fervent praise (vv. 8-13) (p. 328). This Psalm has the qualities of a liturgical prayer

because of the respect that David shows and the way he addresses the sovereign God, mentioning and exalting 23 times the name Lord and God, and the trust that he manifests. These are all attitudes of liturgical gestures. Liturgical prayer is considered by many to be very necessary to the Christian religion, but unfortunately, some factions of the Christian church have misused it.

Another of David's liturgical prayers is Psalm 41, where the name of God is inserted 10 times. The order and context of the prayer expresses respect for God and asks for God's concentration. The psalmist mentions his suffering and, at the same time, he exalts the name of the Lord. The first four verses reference God's power (Ps 41: 5-9) and present the trials and persecutions he experienced. The final four verses include petitions and praises. In his exegesis, William Taylor (1980) suggests that this is a psalm with liturgical characteristics. He supports his assertion by quoting from verse one: "Blessed is he who considers the poor." There is a blessing given to the one who helps the poor, which is the deliverance of evil in the days of troubles (p. 216).

The liturgical prayer, as I suggested before, is very important in the church service, but it has to have life. It should never be boring, too long, or even so routine that the words make no sense anymore. That is the problem with the liturgical prayer that some contemporary churches have taken away. The Seventh-day Adventist writer, Ellen White (1915), states that "the prayers offered in public should be short and to the point. God does not require us to make the season of worship tedious by lengthy petitions." And she reinforces her statement saying, "Christ did not enforce upon His disciples wearisome ceremonies and long prayers." She may be referring to the long liturgical prayer heritage from paganism, or even from Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli. The great reformers tried to

make it better, but, with time, it became routine again. She quotes Jesus Christ's own statement about hypocritical prayers that used to be offered in the temple and other locations. "The petitioners would cry out in a loud voice, boasting about themselves, not even recognizing that they were sinners. 'When thou prayest,' Jesus said, 'thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men' (Matt 6:5, KJV) (p. 175).

For the liturgical prayer to be effective in the church it has to be recited in such a way that the people rejoice. And, like David's psalms, when he prayed he really meant what he said, he petitioned and gave thanksgiving and praises.

### Personal Prayer

The Bible gives us the keys we need to develop a powerful prayer life. Scripture is full of examples of men and women who walked with God and used prayer to impact their world. The following are scriptural ways to develop a deeper, more fulfilling personal prayer life.

#### **Hannah's Prayer**

One of the reasons we pray is because we are facing trials and misfortune, and in my opinion, people in these circumstances usually pray selfish prayers. God does not attend selfish prayers. Certainly, it does not apply to Hannah's prayer, at least for the one said in the temple asking for a baby boy and offering him entirely to the Lord. In order to analyze Hannah's prayer, it is very important to consider her background (1 Sam 1:1-14). She was one of Elkanah's wives and, unlike the other wife, Peninnah, Hannah did not give birth to any child, and it was a very serious problem at that time. The commentators,

(Richards & Richards, 1987), declared that “in ancient Israel, children were more than important: they were symbols of fulfillment. In Hannah’s case, her childlessness was a double burden. ‘Her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.’” (v. 6) (p. 199). The Bible says that she was depressed and living a bitter life (v. 7).

Hannah’s situation was aggravated much more when she had to go to the temple. Year after year, meeting all the relatives with their families growing, while she remained childless, was difficult. Hannah’s personal prayer was marked by such suffering that the Bible says she wept and prayed to the Lord “in bitterness of soul.” (v.10) Referring to the phrase “in bitterness of soul,” (Bergen, 1996) states that this was a phrase used in other places in the Bible to characterize the psychological pain of a person who had lost a child through death (Ruth 1:13-20; 2 Kgs 4:27; Zech 12:10). Or someone was suffering a great physical pain (Job 3:20; 7:11; 10:1; Isa 38:15). To experience relief from such suffering was impossible without the Lord’s intervention. Hannah finally discovered the secret (p. 68). To develop a personal life of prayer, it is necessary to have in mind the magnitude of the Almighty and trust in Him with all of our heart. Trusting in Him with all her heart was what Hanna did. She finally started developing a very close relationship with God the Father.

The Bible suggests that Hannah was a woman of prayer, but while she poured out her heart to the Lord, the bitterness and sadness was also part of her soul and that is why her prayers could not be heard. As James Smith (1996) said, “She wept and poured out her heart to *Yahweh of hosts*. She approached him reverently as can be seen in her threefold reference to herself as the *handmaid* of the Lord.” And Smith emphasizes the fact that “she vowed that if the Lord would give her a son, she would dedicate him all the

days of his life as a Nazirite” (1 Sam. 1:9–19). The prayer was personal and secret, and the vow was a covenant between Hannah and the Lord. Nobody needed to know what she had offered to the Lord but her transformation was notable. Even Eli the priest could not guess what was going on, but dismissed Hannah and blessed her with the words, “May the God of Israel grant your petition.” Hannah then returned to her meal. Because she was now confident that God would hear her petition, her face was sad no longer (1 Sam 1:14-18).

Personal prayer is a deep relationship with God, says Ellen G. White (1892), who states, “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend” (p. 93). This is consistent with the directive given by Jesus to the disciples (John 15:15) regarding His choice of title to define His relationship with them as “friend not servant.” The best way to communicate with someone is through a friendly relationship and good conversation.

In his book, Roger J. Morneau (1995) tells that he was sick with a bone degeneration in his spine that caused uncontrollable back pain, and he also suffered with heart disease. He said a prayer to the Lord in supplication, asking God to return the youthful vigor to the parts of his body that were deteriorating. He mentioned the promise in Isaiah 40:28-31 as he prayed: “Precious Father, I have one exception to this request, however. Please do not restore my heart to a perfect health, for I am afraid that if you did, I would no longer have a prayer ministry” (p. 13). Thus, passing through a time of tribulation may not be a bad thing, for it motivates us to personal prayer. The Bible says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (Jas 1:2-4).

Hannah was motivated to present her personal prayer about an embarrassing family situation, and what a blessing it was after that deep conversation with the Best Friend of people.

Although there are many samples of personal prayer in the Bible, I will select just one more in order to finish this section.

### **Jesus' Personal Prayer**

Jesus' Gethsemane prayer was one of the most intense personal prayers recorded in the Bible. The prayer is described in the four gospels, (Matt 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-50; Luke 22:39-53; and John 18:1-12). The Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary and commentator, (Campbell, 2008), states that what "Jesus' experiences in Gethsemane is a solemn and powerful time when he wrestles with his Father in prayer in connection with his coming death. He commissions Peter, James, and John to accompany him and to 'watch' with him" (p. 160). The suffering of the Savior cannot be comprehended in human terms. He was about to face a moment of challenge, a separation from His Father. The author Ellen White (1898) states that "the guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all" (p. 74). The crisis in the life of Jesus can be described only with such words as darkness, horror, and terror. As Henry (1996) puts it, "Now, we enter upon the bloody scene." He said that "in these verses we have the story of his agony in the garden" and "this was the beginning of sorrows to our Lord Jesus" because "*the sword of the Lord began to awake against the man that was his Fellow; and how should it be quiet when the Lord had given*



*it a charge*” (Mt 26:36–46). That is the moment when sin and the sinner are together, and the result of it is doom, destruction, and much suffering and death.

The place where this event was taking place is the Garden of Gethsemane. (Myers, 1987) states that “it was named for a press that was located there, perhaps in a cave since the cool underground temperatures would have been preferable for pressing olives. According to John (John 18:1) a garden was situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives” (p. 413). Jesus used to use this place with His disciples for a time of refreshing and retirement. His personal prayer was short but straight to the point.

Henry (1996) comments that “Christ went to pray alone, though he had lately prayed with his disciples” (John 17:1). Our prayers with our families must not excuse us from our secret devotions. Personal prayer is very important in our daily lives, especially when we face trials and temptations. Nevertheless, according to Wagner (1992a), we know that the average prayer time among church leaders is not as good as it should be. Pastoral leaders from different churches and states indicated that the average time of their personal prayer is around 22 minutes per day (Wagner, 1992b). He emphasizes that 28 percent pray less than 10 minutes a day (p. 79). If our leaders are praying that little, I presuppose that the membership is a reflection of the leadership, but prays much less. The Bible reveals that Jesus’ personal prayer was for us the right example. In His prayers, we see Him saying, “May your will be done” (Matt 36:42). The churches’ leaders should follow Jesus’ example of prayer, and let the will of God guide the church in every way.

## Intercessory Prayer

One of the most important types of prayer is the intercessory prayer, and the Bible is full of examples of this notable way of praying.

### **Abraham and Intercessory Prayer (Genesis 18:22-33)**

The work of intercession for both the good and the wicked is very important and reveals the character of the Christian, the believer. The commentators (Walvoord, Zuck, & Seminary, 1983) suggest that “Abraham’s great character is revealed by his intercession. He prayed that all in the cities, the wicked as well as the righteous, be spared for the sake of the . . . righteous” (v. 23). If the character is not entirely revealed, at least the lovely heart of Abraham was exposed, perhaps because he knew his nephew Lot and his family were living in Sodom and Gomorrah. Some may say that Abraham’s intercession was not well received, and basically did not succeed, but the fact that Lot was taken out of there proves that at least one was saved because of his intercession (Mathew, 1996).

According to the Bible, the following are some characteristics of Abraham’s intercessory prayer: (1) Friendship with God (v. 17), (2) Boldness (v. 23), (3) Humbleness to talk to God (vs. 27, 28), (4) Persistence (vs. 27-32), and (5) Comprehension (v. 33). Because of his relationship with God, Abraham followed this model. Intercessory prayer is perhaps the most demanding, because it takes the petitioner out of their thinking of self.

The British scholar Peter Williams (2006) states that “Samuel was so aware of the importance of it and the need to pray for his people that he regarded it as a sin not to do

so: ‘Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you’” (1 Sam 12:23) (p. 104).

I particularly agree that the intercessory prayer is the most important one when we are talking about the salvation of others. An expert in church growth, Peter Wagner (1997) suggests that intercessory prayer is the one that shows cause-and-effect for evangelization. Wagner says that we cannot lose the focus and affirms that “prayer is a very important means in the salvation process” (p. 75). (Williams, 2006) declares that intercessory prayer is a powerful weapon in the hand of the Christian, and it is also a secret one. He says that all of us have relatives, friends, and neighbors that we would love to save but they hate to hear anything about religion, and, in their own way, forbid us to talk about it. We can pray for them and they cannot do anything to stop us. Some refer to prayer as the top-secret weapon (pp. 104-105). This is according to the commentator David S. Dockery (1998).

In 5:13, John indicated that he had written his epistle to lead believers to an assurance that they possessed eternal life. John suggested that the assurance that we have been accepted with God provides an assurance toward receiving answers in prayer. He urged that Christians practice intercessory prayer, particularly for fellow believers caught in the trickery of sin. He concluded with the statement that Jesus’ death had made possible holiness in the life of each Christian, the new birth, and a genuine knowledge of God (p. 650).

The Bible, in several references, mentions the importance of intercession. Jesus Himself interceded for transgressors (Isa 53:12). The Holy Spirit intercedes for us (Rom 8:26). God always lives to intercede for His children (Heb 7:25).

The biblical prayer includes petition, intercession (Num 20:16; 1 Sam 12:19 and 23; Isa 37:1-4; Jer 37:3, 42:2, 3; Eph 6:19, 20; Col 4:3, 4; and 1 Thess 5:25), confession, (Judg 10:10; 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Sam 12:13, 24:10; Judg 2:5); and thanksgiving (Dan 6:10; Phil 4:6; Col 1:3 4:2; 1 Tim 2:1).

Peter Wagner (1997, p. 127), in his research on church growth, found out that churches that prayed the most, grew the most, and churches that prayed less, grew less (p. 127). Certainly, people come to church through intercessory prayer. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* defines intercession as “an entreaty of prayers for others; a mediation” (Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, 1979 s.v. "interseccion").

The Word of God clearly, implicitly and explicitly calls attention to the importance of intercession in the life of people. The salvation of souls has to do with intercessory prayer and Jesus Christ intercedes for them. Ellen White (1981) states that the church is abundantly honored in being allowed to operate together with celestial angels. The Lord is calling the ones who profess to be Christians to be intercessors of men and women for His kingdom. To intercede for the lost is a duty of anyone who is called Christian.

Piotrowski points out that the term used most frequently in the Old Testament for prayer is “the verb *לפחל* , *להפחל* in the piel can mean ‘to intercede or Judge.’” He says that “the noun denoting intercession however is *פגנע* such as is found in Jer 7:16, Isa 53:12, and 59:16.” In his studies about prayer, Piotrowski mentions that prayer and intercession are often used as synonyms (Piotrowski, 1999, pp. 8, 9).

Yancey (2006), the author of the book *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference*, says, “When I pray for another person I am praying for God to open my eyes so I can see

that person as God does and then enter the stream of love that God already directs toward that person.” He goes on to say, “I have found that the most important purpose of prayer may be to let us be loved by God” (p. 303).

Although we have many beautiful definitions on prayer, I agree with Moyer’s statement “Intercessory prayer does seem to be mysterious. It cannot be defended logically, but we do it because it works. It is experientially true” (Moyer, 2011).

### Communicative Prayer

#### **Abraham’s Prayer of Response to His Call**

Abraham heard God’s call (Gen 12:1-3). Communication is possible between God and humanity. They can interact with and hear each other. The great promise of God to Abraham, in this conversation, this prayer, was that he would be the father of a great nation. Beyond God’s interaction, there is a point that is very relevant in this particular conversation with Abraham: God expresses His desire to see Abraham interact with others, increase, grow, and exchange blessings. He promises, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (Gen 12: 2).

#### **Abraham’s Prayer**

Abraham is known as the father of faith, by grace, and he lived a life of constant relationship with God. Simpson and Bowie (1981) say that he must have been a man of prayer, and they affirm, “True prayer becomes a benediction precisely because it lifts a soul out of itself” (p. 574). However, we know by the narrative, that in Abraham’s life it was not always like that, he had his moments of weakness and lack of faith as well. He

first tried to do the things in his own way; for example, the promise of an heir. He trusted that the promise would be fulfilled through his handmaid Hagar (Gen 16: 1-4). The lack of faith exhibited by Abraham caused him and all his family great suffering, even though the Lord transformed it into a great blessing (Gen 16:10). “I will multiply thy seed,” said the Angel to Hagar. She was faithful to the Lord, comments Nichol (1976-1980, p. 1:318) and that is why God allowed her, a slave, to participate in Abraham’s promise of blessing; she was greatly comforted in spite of Abraham’s and Sarah’s error.

### **God’s Response to the Crisis Prayer**

Abraham’s lack of faith was visible when he lied to King Abimelech, saying that Sarah was only his sister, and Sarah lied as well (Gen 20). This lie caused trouble and put Abimelech and Sarah into an embarrassing situation (Gen 20:8-16). Abraham had to pray to the Lord for mercy.

He needed to pray in a moment of crisis and God responded by healing Abimelech and the whole nation from the curse of not having children. That prayer was a prayer of healing. The Lord’s response was faithful. “Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his slave girls so they could have children again” (Gen 20:17, NIV). God heard the prayer of Abraham, but there was a condition for the prayer to be heard. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1976-1980, p. 1:342) states, “Had restitution not been made, death would have been the result (see vs. 3, 7).” Again, the prayer was followed with the blessing of healing and growth. Regarding the response of Abraham and Sarah to God’s promise, their lives were marked by ups and downs, but whenever they recognized their mistakes, repentance followed. In this way,

God always accomplishes the promise (Gen 21). The commentator Nichol (1976-1980) affirms that Isaac was the son of the promise and his birth was contrary to the usual course of nature (Gal 4:23; Heb 11:11) (p. 343). In other words, he is saying that it was a miracle, and that is exactly what needs to happen in the churches that are not growing anymore: a miracle.

### Doxological Prayer

In order to understand the Doxological Prayer, it is necessary to see the definition of the word “Doxology.” According to the Believe Religious Information Website (Retrieved October 25, 2010. Doxology, <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/doxology.htm>), a doxology is a short prayer or hymn of praise that extols the glory and majesty of God. Also, the “well known doxologies include the Glory to God (Gloria Patri), the Glory Be (Gloria in excelsis), the Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus), and the Hebrew word Alleluia, which means, ‘Praise the Lord.’” The last statement was added, stating, “Some verses of hymns, such as Thomas Ken's *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*, are also called doxologies.

Myers (1987) defines Doxology as a word coming from the Greek word *doxología, dóxa*, “praise” and *logos*, “utterance,” both expressions of praise to God. A common Old Testament formula is “Blessed be the Lord” (Gen 24:27), in which the speaker mentions God’s activities in the lives of his people.” Myers also mentions that there is another formula, which is “Ascribe to the Lord glory” (Ps 29:1). He says that “scholars believe that the Old Testament congregation voiced such doxologies at the conclusion of hymns and prayers (1 Chr. 16:36), although 1 Chr. 29:10-13 records similar praise in the opening lines of one of David’s prayers (cf. Dan. 2:20-23).” He states that

“the New Testament has retained both Old Testament formulas for the doxology” (Luke 1:68; Rom 16:27).

In Paul’s epistles, doxologies occur in the salutation (Gal 1:5), as opening thanksgiving (2 Cor 1:3-5), as a final exhortation (1 Tim 6:15-16), and in closing comments (Phil 4:20). Myers may be right because we usually focus our praises on God the Father, but twice at least the New Testament gives a doxology on behalf of Christ, first by the crowd that praised Jesus during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21:9 par.; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38) and second by the four living creatures and twenty-four elders who magnify the name of the Lamb (Rev 5:12; Rom 16:27); the various versions attribute glory to God through Jesus Christ.

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

The assumption that the Lord’s Prayer is doxological is because of the variant included at the end of the prayer; therefore, it was used doxologically.

Myers’ final statement is about the Lord’s Prayer. He states that the doxology at the close of the Lord’s Prayer is omitted by Luke (Luke 11:4) and is not found in the major and more reliable manuscripts of Matthew’s gospel (Matt 6:13, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever”). He believes that this ending may be based on 1 Chr 29:11. It is included in the Didache as well (8:2; cf. 9:2-4; 10:2, 4, 5 for the expression of praise in other contexts), (pp. 292, 293). Thus, it is doxological.

In my personal view the inclusion of the variant found in Matt 6:13 has completely impacted the life of the Christian church and shown that the Lord’s Prayer is a doxological prayer. The commentators Cox and Easley (2007) have a similar statement,



“The original ending of the Lord’s Prayer is ‘deliver us from evil.’ As early as the late first century, however, a doxological ending was added to the prayer (‘for Yours is the power and glory for ever and ever’ is the form in *Didache* 8.2)” (pp. 232, 233).

Interestingly, Henry says, “The conclusion: *For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.* Some refer this to David’s doxology, (1 Chr 29:11). *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness*” (Mathew, 1996).

The Lord’s Prayer is a model of prayer taught by Jesus to all Christians in all generations. At the same time, He based this prayer on facts that the disciples at that time would understand and easily be able to learn correctly. The model that they had was based on the Jewish doxology. Hamman (1971) states that the Lord’s Prayer has its roots in Jewish tradition, and he justifies his assumption for the use of the expression “our Father” as terms used in Jewish prayer and writings (p. 105). Consequently, it became part of the Christian doxology.

### **Jude’s Prayer**

One of the doxological prayers in the Bible is recorded in Jude 24, 25, in the final paragraph of the writings. Jude, the author, according to *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Walvoord et al., 1983), “exploded with a most elevated doxology, answering the unexpressed question, “But who will deliver us from the apostates and the apostasy into which they lead the unsuspecting?” He was proclaiming praise to the One who is able to keep us from falling. The commentary also says that Jude wanted to communicate victory over apostasy found in Jesus Christ. The commentators suggest, and I agree with them, that Jude “thus fulfills his heart’s desire of writing in the most

joyful terms (Jude 3), for in Christ there is hope in victory, which gives believers joy and confidence” (Jude 24). This confidence is that in God’s plan of salvation there is an outline of joy, praises, and glorification, and those are, according to the Bible, characteristic of doxological prayers. This prayer can be used in any community of believers in God and should be used with the objective of giving the glory to the Almighty and not to anyone else.

### Prayer Expressing Anger

It may be said that the prayer expressing anger shows only rebellion, disagreement, lack of faith, ingratitude and apostasy, but the Bible has a different point of view when portraying some of the prayer warriors who expressed anger.

### **Job’s Prayer**

The circumstances for Job were really bad; he lost everything, things that took a long time to acquire, and he did not understand why those things happened to him. Considering what happened to Job, it is natural to express anger, and ask questions about it, especially because he did not know what was going on. Our conversion and faithfulness to God is proven when trials and temptations come to us. James Smith (1996), in his commentary about Job 13:23-28, says that “Job begins his plea with a demand to know the number of his sins. He wants to have heaven’s indictment against him made clear. He is referring to great transgressions, to recent transgressions, to transgressions, which would call forth such affliction from God.” In response to his prayer he did not receive any explanation, so he started reasoning about why he came to this world, what was his purpose for being, and he cursed the day he was born.

I appreciate what Henry states. He says that “there are those in hell who with good reason wish they had never been born, such as Judas, (Matt 26:24). But, on this side of hell, there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. It was Job’s folly and weakness to curse his day” (Job 3:1-10), (Mathew, 1996). The difference between Judas and Job is that Judas cursed his life and took it away, committing suicide. His lack of faith, weakness and despair were so huge that he lost control and, without repenting, did exactly what Satan wanted. Actually, he lost his faith in Jesus’ love for him and could not forgive himself. By not allowing Jesus to forgive him and save him from that situation, he lost eternal life.

Job likewise cursed his birthday; he did not like what was happening with him, and became angry with the Lord. Perhaps he thought God was causing the devastation in his life. But, according to the Bible, says Matthew Henry (1996), Job cursed his day, but he did not curse his God. He was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he resolutely cleaves to that, and never lets it go (Job 3:1-10).

The prayer of Job expressing anger is a subject of a reflection from Jewish theology that God is the one who does well and also punishes the ones who sin against Him. As James E. Smith puts it, “Job cannot understand why one as great as God would pursue such an insignificant one as he” (Job 13:23-28) (J. E. Smith, 1996). The prayer expressing anger uttered by Job could be justified because he was being sincere, and it was only in ignorance that he was attributing the guilt to God.

The dispute between God and Satan concerning Job, says Henry (1996), was not whether Job was suffering from some illness or whether or not he was subject to like

passions as we are. Instead, Henry emphasizes, the issue was that Satan was accusing Job on behalf of any who believe in God. He accused the followers of God of doing so due to blessings. He accused them, Job included, of being hypocrites who secretly hated God, and, if provoked, would show hatred. The trial Job faced revealed that he was no such man (Job 3:1-10). Satan's statement about hypocrisy was possibly right, considering the many people who claim to love God with all their heart, but when some bad things happen to them, they are quick to blame and even curse God and attribute every bad thing to Him. Some go on to abandon their faith, but Satan was wrong in his assumptions concerning Job. Job was a man of prayer. Though Job made a mistake in cursing the day he was born, he is an example for all of us of trust and faithfulness to the Almighty.

The Bible says, "In your anger do not sin" (Eph 4:26). Job's prayer expressing anger was a moment of relief, but he did not sin against God. Although he did blame God for his misfortune, it was not sin. Paschall and Hobbs (1972 ) suggest that Job's suffering reminds us that we should not blame God for everything that happens to us; it might be that Satan is doing the same thing that he did to Job to make us angry and sin. And he finished saying that God's will is never to do anything bad to his children (p. 272). Although he blamed God, based on his Jewish cultural background, it was not taken to be a willful sin, but rather a sin of ignorance. John Calvin (1997) states that even involuntary sin should be repented of and sacrifices should be offered to the Lord (Lev 4).

However, there was a moment that God rebuked Job for his error (Job 40:1-3). The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1976) says that "Satan predicted that Job would curse God. This he had not done, but he had erred in trying to tell God what to do" (p. 3:605). Job was innocent until he started to tell God what to do. It seems to be

common today for Christians to commit the same mistake—when expressing anger in prayer they begin to tell the Lord what He has to do.

When God perceived that Job was about to sin against Him, He really called Job's attention to the matter (Job 38:2; 40:2, 3), and, in order to have the answer to his prayer, Job needed to humble himself and repent. As McKenna (1986) says, "Job needs to confess each of these deficiencies. Although he has not sinned, his pride has taken him perilously close to blasphemy when he demands that God come down to his level of power and understanding." McKenna yet suggests that God might have had Job in mind when He closes His speech with the warning about Satan "He is king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34). I believe that pride is one of the most voracious sins among the human race. McKenna notes that "confessing that he is weak, unwise, wordy, and unworthy, Job progresses to an affirmation of faith that is big enough to include the question, Why do the innocent suffer?" (pp. 310, 311). Until today, we don't have an answer that satisfies the sufferer but we know that it is going to be over when sin will finally not exist anymore (Rev 21:26, 27). God answered Job's prayer of anger, because he surrendered to God, recognizing His power and justice over whatever happens on the face of the earth.

### Prayer as Ongoing Conversation or Dialogue

Randy Hatchet (1991) states that the Old Testament reveals Israel as a nation born of prayer. In his view, "prayer in the scripture involves a conversation between God and people, especially when there was a partnership covenant" (p. 1170). God always enjoys covenants with the ones who love Him and delights in having conversations with His

children. Observing the way God communicates with the patriarchs and the prophets, we can realize that God is an interactive God and loves to interact with His children, responding to their prayers (Gen 16:12-14; 18:27; 19:14; 24:7).

### **Moses' Conversation with God**

Moses had conversations with God (Exod 3:1-22). This was the way he was called to the great mission of leading the people of Israel out from Egypt. And according to Paschall and Hobbs (1972), "This came directly from God by angelic messenger in the incident of 'the burning bush'" (p. 55). I particularly think that it was a message straight from the Lord, not from an angelic messenger, as Paschal says. We can observe that from the bush the voice said, "I am the God of your father" (Exod 3:5, 6), and when Moses heard that it was the God of his father (Yahweh), he was afraid in such a way that he hid his face thinking he could be destroyed. Cabal, Brand, and Clendenen (2007) explain it by saying that who appeared to Moses at the burning bush was the Lord Himself (v. 4). The assumption that it was an angel is based on the fact that the Hebrew word used is *mal'ach*, which means "messenger." But they argue that "one does not have to think of the 'angel'" here as falling into some unscriptural stereotype. Perhaps both expressions are simply different ways of referring to the one God. In conclusion, Cabal, Brand, and Clendenen claim that "the intimate relationship between the Lord and the Angel of the Lord hints at the relationship demonstrated in the NT between God the Father and God the Son" (see John 10:30) (p. 87).

That was only the beginning of God's dialogue with Moses; the conversation of Moses with God was so important that it lasted his whole life. Particularly along the

journey in the desert with the people of Israel, we can see them often speaking with each other (Exod 3:1-7:7; 20:1-24; 32:11-13; Num 11:1-11). On one of these occasions, Moses and God were together for 40 days and 40 nights (Exod 24:18). This dialogue was so good that I believe Moses and God are still having this exchange of ideas in heaven today (Matt 17:3).

The commentator Randall C. Bailey (2007) outlines some of Moses objections in the beginning of their conversation and points out the response of God. See figure 1.

Table 1

*Dialogue between Moses and Yahweh*

<b>Moses' Objections</b>	<b>Yahweh's Responses</b>
Moses was unworthy, 3:11	Yahweh would be with Moses, 3:12
Moses did not know God's name, 3:13	God revealed His name, 3:14, 15
The people would not listen, 4:1	Yahweh gave signs, 4:2-9
Moses was not eloquent, 4:10	Yahweh would be with Moses, 4:12
Yahweh had not kept His promise, 5:22-23	Yahweh repeated the promise, 6:1-8
The Egyptians would not listen, 6:12	Yahweh repeated the mission, 6:13, 26, 27
Moses is not eloquent, 6:30	Yahweh appointed Aaron as speaker, 7:1-7

When we pray and have a dialogue with God, we will always hear what the Lord wants to say. Ellen G. White (1892) says that “prayer is talking to God as to a friend” (p. 93). The Senior Pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church, Dwight Nelson (1993), suggests that

talking to God as to a friend requires a dialogue, a conversation with speaking and listening. Unfortunately, many of the prayers being offered today sound like repetitious monologues. Considering White's statement, Nelson asks the following question, "Isn't talk between friends a two-way conversation or communication?" (p. 15).

Along with Nelson, I also trust that when we pray, we should talk and listen for God's response. Moses had this privilege and when he heard God's voice, he respectfully obeyed Him, and the result was powerful. An honorary priest, Browning (1997), states that prayer is "the act of communicating in words or in silence with the transcendent God." Abraham, Moses, and many others had this kind of communication. (Gen 15:1-6; Exod 3:1-4; 33:11; 1 Sam 3: 4-9). In the same way Michael Paul Johnson (2010, October) defines prayer as an intimate, personal contact with our Father in Heaven. "It is heart-to-heart conversation with our loving God."

Matthew Henry (1996) states that "God, having spoken to Moses, allows him also the liberty of speech, which he here improves; and, Moses objects to God's directions, declaring his own insufficiency for the service for which he was being called" (Exod 3:11-15). What made Moses attend the call was the fact that he kept in conversation with God. Communication with God always gives an alternative to fulfilling the purpose that He has for each one of us. It is through God's voice that we will know what to do in difficult times. The church can survive, the church can revive, the church can be re-ignited by the power of this communication, talking, and listening to what God wants to say.



## Reflective Prayer

There is a prayer that is a reflection of what has happened, is going on, and an exploration of why and what should be the response to that particular situation. A noted commentator on preaching, Shelley (1995), makes an assumption that the prayer following a sermon tends to be reflective, The worshiper now has the chance to reflect on what was said and can take the opportunity to make a decision. He states that “a sermon connects God’s Word to a worshiper’s life. It is appropriate for the worship leader to end a sermon with a reflective prayer, focusing on the desired response. Silence is helpful here, giving the listener a chance to think through what he or she will do about what has been said” (p. 213).

### **Isaiah’s Reflective Prayer**

James Smith (1996) calls Isaiah’s reflective prayer a *Reflection by Zion (26:7–15)*. He comments that “Isaiah entered into reflective prayer as he contemplated the benefits of God’s judgments.” He states that Isaiah first “noted that the way the righteous travel through life becomes level as a result of the just judgments of the Lord.” But, if obstacles and dangers appear in the way, they are removed. Second, Smith affirms that in Isaiah’s reflection, “during their earthly pilgrimage, the righteous wait for God to perform his judgments.” And third, he observes that the saints are sustained in their patience by recalling God’s memorial name. The name Yahweh, meaning He who is The Eternal, was associated with victory over oppressors ever since the days of the Exodus (Isa 26:7f.). In other words, James Smith is saying Isaiah was reflecting on God’s judgment, and perceived that He was just for the righteous and for the wicked at the same time. I believe

that such reflection is important for the Christian life, because, in order to follow God, we have to be sure of His righteousness and desire to be like Him. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary (1978a) adds that this desire should be not only a desire to be like God, but to be with God.

The commentator says that in Isaiah's reflection about God's name he came to the conclusion that "the earnest desire of God's people is for a fuller manifestation of His will that they may walk in His ways and fulfill His purposes." He affirms that Isaiah was reflecting on God's character and with his soul yearning for God in the same way that the psalmist related in Pss. 42:1, 2; 62:1, 5; and 63:1, 5, 6. And, he insists that men and women do not realize that only the knowledge and communion with God can fulfill the emptiness of the soul. The lack will remain, because nothing in and of this world will fully supply the need (p. 213). When we reflect on God's name and His knowledge, the filling will automatically take place in our hearts.

I believe that using the reflective way of prayer is going to help us fulfill what the Bible says—by the contemplation on Jesus Christ we will be transformed into His image (2 Cor 3:18). Ellen G. White (1891, August 4, par. 3) says that "by beholding, we become changed. Through close study and earnest contemplation of the character of Christ, *his image is reflected in our own lives*, and a higher tone is imparted to the spirituality of the church" (emphasis mine). Along with White, I think that reflective prayer blesses not only the individual with personal transformation, but also the church will have increased in spirituality and consequently in growth.

The Paleo-orthodoxy theologian, Thomas Clark Oden (1989), states that Ignatius Loyola suggests a powerful approach to contemplative prayer. He explains that the

method is a step-by-step procedure that takes the worshipper through topics, such as the Ten Commandments, seven cardinal sins, three powers of the soul, and five senses of the body. He says that contemplative prayer is a remarkably comprehensive, yet condensed, way of entry into the life of prayer (p. 65). Basically, reading, meditating and praying compose Ignatius's method. Although St. Ignatius provided a very important idea, I agree with Odeon that the method is condensed. Considering the importance of the understanding of the Bible, I suggest that some adaptation could be included, opening up the window of biblical topics for reflective prayer.

According to the author Ellen G. White (1896; 2002), through a reflective imagination of what God has done or created we can get marvelous lessons for our life. She states, "Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons" (p. 1).

Ellen G. White (1892) also says that we cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study. She says that some portions of Scripture are indeed too plain to be misunderstood, but there are others whose meaning does not lie on the surface to be seen at a glance. And, in order to understand, she declares that scripture must be compared with scripture, followed by careful research and *prayerful reflection*. And as a result of this exercise, the student of the Bible will be richly rewarded. She compares biblical discovery to the miner who discovers a precious metal concealed beneath the

surface of the earth. Concluding, she says that the words of inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as streams flowing from the fountain of life (pp. 90, 91).

In view of the magnitude of reflective prayer, Dockery, Butler, Church, et al, (1992) say that there are two offensive weapons included in the armor of God (Eph 6:19-20) and both of them are the ones used in the reflective prayer: (1) the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and (2) prayer. Their conclusion is that, the study of the Bible will be more effective when followed with meditative prayer (p. 718). In my personal view, I think one should never open the Word of God without a prayer. Meditative or reflective prayer is very important for personal growth of spirituality and also for the whole church of God.

There are a variety of forms of Christian prayer; for this limited study, we have selected just a few of them. After reflecting on these, we can conclude that Christian prayer, based on the Word of God, will in some way contribute to the growth of the individual and ultimately the church. But, in order to complete this chapter, let us see some samples of prayer that revived or contributed to an intensive growth of the church of God.

### **Prayer for Intensive Interaction in the Old Testament**

#### **Joshua's Prayer**

Joshua's prayer was in a time of distress (Josh 7:1-6), and, until that moment, God was with them and greater battles than Jericho had been won. What happened to Israel at the gates of Ai was something beyond their comprehension, especially to Joshua who wholeheartedly trusted in God's promises. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary

(1978b), states that “Joshua’s faith had led him to expect nothing but victories, and he now seemed to be at a total loss to understand this failure (Josh 7:3)” (p. 208).

Just about to get to the Promised Land, the people of Ai struck Israel down on the slopes. The biblical record says that “at this the hearts of the people melted and became like water” (Josh 7:5). Even the great leaders of God have the risk to sin for lack of comprehension. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary (1978b) explains that “Joshua’s prayer almost takes on the spirit of murmuring and complaining, so characteristic of the children of Israel on numerous occasions” (p. 208). Israel was stopped and could not carry on in God’s purpose. Absolutely, there should be a way to solve the problem. A statement of Ellen G White (1892) says that “prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured . . .” (p. 94). By prayer, Joshua was able to discern sin, remove the obstacle, and conquer the land of Ai toward Canaan (Josh 7:6-9). However, on another occasion, he was destabilized when he did not discern God’s plan because he failed to pray (Josh 9). The lesson to be learned was that without prayer, we do not succeed. As says the researcher of the Old Testament, Keith Leroy Brooks (2009), “We make more haste than good progress in any business when we do not stop to take God along with us and by the Word and prayer to ascertain His will” (p. 46).

Along with Brooks, I believe that prayer is fundamental for the progress of the church and its believers. In the first case of Joshua there was a need of prayer in order to discern what was wrong, who was committing sin. I personally believe that not only Achan needed to repent and be converted but others as well. The church is one body and if one member suffers all the others suffers as well. If one sins, the whole body will be

separated from God. The whole congregation needed to know that it is nothing but sin that separates them from God and if it were not sincerely repented of and put away, would bring disaster, not only upon themselves, but those associated with them.

Matthew Henry (1996) also believes that “by personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accursed thing in our own hearts, and, unless we do this, we must never expect the favor of the blessed God. Let all men know that it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and, if it be not sincerely repented of and forsaken, it will separate eternally” (Josh 7:10-15). Achan had to confess his sin, but it did not let him and his relatives free. They paid a high price for the disobedience of the Lord’s commands. Being stoned and, with his belongings, burned represented the purification that the people of God need in order to inherit the heavenly Promised Land. After the purification, they all followed God’s instructions and conquered the city of Ai. If there was no repentance, there would be no victory, as says Henry.

### Solomon’s Prayer

#### **Prayer for Wisdom**

One of the characteristics of prayer for intensive growth certainly is the request for wisdom. Instead of asking for richness, fame, or power, Solomon humbled himself and asked God for knowledge in order to discern the government issues. King Solomon did please God by praying for wisdom to fulfill his father’s desire and God’s purpose (1 Kgs 3:5-9). Ellen G. White (1917) declares that “Solomon’s wisdom and understanding exceed much, and his largeness of heart is even as the sand that is on the seashore.” She goes on to comment, “Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the

east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men” (p. 31). As a result of his wise request, God gave him not only wisdom but fame, and riches, and power (1 Kgs 4:29-31).

I believe that when the church of God unites in prayer and asks for wisdom in order to save the lost, God is going to give much more than is expected. As a result of the outpouring of His Spirit, the name of God will be glorified through all nations and many souls will turn to Jesus Christ. Talking about spiritual life, Ellen G. White (1915) declares that prayer is the breath of the soul and the secret of spiritual power. In other words, she is saying that the spiritual life needs to be healthy, breathing normally through prayer; otherwise, it would be in a state of stagnation, with a serious risk of dying instantaneously. She also says, “Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the well-spring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience.” If we “neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God, the spiritual faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor” (pp. 254,255).

King Solomon learned the skill of prayer from his father, and while he dedicated his life to prayer and obedience, his kingdom grew intensively. He learned that praying was as essential as breathing. The Bible also compares prayer with breathing. Norman Johnson (2008, April) in a recent study discovered that Jeremiah used the same term in Lamentations 3:55, 56: “I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my *breathing*, at my cry” (KJV, emphasis mine). It sounds like Ellen G. White took the idea from the prophet Jeremiah.

Comparing prayer to breathing is a deep argument in favor of the idea that prayer has to be constant in the life of a church or in the life of a Christian in order to survive, revive or to keep growing intensively. As the prominent writer on prayer, Smith (2010) puts it, “The principle of persevering in prayer applies to every area of the Christian’s life, including our efforts to lead others for Christ” (p. 55). “Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching, we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path,” says Ellen White (1892). She reinforces this statement, reminding us that “we should pray in the family circle, and above all we must not neglect secret prayer, for this is the life of the soul.” She concludes, saying, “It is impossible for the soul to flourish while prayer is neglected. Family or public prayer alone is not sufficient. In solitude let the soul be laid open to the inspecting eye of God” (pp. 78, 98).

### **Solomon’s Prayer for the Temple**

Solomon also prayed for the consecration of the Temple. His prayer in the temple can be qualified as praising with petition of supplications and intercessory prayer. The authors (Freeman & Chadwick, 1998) state that the way Solomon spread out his hands toward heaven indicates that he was using the ancient custom in prayer, not only among the Hebrews, but among the heathen” (p. 240). The allusions to it in classic writing are frequent, and so also are references in the Scriptures (Exod 9:29, 33; 2 Chr 6:12; Ezek 9:5; Job 11:13; Ps 28:2, 44:20, 68:31, 88:9, 134:2, 143:6; and Isa 1:15).

The commentators Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards (1987) affirm that “calling on the Lord, Solomon asked that God’s special presence might be focused in the now completed temple.” And amazingly, when Solomon finished praying, as with Elijah



(1Kgs 18:20-40) and Isaiah (Isa 6), “fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple” (p. 249). When the church leaders are engaged in prayer the glory of the Lord will fill the temple. The temple will become a house of prayer as Jesus said when He chased the moneychangers out of the temple in Jerusalem, “It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matt 21:13).

An expert in church growth and in prayer ministry, Peter Wagner, (1997) suggests that every church should be called a house of prayer (p. 122). The Bible says that when Solomon as a leader prayed, interceding for the people, he observed that the whole nation followed his example and were also praying and giving thanks to the Lord (1 Kgs 8:65, 66). Prayer is definitely a good way to bring people close to God and fulfill His mission. The writer tells us that the two occasions that the Lord appeared to Solomon were very important to our understanding of prayer. The first is at Gibeon, where the young king goes to make sacrifices in the early days of his reign, and he asks for wisdom in order to rule Israel (1 Kgs 3:7-12). The second is when God appears to Solomon again at the moment of the sacrifice (1 Kgs 9:1-9). He came to tell Solomon that prayer for wisdom and God’s protection are important, but without obedience and faith, the temple would be worth nothing (Knowles, 2001, pp. 151, 152).

The immediate appearance of God and His response to Solomon shows us the value of the house of prayer for the people and the importance of God’s presence for the adoration. God’s response to Solomon also shows that the blessings from God are always available, if the leadership and the people keep the covenant with Him. God was

answering Solomon's request (1 Kgs 8:29; 1 Kgs 8:25, 26; 9:6-9 to 1 Kgs 8:33-46; Deut 29:22-24).

The commentators, (Jamieson, Fausset, & Fausset, 1997) state the following:

The record of this second vision, in which were rehearsed the conditions of God's covenant with Solomon and the consequences of breaking them, is inserted here as a proper introduction to the narrative about to be given of this king's commercial enterprises and ambitious desire for worldly glory; for this king, by encouraging an influx of foreign people and a taste for foreign luxuries, rapidly corrupted his own mind and that of his subjects, so that they turned from following God, they and their children. (1Kgs 9:6)

What happened to the temple of Solomon and to Jerusalem is a type of what is happening with so many temples today—they are becoming desolate, only old buildings abandoned by the people, serving as museums, a reminder of the past.

## Elijah's Prayers

### **Elijah's Prayer for Encouragement**

The situation that Elijah encountered was not the best one; he met a widow with her son about to die because there was no food and no source of income. In her mind, apparently there was no hope. "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die" (1 Kgs 17:12). The situation turned worse, when, after God's first miracle of providing them food, the boy got sick and died. God performed the miracle of the resurrection when Elijah prays for His power (1 Kgs 17:19-22). This story of Elijah, say Richards & Richards (1987), teaches us two important lessons. First, the teaching of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us today our daily bread" (Matt 6: 5-15). It means that our needs

will always be supplied when we trust in God's power. And second, we should not be worried about tomorrow, but trust a Heavenly Father to whom we are important (Matt 6:28-34) (p. 262). Although I agree with the two lessons learned in this story, there is still one more lesson—do not attribute to God the disgraces that happen to us, because God cannot be good and bad; He is totally good or totally bad. The apostle Paul says, "In all things God works for the good" (Rom 8:28).

### **Elijah's Prayer for Rain**

Three years without rain and the people did not recognize the power of the Lord. Instead, they were accusing and persecuting the prophets of God and the order went out to kill them. Elijah followed the instructions of the Lord and went back to meet with the king and present a proposition, the first goal of the proposal was to determine who the true God was, but I think the main reason was to convert Israel from Baal to God.

Then Elijah said to them,

I am the only one of the LORD's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God. (1 Kgs 18:22-24)

We can read the narrative in the Bible, but The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary (1978b) describes the day, "For long and noisy hours the priests of Baal had gone through their violent and excited leapings and screamings, praying wildly, muttering incoherently, but with no results." The false prophets were tired and so were the people. They were longing for the time of the true God. Elijah humbly and gently, claimed for the true God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob. Nichol comments that Elijah

spoke to Him quietly and reverently, in striking contrast to the frenzied shrieks of the prophets of Baal. The commentator adds that when the expression, “Let it be known,” was said in the prayer by Elijah, “it was utterly simple, utterly sincere, without excitement, straight to the point, and right from the heart.” The expression “turned their heart” demonstrates that the principal reason for Elijah’s prayer was the conversion of Israel, for whom Baal had become their object of worship. It was an invitation for Israel to turn back to God (vol. 2, p. 820). One of the principal reasons to pray is to rescue and save the lost in intercessory prayer. When we pray with the right reason, that of obeying God’s instructions, like David’s prayer; “In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple, he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears” (Ps 18:6), God is always faithful to His faithful children (Pss 5:12; 34:17; 37:39; 58:11; Prov 12:21).

### Isaiah’s Prayer

#### **Isaiah’s Prayer and His Call**

According to the commentators Richard, & Richards (1987), the year that Isaiah saw the Lord “was 739 B.C. It was the twelfth year of Jotham’s co regency, three years after the death of Israel’s great king, Jeroboam II. According to tradition this may have been the actual year in which, on the banks of the Tiber River across the Mediterranean, Rome was founded!” (p. 366). Ellen G. White (1917) comments that the situation of Israel was economically bad, morally corrupted, spiritually dead, “Even the magistrates, whose duty it was to protect the helpless, turned a deaf ear to the cries of the poor and needy, the widows and the fatherless. See Isa 10:1, 2” (p. 306).

When Isaiah was called, we can see immediately the need of repentance, cleansing, and commitment in prayer (Isa 6). As we read the record of Isaiah's transforming vision, we are impressed with the prophet's solemnity regarding his first vision. His response to the magnificent Lord is short. Certainly, to be in the presence of such a powerful God was a privilege but a big responsibility as well. Remaining quiet would be eloquence.

According to the scholar Herbert Lockier (1959), the Lord's meeting with Isaiah could be considered a three-fold vision granted by the prophet. Lockier states that "following upon the revelation of the glory of the Lord there came confession, cleansing, and commission." This is the kind of prayer that every Christian should have in order to achieve God's purpose.

First Lockier (1959) emphasizes the vision of the throne (Isa 6:1-4), regarding the *reverence* that we have to have before the almighty God when confessing the sins. Second, he suggests the *vision of the heart* (Isa 6:5-7), because Isaiah pronounced some woes upon others but one of them was about him. "Woe is me" is his cry as he unconditionally *prays for cleansing* after confession (Isa 6:5). Third, Lockier points out the *vision of a sphere* (Isa 6:8-13). Isaiah would need such a vision in order to see the whole angle of the heavy duty he would be committed to. He states that today God needs men and women with the kind of vision that Isaiah had in order to fulfill the mission of the Lord (p. 130).

## **Prayer for Intensive Growth in the New Testament**

### **New Way to Pray**

There is a rich treasure of prayer in the New Testament, but we do not need further evidence than the Old Testament presents of the facts that God can answer our prayers. As says Lockier (1959), “From Genesis to Malachi, we have ample proof of prayer being fully answered by God” (p. 173). I would say that we have many different kinds of prayer and all of them necessary for the growth of the church of Christ.

In the New Testament, we also have many examples of prayer, but now with a new scope, considering that we have the greatest model “Jesus Christ our Savior Lord.” As says the apostle Paul, “Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2), He Himself said, “If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14, NKJV).

### **Jesus’ Model of Prayer**

Prayer in the New Testament has become known as the Christian Prayer. H. Lockier states that the people of the Old Testament were used to coming directly to God and were accepted through the future propitiatory sacrifice of Christ (Lockier, 1959). He also says, “The full merit of the cross could not be pleaded until Christ’s atonement was complete, and that now we can rely upon Jesus’ declaration, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you’” (John 16:23). Lockier concludes by stating that the New Testament believer has one more prayer-advantage that the Old Testament did not have and that is the fact that Jesus pledges to act on our behalf as our personal intercessor: “I will pray the Father” (John 14:16; Heb 7:25). This revelation he affirms, the Old Testament believer never had (p. 174). Jesus’

teachings in the New Testament inspire prayer. In the four gospels, we find evidences that Jesus believed prayer to be a working power in the life of a believer. He called our attention to the fact that the life of Jesus was marked by prayer, starting early in his boyhood (Luke 2:39-52), at His baptism (Luke 3:21), in the mountain of the temptation (Matt 4; Mark 1; Luke 4), when choosing the disciples (Luke 6:12), and throughout His ministry of preaching, healing (Luke 4:18-21; 5:12-16; Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45), expelling demons (Mark 9:29), teaching (Luke 11:2-4; 18:1; Matt 6:9-15), on the mount of transfiguration (Matt 17:1-13), resurrecting the dead (John 11:41), in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36, 38.), during His crucifixion (Matt 27:1-66), during the Last Supper, and after the resurrection (Mark 3:13). We can see in the four gospels that Jesus' life was filled with regular and intensive prayer (Matt 6:5; 14:23; Mark 1:35). In the book of Luke, the author emphasizes, how Jesus was guided by the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:22; 4:1, 14, 18; Luke 10:21; Acts 10:38). A life guided by the Holy Spirit can only be achieved through a daily relationship. If Jesus Christ needed the Holy Spirit, how much more we, as His followers, should through prayer and devotion seek the Holy Spirit. (D. Smith, 2010, p. 18) overlooks what I consider an important point; when Paul urges us to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18, NKJV) and to be "renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16, NKJV), prayer is not one of the needed components (p. 18) but prayer alone is the most relevant.

### **Prayer in the Book of Acts**

The book of Acts is well known for the narrative of the prayer movement in order to begin the Christian church. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to

the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Matthew Henry (1996) comments that “they continued *in prayers, after* the Spirit was poured out, as well as before, while they were waiting for him, they continued instant in prayer; for prayer will never be superseded till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise.” He states that the fellowship, the *breaking of bread*, comes in between the *work* and *prayer*, for it has reference to both, and is a help to both (Mathew, 1996 Ac 2:42–47).

The early believers prayed for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14); they prayed in regards to the choice of their leaders (Acts 1:24; 6:6; 13:3), for discernment (Acts 4:24-30; 12:5, 12); getting ready to ask for healing (Acts 9:40; 28:8); and to call with passion upon God’s name.

Along the same lines, Hatchet (1991) declares that prayer is the first act and true mark of a believer (Acts 2:21; 9:14-21; and 22:16). I believe Ellen G. White (1915) was right when she declared that “prayer is the breath of the soul” (p. 254, 255). She also states, “The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship” (Ellen G. White, 1911; 2002, p. 37).

### **Paul’s Constant Prayer**

Herbert Lockier (1959) notes that the New Testament show that Paul’s ministry reflected his constant prayer of intercession (1 Tim 2:1; Eph 1:16; 5:4; Acts 9:11). He states that Paul’s life of prayer was so continuous that “to him prayer was more than a doctrine, it was a dynamic.” In other words, prayer is what made his ministry so powerful



(p. 238). By observing a church's prayer meetings, members are used to thinking about prayer as a way to get their personal wishes accomplished. Nevertheless, we ought to comprehend prayer as a process of praising, adoring and knowing God, in order to come into His presence, allowing Him to change us. Actually, I suggest that we need to find out how to pray and repent, and how to request God's favor privately and comparatively.

John F. Walvoord et al (1983) found out that Paul's prayer was in its majority dedicated to praise the victory of the saints, give thanks for them (cf. Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3) and to make requests for them (cf. Phil 1:4; Col 1:9; 1 Thess 1:3) (Walvoord et al., 1983, Eph 1:16). May our prayer be intensive and constant in the Lord Almighty, for "what joy for those whose strength comes from the LORD" (Ps 84:5 NLT).

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE: REIGNITING THE LIFECYCLE OF PLATEAUIING CHURCHES

According to the researcher and author Alan Nelson (2006, july/august) every year, more than 6,000 congregations close their doors. Nelson affirms that predictions are that in the next few years, tens of thousands of churches will cease to exist. He explains that many of these closures are the direct result of an unwillingness to dream new dreams and develop new approaches to ministry.

The task of this chapter is to review the literature from 2000-2010 on the theme of reigniting the lifecycle of plateauing churches, comparing and contrasting the scholars' ideas in dialogue with the author of this research. In some cases, older works will be referenced if the material was thought to be relevant. The principal intention is to create a foundation for recommending new ideas and develop a strategy that will help redirect the declining cycle of plateauing churches.

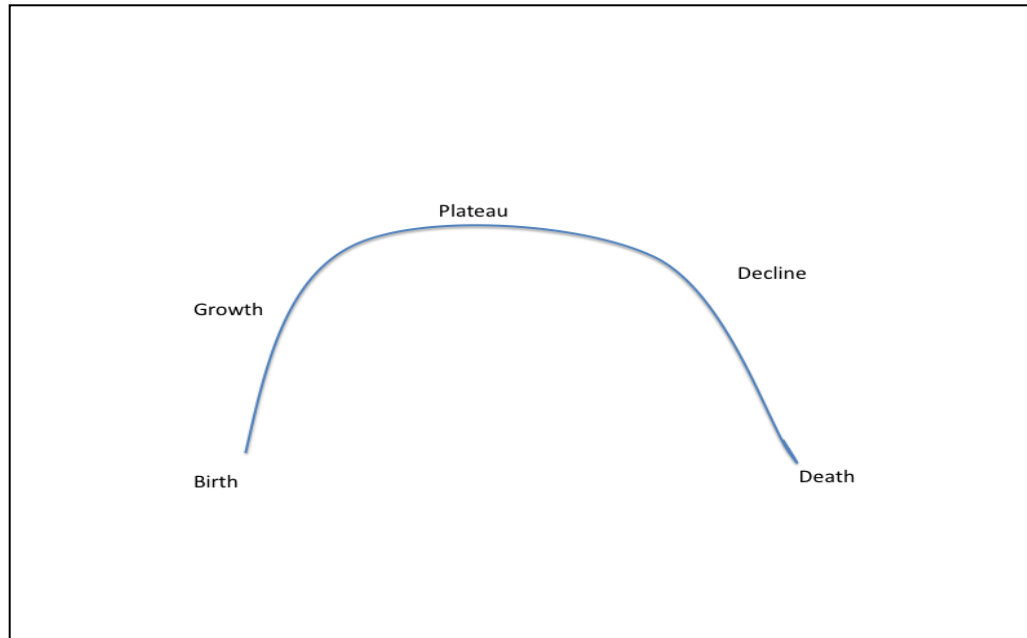
#### **The Lifecycle of Churches**

As mentioned in Chapter One, McIntosh (2001) suggests that most churches go through a normal lifecycle. They experience a period of birth and growth, followed by a period of

flat development or a plateau, and then eventually a decline and death (pp. 25-26) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

*Typical church cycle*



Some of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brazil are following this cycle. As a result of Conferences' investment in church planting and evangelism, there has been fast-paced birth and growth in many regions of the country. While these younger churches are in the exciting stages of birth and growth, some of the older churches in several places are beginning to plateau. If this trend continues unchecked, the churches that have begun to plateau will inevitably begin a slow decline toward death. Previous pastoral experiences with plateauing churches suggest that a potential contributing factor

to older churches reaching a state of plateau is the lack of a prayer-based evangelism strategy that keeps the members on fire for their own salvation and the salvation of others.

McIntosh (2001) also states that it takes 20 to 25 years for a church to grow to maturity. After it has reached its goals, there are no more challenges, and the members start to think that they no longer need to set up new goals or new projects; they are in a comfort zone. McIntosh states, “There is a slowing of growth as the church moves into a maintenance mode of ministry.” He added, “If this plateauing church is left unchallenged, the eventual result is decline and often death of the church” (p. 28). He also affirmed that most plateauing churches remain in that state for 50 to 60 years.

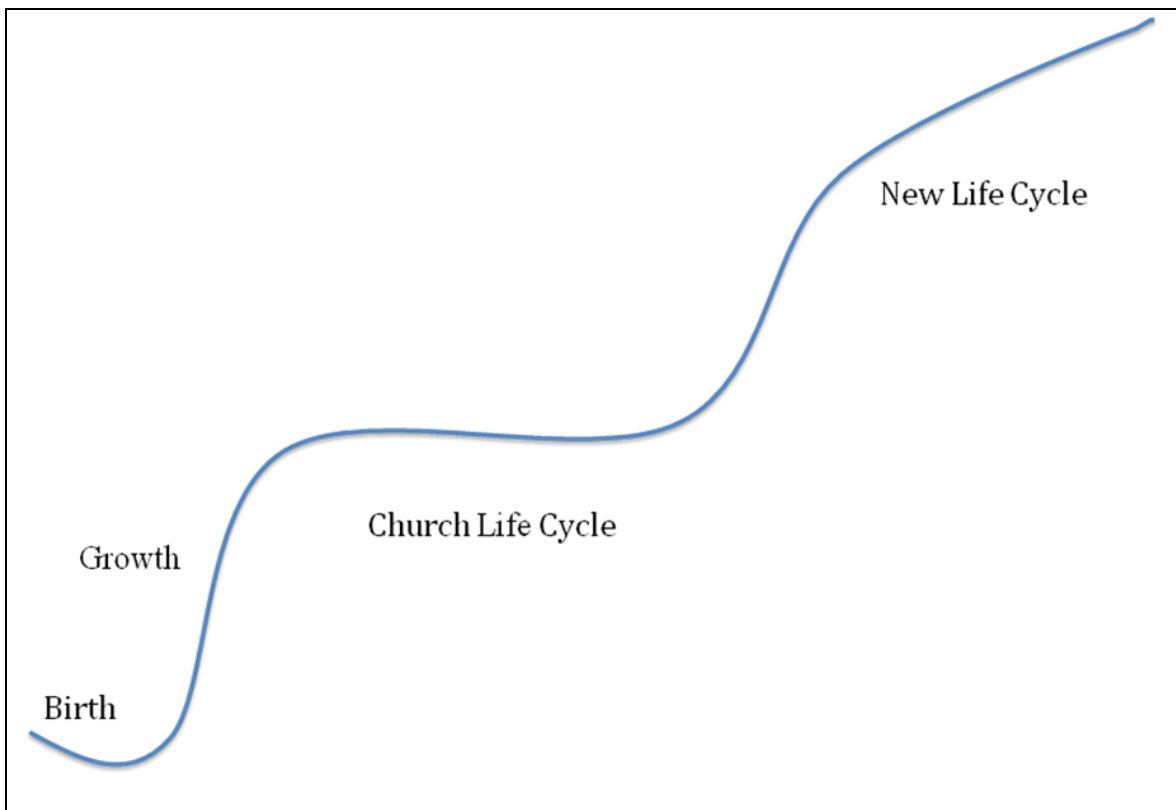
McIntosh (2001) named the plateau stage “St. John’s Syndrome,” after the part of Revelation when the apostle John had the vision of the seven churches, ending with Laodicea’s church. The Bible says (Rev 3:14-22) that the church was neither hot nor cold and the Lord was about to throw it up out of His mouth; concerning the seventh church, John declares, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Rev 3:16, 17). I believe that, although McIntosh does not see it in the complete light of the prophecy, this passage offers a fabulous illustration of the plateauing church.

So, what does McIntosh recommend in order to avoid the fatal doom of the church? He says, “Unfortunately, though, most of the churches never replace the dream of paying off the church mortgage with a new vision for the future. Thus the church begins to plateau, which leads to an eventual decline.” So, the key to overcoming St. John’s Syndrome is to rediscover the church’s values and then develop a new dream for

the future based on those values. And he adds, “The lifecycle of a church with a new dream would look like this . . . ” (p. 31) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

*Projected lifecycle of a growing church*



In the new lifecycle of the church suggested by (McIntosh, 2001), the members will have to “look back in order to leap forward.” McIntosh mentions a very important weapon to keep fighting the enemy and enabling the church to grow; he says, “powerful

prayer is essential for a powerful plan” (p. 43). In other words, planning with faith in God and human motivation and effort, the church will grow powerfully.

Rick Warren (1995), the pastor of a mega church in Saddleback, California, agrees with McIntosh. Warren says that prayer is absolutely essential for any church that wants to grow. Every step of Saddleback’s development has been bathed in prayer. Warren also states that every program of his church has a prayer team praying while the service is going on. He thinks that a ministry without prayer is a ministry without power. Although Warren elevated the value of prayer, he declares that it takes far more than prayer to grow or keep on growing a church; he says that it is necessary to develop skills and act on them in order to constantly keep growing the church of God (pp. 58, 59).

Joshua offers a clear biblical example of what Warren and McIntosh are saying. After the Israelites under Joshua’s leadership were struck by the men of Ai, he devoted himself and the leaders to prayer and supplication. They were in this desperate state of prayer when God told Joshua to stop praying about failure, get up, and start correcting it instead (Josh 7).

### Prayer and Intensive Growth

One of the noted authorities on this subject is prayer evangelist Ed Silvano (2000). He concentrates all his efforts on prayer in order to save the lost. He uses the example of the early church, saying that through prayer and evangelism, the disciples shook the entire city of Jerusalem in only a few weeks. Silvano believes in the statement Jesus made when He said that if we believe in Him, we would do greater work than He did while He was on the earth (John 14:12). Silvano says that this is a key passage for answering one of

the most difficult questions: “Why is the church today doing such a poor job of fulfilling the Great Commission compared to the early church? Silvosio answers: Surely it was not easy for the disciples to preach the gospel in the city where Jesus Christ was crucified together with two criminals, but “nevertheless, Jerusalem was reached and soon the gospel spread to all Judea and Samaria and beyond until all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord.” He declares that the early church understood something that the modern church has not yet learned: “They could do greater works than Jesus did” (Acts 19:10), (p. 48). Silvosio emphasizes the method for reaching the cities, using the biblical example of the apostle Paul, who according to him, taught us about prayer evangelism. He says that the apostle Paul admonishes us to pray for everyone everywhere (1 Tim 2:1-8). The author also affirms that Paul is telling Timothy that this “statement is so reliable” that “everyone in the city will accept it.” Ed Silvosio justifies this assumption, saying that all the people will at least know the truth and accept the truth but not all of them will give their heart to Jesus, accepting Him as their personal savior (p. 56).

Peter Wagner (1997), another noted scholar, agrees with Silvosio, saying that he “believes that the cities of the world have become the primary target for planning evangelistic strategy as we move into the twenty-first century.” Wagner concentrates his writing on beautiful stories of people who believed in prayer ministry as a tool of evangelism everywhere, but especially in the cities. He believes that, just as Israel knocked down the wall of Jericho and won the city through the power of prayer, we can do the same today. He attests that it is biblical to pray for the lost, even though the lost do not know you are praying for them. “Prayer is the most tangible trace of eternity in the human heart. Intercessory prayer on behalf of the felt needs of the lost is the best way to

open their eyes to the light of the gospel.” Wagner also states, “Working together in harmony, city pastors and city intercessors are an unbeatable combination” (pp. 161, 165, 170).

Mark Mittelberg (2000), a passionate expert on church growth, says that just as “people matter to God,” they should matter to us. If the members of a plateauing church remember this value, their church will immediately start to grow and turn into a “contagious church.” It is a pity when church leadership ignores this issue and pays more attention to problems or other programs that do not reverse the declining situation. Mittelberg affirms that “when this value really takes root,” everything in the church starts to change, beginning with the calendars, because the calendar expresses exactly what we care about each day. The core value of a church must be concerned for the lost, and we can see the core value of heaven, “God so loved the world” (John 3:16). Through this statement, Mittelberg suggests that, when we also love the world (in terms of passion for people), we are able to do anything that our Father asks in order to accomplish the mission of saving the lost (p. 35).

Another fact that Mittelberg mentions is an exemplary evangelistic life in the heart of the leader. When the value of caring for the lost has slipped, the leader must be the first to admit it and try to open the eyes of the church to see and admit it as well. Mittelberg states, “The most natural thing to do after admitting to yourself that the value of evangelism has slipped is to talk to God.” Surely he is right, because prayer will warm you up, and you will warm the others.



Mittelberg applies the following prayer formula that pastors and lay ministers would do well to emulate; using four words forming an acronym through the word *A.C.T.S.*, as follows:

He states that *adoration* is a moment that you exalt the name of God, give glory to Him for all the things you remember that God created for the benefit of mankind and thank Him for His love, protection, maintenance, forgiveness, and salvation for the lost, including us. He also uses the word *confession*, which is the part of the prayer when you confess your failure to “love lost people in the way He does.” Mittelberg mentions that the Lord moved the earth and heavens in order to save all of us. He argues that we should confess that we lose so many opportunities to preach the gospel every day whenever we meet someone that may be lost on the avenue to hell. Confess how selfish you have been, and ask for forgiveness. I think he is right—because of our selfishness, we do not care very much about the needs of others.

*Thanksgiving*—in prayer the believer should thank the Lord for the payment Jesus made on the cross that extends to all of us today. Express the gladness for the privilege of being part of the family of God, for the honor of serving Him and having the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of other people.

He concludes saying that *supplication* is the part of prayer where the Christian really supplicates for God’s mercy in order to make himself passionate about loving those around him and asks God to help when he/she sees someone to remember to love him with the love and passion of God. Also, affirms Mittelberg, the believer should ask Him for expertise and skills in order to evangelize whoever is open to hear the Good News of salvation, and plead for God to help him to abide in Christ and bear much fruit. In Jesus’

name, finalize the prayer (pp. 93, 94). This model of prayer is often met in Paul's letters; he not only prayed, but also advised the believers to pray with thanksgiving, intercession and supplication (2 Thess 1:3-4; Phil 1:3-14; Eph 3:14-21).

### Praying for a Sister Church

Aubrey Malphurs (2004) believes that whether a church is growing, plateauing, or declining, the remedy is to plant a sister church (p. 256). Although Malphurs states that the remedy for plateauing churches is to plant a sister church, he declares that the first step in the process is prayer, because "those who plant churches" should never forget that they are fighting a spiritual and not a physical fight (Eph 6:10-20). Therefore, they will need to recruit intercessory warriors. There is no doubt that prayer is a fundamental weapon to fight against the enemy (Eph 6:18-20). No one who is going to work for the Lord's army will succeed without praying for the lost. Malphurs says that churches plateau because there is a strong inward selfish focus and they are not looking outward. Along with the author, I think this trend needs to stop and if the church wants to continue fulfilling the great commission of the Lord, it needs to use powerful prayers and powerful strategies to start and sponsor a new church.

He states that when a church decides to plant a new church, it is natural for it to lose some part of its membership. They will become the core cell of the new church; through them, the work of God will take place and be a blessing in the new area. By faith followed with work, the church goes forward; Malphurs suggests that when the mother church sees that its pews are empty, instead of complaining, it should keep on praying and create new strategies in order to fill those places again. In that way, the natural cycle

of the church will be reignited and the members will be happy again and again until Jesus' second coming (pp. 250-257).

Aubrey Malphurs (2004) also states that the mother church's main concern should be prayer for the sister or daughter churches, beginning with the leadership and then the members. He declares that a church will never rise above its leadership. Therefore, if the leadership is not committed to church planting, the membership will also not be committed. If the leadership doesn't pray for sister churches, the membership will not pray either. Malphurs urges that the leadership must set the example for the congregation. A leader should cast the vision for church planting in such a way that will motivate people to pray for the project. He concludes that although it is not realistic to expect someone to state the same burden and to pray to the same extent, the main purpose and goal is to have some people praying all the time (pp. 250-257).

Considering what (McIntosh, 2001) says about the plateauing stage of the lifecycle, a church could take 50-60 years to start declining (p. 28). In apparent disagreement (Malphurs, 2004) affirms that "churches stay plateaued for only a short time. If the church continues to conduct business as usual, it will begin to decline, which is a nice way of describing the death process" (p. 256).

The Central church of Terra Roxa state of Parana, Brazil, was plateaued for more than 40 years and never declined; then, a new pastor came with a new vision and planted a sister church. The members became full of enthusiasm, praying and glorifying the Lord. I was ministering to another church that was transitioning from plateauing to declining, to a point where the conference almost had to close that church; however, that measure

motivated the members in such a way that two years later they were as alive and organized as they were before.

Considering the apparent disagreement of Malphurs and McIntosh, I would say that both are right. The difference between the ideas is the mindset of the leadership which acted, implementing new ideas in order to change the lifecycle of the church in different times. In other words, the church that is dying can be revived at any time, depending on the response of the leadership. There is no disease that the power of the Holy Spirit cannot heal (John 16:5-15, 23; Gal 5:16-26; Acts 2:1-13). However, it is possible that if the leadership's response is negative toward the illness, that church will surely die.

Malphurs (2004) comments that sometimes the only solution for declining churches is to advise the people to congregate in some other place, sell the property, and invest in evangelistic work somewhere else. Another option is to close the church for a period of six months, refurbish the facility, and plant a new work with a new vision and perspective for the neighborhood in order to attract people in a different manner. Malphurs believes that even dying churches can be involved in starting a new work (p. 256).

Malphurs may be right in his final statement above, but I believe that the measures mentioned by him should be the last alternative after trying to change the leadership. The fact is that in churches that are in decline or plateauing, the leadership should change their mind or they should be replaced. Prayer is the best way to prepare hearts for any needs or changes.

## The Radical Prayer

I really believe that situations of plateauing or dying churches should be confronted only with resolute radical prayers. Examples: The church of Cascavel Parana, Brazil, was shaken when it started the movement of 40 days of prayer in 2005. Many miracles happened. One man decided to pray for a prisoner that was studying the Bible and was very interested in living a righteous life. When the journey of prayer was almost over the man that was condemned to 23 years of prison was released with no explanation. He got out of jail, came straight to the church, asked to be baptized and became a valuable missionary of that church. Another church in Mount Vernon, New York, USA, in 2008, also decided to launch the 40 days of prayer journey. One man that was going through a painful divorce who did not belong to that church was traveling in order to get as far as possible away from his wife. When he was passing near that church he felt compelled to stop and go to church. He participated in the 40 days of prayer, praying for his home and his wife. And as a result of that decision, at the end of the journey, he and his family came and shared a wonderful testimony of conversion.

Derek J. Morris (2008), the senior pastor of Forest Lake church in Orlando, Florida, discovered a radical way to pray (the utterance of your heart). He relates the results of his research and experience with prayer ministry. The most impressive finding was the radical prayer on behalf of people considering that we work for the Lord of the harvest: “When you give the Lord of the harvest permission to involve you in His harvest, as a lamb among wolves, He asks you to demonstrate an attitude of radical dependence.” Morris complements this with the instructions found in Luke 10:4: “Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals.” In other words, Morris is saying if we want to

fulfill God's purpose in our lives, if we pray a radical intercessory prayer while really believing in Jesus' power, we will accomplish it (p. 65). Gary L McIntosh (2001) says that when the church is in a state of plateau it is because it was contaminated by the syndrome of St. John. He says that the apostle John talks about it in Revelation when he mentions the characteristics of the Laodicea Church. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm; neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Rev 3:15, 16) (p. 31). The church of Laodicea should never be conformed to the lukewarm situation. According to the authors of the book *Comeback Churches*, Ed Stetzer and Mike Dobson (2007), churches that are in a state of plateau should establish strategic prayer emphasis in their communities. They quote Roger Lipe, pastor of the first Baptist church in Woodlawn, Illinois, who met the church almost dead, and through specific emphasis in prayer the dead church that was in debt of \$109,000, in a year and a half, paid the whole amount. According to the pastor, "Giving continues to increase, and the once-dead church is alive and ministering effectively to the community around them" and Stetzer added, "His attitude toward change and belief in the power of prayer caused others to believe" (pp. 70, 71). They prayed radically in order to reignite the lifecycle of the church and that was their secret.

McIntosh also suggests, "A powerful prayer is essential for a powerful plan and dream." He mentions that prayer in plateauing churches is often left out of the planning processes (pp. 43, 44). Solomon tried the radical prayer in order to be a great king and build the temple of the Lord, and God warned him and the people saying, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn

from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14). Prayer was Solomon’s secret.

The Bible says that Joshua, after the disappointment of the city of Ai, was again an example of how someone overcame the plateauing situation through a process of radical prayer. Joshua was so radical that the Lord had to instruct him to stop praying, stand up, and accept that God would be with him. Look at his prayer: “Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening” (Josh 7:6, 10). Hannah, in the temple, was so radical that the priest thought that she was out of her mind (1 Sam 1:10-15). But the radical prayer revigorating her dream brought into existence one of the greatest prophets of Israel.

#### As God Sees

(Yancey, 2006) agrees with Morris (2008) when he tells the story of Mike and his friend, two students who decided to live on the street and who had a radical experience helping the people around them through intercessory prayer. Yancey also discusses the radical love that involves a person who prays. He used to think of intercessory prayer as bringing to God a request that God did not yet know about, but now he sees intercession as an increase in his own awareness. He states, “When I pray for another person, I am praying for God to open my eyes, so that I can see that person as God does, and then enter the streams of love that God already directs toward that person” (pp. 303, 306, 307).

If a church is in decline or plateauing, the members need to learn how to love one another and pray to intercede for each other. Ellen White (1946) says that in churches that

are not growing, the ministers should train the members to be ambassadors for Christ through training and prayer.

White (1946) cautions that “in laboring where there are already some in the faith, the minister should at first seek not so much to convert unbelievers, as to train the church members for acceptable co-operation.” In other words, she is saying that the pastors should let the believers labor for themselves individually, endeavoring to arouse them to seek for a deeper experience themselves and then, work for others. White concludes, saying, when they are prepared to sustain the minister by their prayers and labors, greater success will attend his efforts (pp. 110, 111).

The Bible also endorses the opinions of the authors cited above. As Ken Anderson (2002) puts it in the words of Matt 11:28-30 and Gal 6:2: “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ (NIV). Anderson says that through prayer and actions we demonstrate care and concern for others in such a way that we will with pleasure and willingness be able to carry somebody else’s burdens. In that way, he affirms that we represent Christ’s Kingdom and become ambassadors of heaven (p. 78).

The professor of Spiritual Formation at Andrews University Seminary, Jon L. Dybdahl (2008), offers an impressive program for anyone who desires to be a true disciple of Jesus. One thing that Dybdahl highlights is God’s invitation to each one of us to have fellowship and a relationship with God and with our neighbors. He says, “God’s people have always been a community—a group of like believers who share and support



each other. This principle is especially important in the spiritual life” (pp. 78, 79). His statement brings us to the assumption that prayer is necessary to save people, especially to melt their hearts with the power of the Holy Spirit, but prayer without a plan or strategy of revival will not hold new believers in the church. It is necessary to create an environment of peace and welcoming in order to make new believers feel welcome in the community. When that happens, we can call it prayer and revival.

### **Prayer and Revival**

According to expert on prayer Edward M. Bounds, many of the failures in revival efforts have been because of a lack of nurture and powerful prayer. He declares that without prayer, a “church is like a body without spirit; it is a dead, inanimate thing. A church with prayer in it has God in it” (Bounds, 1999).

The British evangelist, who conducted evangelistic campaigns in the United States and Great Britain for over 70 years, Gypsy Smith (31 March 1860- 4 August 1947), as mentioned by Paul Lee Tan (1996), says that the best way to start a revival is to “go home, lock yourself in your room, kneel down in the middle of your floor. Draw a chalk mark all around yourself and ask God to start the revival inside that chalk mark.” And concluded, “When He has answered your prayer, the revival will be on” (Missionary Worker).

In his article “Prayer and Revival,” Louis Bartlet (2009, March) defines revival as “the saints getting back to normal.” This means that revival can only happen followed by sanctification, and that will happen if the church gets back to normal. It is time for prayer and revival as at the day of Pentecost.

The pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, Jim Cymbala, (1996, Fall), states that “revival is where you see multitudes getting saved, not coming over from another church because there’s a better program . . . a church loving each other and coming together to pray and call out to the Lord . . . a return to the Book of Acts.” The essence of his definition is that a growing church by transference is not a real growth or revival. The real revival has to do with the real conversion of unbelievers to believers in Jesus Christ following completely His teachings.

### The Importance of the Larger Community over the Individual

According to Ed Stetzer and Mike Dobson (2007), a church revival depends on some elements that are vitally important for church growth: (1) The church should renew the belief in Jesus Christ and the mission of it. (2) The church should renew the attitude for servant-hood. (3) The church should develop strategic prayer efforts.

Stetzer and Dobson state that Homestead Heights Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina, had its name changed to Summit Church in Durham. The change occurred because the formal old church was declining, and according to the local pastor, the reason was the transition of the community around the church. Although the pastor was partially right, the real problem was a lack of commitment toward the current situation and the mission. When they changed the name, they changed their marquee and the community around the church was impacted by the new name and by their actions toward people who lived in the area. As a result of the courage and the new vision of the church, in a few years the attendance increased from 600 to 1600 members. Stetzer and Dobson concluded that the missional motivation elevated the attitude of people toward

servanthood and, through prayer, they were able to sustain firmly the right purpose of the church in that area. “Every time people have prayed seriously, growth has happened” (pp. 56-70).

### Prayer: The Source of Revival

There is no doubt that prayer is the basis of revival. Actually, the secret to revival in every generation is prayer. Frank Beardsley (1904) wrote, “It is possible to have revivals without preaching, without churches, and without ministers, but without prayer a genuine revival is impossible” (p. 309). The early church began with prayer and revival. After Jesus’ death, the disciples were greatly disappointed. The day of Pentecost provided tangible evidence that when the disciples of Jesus prayed, something happened. There were only 120 people praying for the Holy Spirit, and the command of Jesus was simple: He told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for God’s promise to be fulfilled (Acts 1-2).

### Prayer Changes the Individual, Not the Environment

The disciples needed to pray for many things: Peter had denied Jesus (Matt 26:69-75), Thomas had doubted Jesus (John 20:24-29), and the brothers John and James were ashamed because they recalled how they had wanted to have better positions than the others in Jesus’ kingdom (Mark 10:35-45). Indeed, prayer was more than necessary to change their attitudes toward the mission and to move the church to be united and revived; it was essential.

The directors of Concerts of Prayer in Greater New York, Pier and Sweeting (2002), relate that after Jesus’ ascension, He expected the disciples to be praying

together, and they did. They pointed out that the Bible clearly says that the disciples were united through prayer. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14, NKJV). Pier and Sweeting believe that it was the power of prayer that unified the believers and prepared them for action (p. 46).

John Stott (as cited by Pier & Sweeting, 2002, p. 46; 1990) stated that “on the day of Pentecost the whole world was there in representatives of the various nations.” Through prayer the Holy Spirit came down, “each listener heard the gospel proclaimed in his or her own language,” and, as a result of the prayer and union of the disciples, “more than 3,000 were baptized into the early church in one day.” That was an impressive revival.

Peter Masters (2002), author of the book, *Worship in the Melting Pot* (which is a critique of some contemporary movements in the Christian churches), states that the biggest church in the world is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, with more than 850,000 members. Paul Yonggi Cho (1984) states in his book, *Prayer: Key to Revival*, that the only way to start a revival in a church is through prayer. He goes on to explain that receiving and getting to know the Holy Spirit is necessary to getting into a life of prayer. He says that prayer opens the door for the Holy Spirit, and as pastor of the largest church in the world, he could feel the results and the power of a life of prayer.

He also declares that the Holy Spirit can bless and direct when you read the Scripture and witness for Christ. Cho affirms that although the Holy Spirit can anoint you as you preach and teach the word of God, the only way to have an intimate communion with the Holy Spirit is through a life of prayer (pp. 43, 44). Ministering to the largest church in the world, Cho realized that without the power of the Holy Spirit, he could not

do many things. He says that he began by trying to save souls using Bible studies and friendship, but with poor results. Then, he realized that he needed to learn how to reach the Holy Spirit through prayer; his church started to grow and soon became the largest church in the world. Peter Wagner (1992a) defends Cho's movement of prayer and in his presentation about prayer ministry intercession for Christian leaders, mentions that he went to visit Dr. Cho in Korea and saw him as an amazing man of prayer. Wagner relates that they went to the Mountain of Prayer and he thought they were only there for a tour, but when they got there, Pastor Cho said they were going to pray there for an hour. According to Wagner, he was not used to doing that and it was quite hard for him to stay there and pray for an hour, but after that, his way of praying changed.

Both Cho and Wagner are charismatic and, because of that, some are tempted to criticize their method and, for some good reasons, such as their beliefs regarding the gift of tongues and other charismatic issues, we do not accept their ways of praying. But so far, in this conversation, their theology of prayer is biblical and we surely have good things to learn from them. Masters (2002) rigidly criticizes Cho for what he wrote in one of his most recently reprinted books called *The Fourth Dimension* (2000, pp. 36-49). Masters argues that Dr. "Cho teaches that prayer will definitely alter the material world and lead to church growth." But he fails, affirms the writer, to realize that true prayer does not necessarily demand the changing of circumstances or the material world for man; rather, it requires the changing of the attitude of the believer and the submission of his will to God's will. Masters is right when he criticizes Cho, about him giving God orders or commands. Although we have examples in the Bible of men telling God what to do (Josh 10:12, 13), it does not mean that the men have the right to always do exercises

his own will. In Jesus model of prayer, He taught us to pray according to the Father's will. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10). Telling God what to do is not our rule, but the Holy Spirit's duty of intercession for us (Rom 8:26, 27). Although Peter Masters is right, in part in his criticism to Cho, I believe Cho is closer to the ideal biblical kind of prayer than many other traditional Protestant churches. We should have a balanced idea on prayer and we should not fear what people will say if we are following God's biblical model.

### Prayer Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

According to one of the founders of the SDA church, Ellen G. White (1915), after the lay people are trained to pray, they should be prepared to sustain the minister by prayer and labors, and great success will attend his efforts (p. 196). White (1900) also wrote, "The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted." When the people are converted to Jesus Christ, they will have love and passion to save the ones who are lost. In other words, if the church recognizes that we need to be revived in order to succeed in winning souls to Jesus, the church would learn and start a movement of intercessory prayer. As previously mentioned, we have to look back in order to leap forward. White (1915) states that in times past, there were those who fastened their minds upon one soul after another, saying, "Lord, help me to save this soul." This is not happening anymore, she declares. If it happens, such instances are rare (p. 65).

An SDA church planter, Russell Burrill (2001, taped), suggests that the "Seventh-Day Adventist Church is not a denomination but a planting church movement," and he

adds that a movement through prayer and preaching moves all the time. If we have plateauing churches in this movement, they have lost their focus on moving and changing, perhaps the comfort zone is so relaxing that people do not want to be bothered to plant a new church. I agree with Burrill although the SDA Church today seems to be acting more denominationally than as a movement like he suggested.

Burrill is in tune with David J. Bosch (2006) who wrote about the failure of the early church; Bosch says that the early church “ceased to be a movement and turned into an institution.” He affirms that “there are many differences between an institution and a movement. One is conservative and the other is progressive; one is more or less passive, yielding to influences from outside, while the other is active and influences rather than being influenced; one looks to the past, the other to the future.” Bosch includes, “We might add, the one is anxious, the other is prepared to take risks; the one guards boundaries, the other crosses them” (pp. 50, 51).

Is our church becoming institutionalized and happy with the tremendous success it has achieved? Is this why in many countries the churches are aging, there is a lack of goodwill to preach the gospel, there is a lack of love for the ones who are not known, and there is a lack of prayer and revival? There will be no changes if we think we have achieved everything we have dreamed for our church. In fact, while the population is growing so fast, so should our church. If there is a village without a church, we are not done. This philosophy needs to be a part of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs everywhere in the world (Burril, 2001, taped).

Christian Schwarz (as cited in Burrill, 2009) is exalted because of the discoveries about the concept known as “Natural Church Development” (NCD). Burrill says that it

was one of the most exciting developments in church growth over the past decade. He claims that NCD brings the church growth movement back to the principles enunciated in the early days. He says that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White can endorse the eight characteristics identified by Schwarz. The churches that are seeking health can achieve it by putting into practice the NCD eight characteristics (p. 57). According to Burrill, the eight principles of the NCD are (1) Empowering Leadership, (2) Gift-based Ministry, (3) Passionate Spirituality, (4) Effective Structures (5) Inspiring Worship Services, (6) Holistic Small Groups, (7) Need-oriented Evangelism and (8) Loving Relationships. He emphasizes these eight quality characteristics as absolutely essential for those churches that are serious about growth.

Burrill cautions that the right growth to be desired is not only numeric growth but quality healthy growth (pp. 59-62). In my opinion, all eight quality characteristics are essential for a healthy growth, but the eight will not happen if the third one (passionate spirituality) is not a reality first in the heart of the individual Christian. We can definitely be healthy only through the reading of the Scripture, followed by conversation with God and obedience to His Word.

Many churches suffer stagnation of growth because they have already accepted the *status quo* (which means “to keep the things the way they are presently”). The church suffered in order to reach the status of being well-built, having plenty of members and well-established facilities, so the membership is tempted to think that they have everything they need—the church is just the right size. The *first love*, passionate about the church and sharing invitations to others to visit and to join, is over. In other words, the church becomes so satisfied and sophisticated that only certain people are invited to



become a part of the church. Burrill (2009) suggests that there are two different types of churches: one is the extended church and the other is the non-extended church. The extended church comes from their *oikos* (home) with the openness to integrate with others, and become a big family, while the non-extended church is concerned about their own members and does not want to stress themselves, having to start new relationships. He compares the two churches with the simple fishing vessel and the luxury cruise liner. In the fishing vessel, the fish are caught, thrown on the deck, their guts are cut out, and the smell is not the best but everybody is happy. In the luxury cruise liner, if you decide to fish, just before the fish hit the deck you will have to stop by the security office, the luxury cruise liner is happy to have you with them, but will not allow you to bring fish on board, because of the mess and the terrible smell. Burrill concludes, saying that some Seventh-day Adventist churches, after accepting the *status quo* transform themselves from a fishing vessel to a luxury cruise liner, and do not want to fill the *boat* with the bad smell of fish (pp. 71, 72). It is sad, but I have to agree with him; however, at the same time, I think that the point of transition, plateau or new growth, is an opportunity for the leaders of the churches to rethink the vision of the church and find creative ways to change the mentality of the congregation before it is too late.

### Prayer Partners

Steve Barker (1997) defines a prayer partner as “a member of your group with whom you meet regularly for sharing and prayer” (p. 172).

The coordinators of the Prayer Partners Ministry, Shewmake and Shewmake (2010), in the article “Evangelism Prayer Partners,” suggests a strong program of

evangelism prayer. The proposal suggests, “While all prayer partners will pray for the outreach of the church some will especially focus on the evangelistic meetings of the church.” A group of three or more prayer partners should begin praying regularly as soon as the evangelistic meetings are planned and continue throughout the series. Specifically, they need to have some suggestions as to the focus of their prayer times.

The following is a suggested sequence for the prayer partners: First, pray for the people who will be invited to the meetings. This list is compiled from the names of friends and neighbors suggested by church members, referrals from television, radio, Internet, Bible study contacts, etc. Second, pray for the preparations for the meeting: location, equipment, advertising, the evangelist and musicians, etc. Third, pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in preparation for the meetings and during the meetings. Fourth, pray during each meeting for the speaker and all who participate, as well as each person attending the meeting, including members of the church. Fifth, be ready to pray after any meeting with people who need special prayer for healing: spiritually, emotionally, relationally or physically.

Although these suggestions are quite basic, they do make a great difference in an evangelistic meeting, and are necessary in order to keep the devil out of the field and keep the angels of the Lord guarding the lives of the souls.

Prayer partners need to be a strong component of programs where spiritual growth for the members, the church in general, and the community is the focus. One specialist in church growth, Dr. John Maxwell (1990), suggests a prayer-based evangelism strategy through Prayer Partners Ministry as a great instrument of church growth and efficiency in ministry. He says that “the great challenge facing the local church is to mobilize

Christians to really pray” (p. 1) and emphasizes the leadership first, starting with the pastor. Maxwell says, “The most effective ministries are those that begin with a core of laborers who have a deep burden and then grow slowly but steadily” (p. 11), and he encourages pastors to start praying for those who are devoted to his leadership and have a vision for his ministry. That is just the beginning of the Prayer Partners Ministry. John Wesley (as cited in Maxwell, 1990) once said, “Give me 100 preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God and I care not a straw whether they be clergy or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer” (p. 14).

On the topic of revival and evangelism through prayer, Peter Wagner (1997) says, “The more we can target our prayers to God for pulling down strongholds, the more powerful our prayers are likely to be” (p. 87). Also, talking about the success of a Christian leader, Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) say that “more and more leaders are recognizing that, with deliberate effort, good planning, and much prayer,” they need not surrender to the pitfalls “that could impair their leadership and jeopardize their personal lives” (p. 261). Blackaby and Blackaby suggest that a good church leader should take part in a small prayer and fellowship group in order to set an example for the laity.

I believe that when humans make an effort to reach the lost, God, as the one most interested in the issue, will dispose His power in order to make effective the plans. That is why it is necessary to establish plans with prayer and special care, as (McQuoid, 2002), “Goals should be prayerfully set. The church that I am a member of is not mine, it is God’s church” (p. 68). Regarding of what McQuoid says, I would say that many could use this as an excuse, arguing that it is not their business but God’s business; however,

the Lord entrusted this business to human hands. We only need to seek God's direction at all times and move forward listening to His voice.

In agreement, K. McFarland comments that God has placed a great responsibility on you and me in these momentous last days of great conflict between Christ and Satan (McFarland, 2006). Studying the Bible, reading the writings of Ellen G. White, and praying for the power of the Holy Spirit in order to share the good news of salvation with the lost should be the priority of the church's members and leadership (p. 4).

The Bible says that we need to improve our faith through hearing and studying the Word of God and preaching the message received through the Holy Spirit to those that do not know yet (Rom 10:17). The people of Israel heard the Word of God but did not believe and did not preach; as a consequence of this disobedience, they lost the right to be called the people of God. I believe this is what will happen to those who hear the great commission of Jesus and do not obey. Jesus once told the disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Therefore, He emphasizes, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20).

### Listening to God

In his phenomenal Willow Creek church, Hybels (2010) presents an extraordinary plan of prayer dialoguing with God, but in a special way listening to God's voice. He says that this idea came to his mind when he as a child listened to a pastor preaching about Samuel's call and his ability to hear God's voice. A thought came to his mind

suggesting that one day he would hear God's voice as Samuel did. He also reveals that since that time, after the thought came to his mind, his prayer was "Lord, give me the ear of Samuel" (pp. 19-23). Along with Hybels, I think that listening to God's voices is a necessity of the church today more than ever. But also, there is the danger of the church being so far away from God that listening to God's voice seems to be almost impossible. I suggest that, in order to hear God's voice, the church should be acquainted with the Lord. The shepherd knows his flock and the sheep recognizes his voice (John 10:14); otherwise, the church may confuse God's voice with conflicting voices. The Bible says that Satan is wise enough to mislead God's people and to masquerade himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Hybels (2010) suggests five filters he believes help us to distinguish whether the voice comes from the Lord or not:

First, we should ask, "Is the message truly from God?" second, "Is it Scriptural?" third, "Is it wise?" fourth, "Is it in tune with His own character?" and fifth, "What do the people you most trust think about it?" (pp. 98-105). These five filters suggested by Hybels are very important, but we should never forget that Jesus admonishes us saying, "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matt 7:16-18). When Ellen G. White (1892) says that "prayer is talking to God as to a friend" (p. 93), she is suggesting prayer as a dialogue with God, and in a given dialogue both talk and together listen. We really need to learn to listen to the Lord's voice.

Considering the difficulties found in the act of prayer, Dwight Nelson (1993) discovered that the biggest problem is the lack of concentration. When we are talking to

Jesus, the lack of concentration goes on beyond not allowing sufficient time, but not using some of the time to listen. Therefore, Nelson suggests a new way to pray, through journaling to Jesus. He says that all you need are your Bible, red marking pen, a writing pen and a journal. Also, you need essentially to choose a special place, or, as he calls it a “prayer closet.” He mentions that prayer warriors of long ago used to call the place of daily prayer in old English a “place to repair to.” It is an excellent plan to have a place of prayer to repair with Jesus at the end of the day. The main keys of his journaling proposal include the following: first, choose a passage of the New Testament and read only one story, or pericope. Concentrate and meditate on it. Reread and ask, “What does this tell me about Jesus?” Before the next step, date it and choose a different color for that. Second, write a letter to Jesus, explaining your reaction to what you’ve read. Third, write a letter from Jesus expressing what He was speaking to you. In that way, while you are writing a letter to and from Jesus in your confidential journal, you do not lose your concentration with interruptions, and time goes fast enough to spend at least 20 minutes daily. As the habit consolidates, it will soon be more than an hour every day spent in dialogue with Jesus through the journaling process (pp. 17-28).

Nelson’s method is a wonderful design, but I would respectfully add the reading of the Gospels, then the whole New Testament and certain parts of the Old Testament, as well as some writings of Ellen G. White. As Seventh-day Adventists, we need to know the complete message of God, which composes the whole doctrine of our faith.

## **Summary**

In this literature review, different approaches to prayer were examined. It is clear that prayer is necessary for every program, project, or movement in the Christian's service. The researcher suggests that without prayer the church of God loses direction, and the power of the Holy Spirit. While the leadership may not realize that prayer is so important and does not prepare a plan to reignite the churches that are plateauing or in decline, many will become pastors and leaders of dying churches. The disappointed leaders and members need only to turn to God and accept the power offered to the disciples.

## CHAPTER 4

### A PRAYER-BASED EVANGELISM STRATEGY

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, a prayer-based evangelism strategy will be outlined which is designed to reignite churches that are in the state of plateauing or in a deadly decline. The profile of some selected plateauing churches in Brazil will be studied, noting when they were founded, and how the church matured, and what the turning point was when it did stop growing.

Piotrowski (1999) suggests that the leaders, in order to implement such strategy in a church, should be the first to give the example. Along with him, Peter Wagner (as cited by Piotrowski) states that first the pastor must be totally submitted to the Holy Spirit so that he/she can be a spiritual leader (p.130). The Bible also reveals that the supreme leader, Jesus Christ, was set as an example for all believers. Anointed in His baptism and led by the Holy Spirit during 40 days in the desert, He was able to overcome the temptations and start His ministry with authority and power (Matt 4:1-11).

In light of these observations, the goal of this strategy is to motivate the pastors, the leaders and the laity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil to be truly, visibly and recognizably servant disciples of Jesus Christ.



## **A Profile of Select Plateauing Churches in Brazil**

Considering that Brazil is a multicultural country, the following chosen Seventh-day Adventist churches do not represent the whole membership of the country.

### **Boa Vista Curitiba Paraná Church's Profile**

The church of Boa Vista is located in Rua Vicente, Cicarino, 799 at Curitiba City, capital of the state of Parana in Brazil. According to Elson Sopper (2010), 1st Elder, the church was founded in the year of 1960. The initiative came from the couple Zilda Vieira and Joao Evangelista. After their conversion to Adventism at the church of Juveve in 1958, they sensed a burning desire in their heart to share the good news of salvation. In 1960, they started a small group of study and prayer in their house in the Boa Vista area with six people initially. This group increased fast and then started to meet every Sabbath, Sunday, and Wednesday. With 60 members meeting in their house, they had to rent another house only for the meetings. In 1967, the church reached 200 members. The economic level of the group was low and with not many resources. Being a typical Brazilian community, the ethnicity was very mixed, white and black people together, working to advance the mission of the Lord.

As the church increased every year, they started a new small group for Bible study and prayer. Many sister churches were created, such as the Tingui Church, Santa Efigenia Church, Bairro Alto Church, Colombo Church, Santa Teresa Church, and others. The latest was the Fernando de Noronha Church.

Fifty years following its birth, the church was composed of 280 members, located near the same place, but now in a middle/high class neighborhood, faced with growth challenges. Sopper (2010) states that even though a church may have some strong points,

such as the presence of youth, planned activities, an attractive physical structure with facilities included, and the leadership is committed and well prepared, there may be weak points. These areas of weakness include little options for evangelism in the surrounding area, a generation transition, the majority of the members may not live in the area, and they do not come to every meeting, especially Sundays and Wednesdays. Another challenge is having so many churches close to each other enabling the members to choose the best option for their own comfort. In Sopper's opinion, churches grew in the past because the area was virgin, the members were experiencing their first love, and there were just a few churches in each region. He summarizes that the church today has difficulty maintaining sustained growth because the members are tourist-type with no commitment, the economic situation of the area increased and, correspondingly, people are not accepting religion easily. Sometimes, the governing organization will put pressure on the pastors to grow a church in the same manner as another successful church growth process, but he argues, "not because the strategies were well implemented in one church, will they necessarily be well-implemented in all the others" (p. 2).

This church has some reasons for stopping growing: (1) It had its children and they grew old. (2) The building was built only for the ones who already were in the church, with no room in which to grow. (3) The economic obesity made the church be conformed to the situation.

#### Terra Roxa SDA Central Church's Profile

The Terra Roxa SDA Central Church is located on Rua Portugal, 116 Caixa Postal, 51 Terra Roxa, Parana, Brazil. The Adventist message came to Terra Roxa through Jose Lima in 1958, followed by Jose Vieira Camargo and, in 1959, joined by

Athayde Acacio de Oliveira with his family. He brought the Perciliano family with him. This small group of 25 people started to meet every Sabbath at Perciliano's house. As the time went by, the group grew so rapidly that in two years they had to build the first church building in the town of Terra Roxa. The capacity of the wood church building was 150-170. It was dedicated in 1961 and was used as a place of worship for about 11 years.

The church kept growing for a period of 30 years. By 1972, the church was too small. The decision was made to destroy the wood building and build a modern building, using a different, more modern material. The new church had the capacity for an audience of 200-250 people. This I think created a small-church mentality.

From 1980 through 2007, the church stagnated, with approximately the same number of members. In 2007, a visionary pastor named Olímpio Dias Barbosa, passionate to save people, was invited to pastor the congregation. It was decided to launch a 40 days of prayer program. According to the church clerk, Heminia Guido (2010), the church began to grow again—the lifecycle of this church was reignited. And today, though they have the same number of members in the Central Church, approximately 230, a sister church already has 40 new members congregating in a rented building.

Guido states that there are some factors that obstruct church growth: (a) lack of spiritual consecration of the members. (b) Lack of commitment to the activities of the church. (c) Little audience in the evening worships (only 15 to 20 percent of the members go to the evening prayer and evangelistic meetings). (d) Unfaithfulness in the paying of tithe and giving of offerings. (e) Marriage problems and other family issues. All of these

obstacles, unfortunately, hinder church growth, both spiritually and physically (personal information by e-mail correspondence with Heminia Guido, April, 23, 2010).

It is interesting to note that the first obstacle is the spiritual nature of the members. The key to spiritual growth is a deliberate prayerful life of the pastor, the leaders and the members. This supports the need to begin evangelism with a prayer evangelism movement motivating everybody in the church to reignite their own life doing what the Lord of the mission requests.

When the people of God see in their spiritual leaders a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others and to be the first one to change for the sake of the Gospel, they're more likely to make the changes that they need to make. The fundamental outcome of the change process is not the performance of any one single change, no matter how significant. It is the movement of the people of God through a transition to transformation. A comprehensive prayer-based intensive growth strategy is needed to reignite their personal life and the life of the community they represent.

### **The Lifecycle of Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Brazil**

Brazil is a country whose people love North America's culture, and most of what happens in the USA will happen there as well, 10-20 years later. The North American culture is little-by-little influencing the whole world, with both positive and negative aspects. A recent report submitted by researchers Stetzer and Dobson (2007) has shown that between, 3,500 to 4,000 churches are closing each year in the United States. In most cases, 70 to 80 percent of the churches closed due to stagnant or declining attendance (p. 19). The main problem, except in areas of demographic depletion, is that the principal focus of the church, that of sharing the gospel, precludes the decline and plateauing and

eventual death. Along the same line, George R. Knight (2008), in his book *Neutering of Adventism*, states that although the Seventh-day Adventist Church, “rich and increased with politically correct assumptions, we have lost that sanctified arrogance that made us believe we had a message that the whole world must hear.” In other words he is saying that “when a church becomes politically correct in all its claims and when it loses the sanctified arrogance regarding its message and mission, it manages to neuter itself even if it continues to brag about its potency” (pp. 15, 16).

If the Christian church is not focused on the divine reason for its existence, it is not paying attention to the main mission of Jesus. If it only exists in order to satisfy the anxiety of the members, and give them a good time—like in a fee-paying club of relationships—it should not exist. Without an evangelistic vision, there is no meaning for this church to be called Church, or to stay alive. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is alive, well, and still growing, states Burrill (1993), but only in the developing world. “In North America, Western Europe, and Australia, we will find a different story.” He satirizes, “As Adventism burns with intense heat in the third world, it barely flames in its homelands” (p. 12). I believe that as our church is getting maturity and stability and submitting to the status quo, it is becoming only a fee-paying club of entertainments and good programs. Although Burrill may be right with his statement 17 years ago, it is much more true today. And I would say that even in the developing countries of the world, the church is maturing. Of course, the growth is a blessing from God, but it seems that when the church reaches all the physical goals, it becomes warm (not cold, not hot) and the main mission of Jesus is not the most important objective anymore. There are some denominations in Brazil which started strongly in the time of the reformation and which

are almost extinct today. The magazine *Register* (Almanaque Abril, 2010, March) published the growth patterns of churches in Brazil. The article showed the results of the survey, which identified the plateauing churches; the list included the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a plateauing church. As mentioned earlier, the North America culture is coming strongly to Brazil, in the secular world and in the Seventh-day Adventist churches as well. Some may contend that this is a natural process of the lifecycle of any church and not a lack of prayer. It may be, but certainly, there is a lack of prayer with a right vision for the moment and for the future of the church.

One prominent specialist in church growth (Mittelberg, 2000) suggests *contagious* churches result when leaders know what they are trying to build and who they are trying to reach, and then work tirelessly and *prayerfully* to fulfill their objectives. He emphasizes that we can do everything possible in order to turn the church into a contagious church, but if we fail on the matter of *praying*, we are failing the spiritual battle and will miss the power and the blessings of God (p. 26, 27).

In order to fulfill the will of God and accomplish the mission of His kingdom, Ellen G. White (1892) declares that Christians should consecrate themselves to God in the first hour of the day. “Make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at your feet. Use me today in your service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.” She states that this must be a daily matter. Beyond consecration, Christians should also surrender all their plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Ellen G. White concludes, saying that “thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ” (p. 47).

Surely, all members of one church should understand the vision above described. If that happens to one church member, consequently to a small group, the spirit is contagious and the rest of the members will be conduits of the vision to the whole community. The concern is how to persuade a whole congregation to be evangelistic. Mittelberg (2000) encourages the pastor to train first one point leader that has the gift of evangelism and prayer and after that person is really trained and converted to the idea, together the pastor and the point person should motivate the congregation. They should do this through compelling announcements and invitations to the entire church, inviting the members for an evangelistic training. He argues that normally 10 percent of the members will come, and that will be what he calls “The Frontline Members.” No matter who you get, those are the ones with whom you should start. “As the participation and the activity levels of this team go up, so does the contagion factor of the entire church” (pp. 195-201). Along with the author, I believe that in order to reignite a plateauing church, it is necessary to implant an evangelistic strategy having prayer ministry with a renewed vision as the base.

#### Organizing a Prayer Evangelistic Ministry in the Church

In order to organize a prayer-evangelistic ministry in a church, it is more than necessary to involve first the leaders in prayer and revival; they need to be aware that the only way to win the spiritual battle is through spiritual nurture. Second, take the same issue to the board meeting; and third, vote the whole program with the board members and then with the entire congregation. All of this should be guided in a pacific way of conversation and wise persuasion so no one interprets it as a dictatorship.

## **Praying with the Leaders**

When one person is invited to be a leader, he must consider the privilege and at the same time the responsibility. In God's work, Jeremiah 48:10 says, "cursed is he who does the work of the LORD deceitfully" (NKJV). In Romans 12:11, 12, the apostle Paul recommends that the Christian should never be lacking in zeal, but keep his spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, *faithful in prayer*" (NIV, emphasis mine). To ask leaders to pray is not an abnormal thing; it is actually their faithful duty to do that all the time. Many writers (Piotrowski, 1999; Wagner, 1994; White State Center, 1985) suggest that first, the pastor must be totally submitted to the Holy Spirit, and after that he can effectively lead others to be submitted as well. In my opinion, the members are a reflection of their leadership. If the leaders are men and women committed to God and devoted to prayer and evangelism, the church is going to be committed as well.

## **Praying with the Board Meeting**

Most of the time, when the church board has meetings, the main purpose is forgotten. The SDA Church Manual (2005) reminds us that the

Church board is composed of the principal officers of the church, has a number of important responsibilities, but its chief concern is the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases. It emphasizes that if the Board devotes its first interest and highest energies to spiritual nurture and evangelism, the majority of the problems will be alleviated, prevented or even resolved. (p. 90)

Sometimes the board may not be prepared to make changes or to implant a project with such involvement. In this case the pastor, as the senior leader, should be aware and keep on preparing the hearts through prayer and personal driven conversations.



A great expert in church growth, Barna (1995), advocates that the greatest responsibility for the prayer and evangelism influence in a church is the senior pastor (p. 132). Actually, the pastor is the responsible person for all dimensions of ministry activity, and in the board meeting, the pastor needs to prioritize what is more important.

### **Voting the Whole Program in Prayer**

The whole program of prayer and intensive growth should be put as a priority before any other program. And, after having the prayer evangelism project voted, the others projects should be planned with prayer and voted, considering the goals of the main program as their own. In that way, every program of the church will be done according to the main cause of the church.

According to a notable Brazilian evangelist, Reginaldo Kefler (2000), the main purpose of a church is evangelism; if not, he says that the church should not exist. If the programs established by any department of the church are not focused on saving the lost, they should not happen. If the members of the church do not desire to save souls, they are not yet converted. I wholeheartedly believe that he is right, considering that the church was created with the unique purpose of bringing the lost sheep to the fold.

The vote of a program in a church simply means that the majority of the church's members are in accordance with the project. However, if the main purpose of the mission of Jesus Christ is not central to the program, it is in vain. So, before taking an item to the board meeting, the leader should pray and certify that the program is in accordance with the great commission of Jesus. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:18-20).

### Spiritual Enrichment: Forty Days of Prayer Seminar

This section will explain the movement of prayer that has the purpose to form a habit in the life of the Christian, not just a modification of behavior, but also a transformation. In this dissertation project, the Forty Days of Prayer Seminar is going to be used as the basis for developing the prayer ministry. Prayer will be the central focus of those who want God to be a guide in their lives and make their ministry meaningful, but the main intention is to use the idea of the 40 days of prayer as a base to prepare the whole church to save the lost. (See the seminar outline in Appendix C.) To engage the entire congregation, each weekend, during the seminar, a discipleship-training series will take place.

The concept is based on the biblical term used by God in several places in Scripture, with some particular characters, such as Moses, Noah, Jonah, and Jesus. In the Bible, the expression “forty days” was always used with the intention of developing something great and significant in the lives of the participants.

### **The Origin of the Project in Brazil**

The Forty Days of Prayer Seminar was developed and elaborated on with the goal of helping the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brazil; therefore, it is wise to analyze what exactly is going on in the prayer ministry in this country.

According to Maia (2010), the idea of launching a project of forty days of prayer in Brazil originated in the Northeast Brazil Union Mission (NeBUM). The union started the program and later it was imported to Rio Grande do Sul in the southern part of Brazil,

and with the transfer of Pr. Miguel Pinheiro from the NeBUM to the South America Division (SAD), the project was implanted all over the South America territory, and today thousands of people are participating. This is my interpretation of the process. While it is true that thousands of people are participating and being benefited, there is a lack of evangelism in the approach; the movement is characterized more as a revival than evangelism. It is not my intent to minimize the value of the revival program but to add components that will make the movement of prayer in Brazil more effective in reaching the main purpose of the believers.

### **Prayer Weekend Seminar**

According to the South America Division Stewardship Director, Miguel Pinheiro (2010), who implemented a strong prayer movement in the South America Division, the weekend seminar is very important to reinforce the member's desire to be a person of prayer. Taking steps to understand prayer is the beginning of developing a personal prayer life and contributing to the mission of the church (p. 6). Although Pinheiro's strong emphasis is laid on the members inside the church, the results of his initiative have been seen throughout the entire South America Division, inside the church and outside, attracting new believers. This seminar presents several topics on prayer, but it is my opinion that it is a great opportunity to create in the mind of the participants the culture of prayer evangelism. In other words, the mission of Jesus must be implanted in their minds.

The place of the seminar is important and will show how much the members' presence matters to the movement. In the interview Pinheiro (2010) said that in his experience it is better to choose a quiet and beautiful place outside of the church and prepare the ambiance in tune with the theme of prayer. He also said that it should be

extremely organized from the very beginning: reception, nametags, lectures, music, and handouts. The person responsible should be very well acquainted with the knowledge and the dynamics of the program (p. 6). Actually, what this seminar is going to cause is a turning to prayer and the motivation will grow as the participants receive instructions and begin to proceed into the following 40 days.

Cheryl Sacks (2007) states that when establishing a prayer training in the church, the leaders need to recognize that people are anxious to learn about prayer. Most of the participants will not have had any prior instructions on how to pray or what to pray for; even those who have been in the church for many years may lack instructions on how to communicate with the Father. Sacks suggests the following topics be included when planning basic training for prayer: (1) What is prayer? (2) To whom am I praying? (3) Why should I pray? (4) How long do I pray? (5) When do I pray? (6) Where do I pray? (7) What position do I pray in?

She also suggests some intermediate topics such as the following: (1) Types of prayer: praise, thanksgiving, confessions, petition and intercession. (2) Why some prayers go unanswered. (3) How to hear the voice of God. (4) Why we pray in the name of Jesus. (5) How to pray God's promises.

And finally, she covers the following with some advanced prayer classes: (1) Spiritual warfare. (2) Fasting. (3) The prayer of agreement. (4) Prophetic prayer-to pray what is on God's heart (p. 155).

Concerning the place where the participants will be taught about prayer, Miguel Pinheiro (2010) says that a special and different place from the usual should be chosen. While Sacks (2007) says that we can teach prayer in many different places, such as small

groups and Christian education classes, personal prayer retreats, specialized training events, prayer conferences, schools of prayer (pp. 156-158), etc., I believe that the place doesn't matter, as long as the place selected provides a comfortable feeling.

Pinheiro (2010) uses the weekend seminars to motivate the prayers for revival and stewardship. Sacks (2007) says that prayer motivates any ministry inside of the church. My conclusion is to prepare a weekend seminar in order to teach prayer and evangelism, and the following topics might be included: (1) God's purpose for my life; (2) The importance of prayer in the morning for my life; (3) Prayer and personal spiritual growth; (4) The importance of prayer for intensive church growth; (5) Prayer and discipleship; (6) Spiritual formation; (7) Prayer and stewardship; (8) The importance of prayer in the life of the leadership; (9) Praying for the leadership; (10) The importance of the Holy Spirit; (11) Prayer and decisions; (12) Intercessory prayer; (13) The connections between prayer and evangelism; and (14) Homework instructions for the 40 days of prayer.

I believe that with the topics above, the person will be prepared to start a prayer life; and, being faithful to the homework, 40 days is enough to form a habit. During the 40 days of praying and participating in the missionary training on the weekends, at the end of the 40 days the participant will be prepared to serve spiritually and technically in the mission to save the lost as Jesus taught us. Although the 40 days are important in creating a habit, it is not enough to consolidate it. Pinheiro (2010) states that in order to consolidate the habit of prayer, it is necessary to keep going on faithfully for at least 180 days, praying in the morning and studying the Word of God (p. 1). I emphasize taking as an example the Jews Passover and others events; that a monthly or yearly renewal weekend will also strengthen the whole program.

## **Sunday Training: Forty Days of Prayer**

In Brazil, the evangelistic meetings are traditionally held every Sunday evening. This is an opportunity to evangelize, but the meetings are currently diminishing. In this project, we are proposing seven Sundays be set aside for prayer training. Some of the participants may not enjoy it very much, but, in the end, they will realize that it was better for the church.

## **Praying for Five Lost Friends**

Prayer without action is the same as faith without works. According to Ellen White (1992; 2002), “Prayer and effort, effort and prayer, will be the business of your life. You must pray as though the efficiency and praise were all due to God, and labor as though duty were all your own” (p. 63). In this seminar, the instruction on how to pray will be made specific, but the task will be given as well, and the first and simple task is to choose five people from your circle of friends, relatives, neighbors, workers, or colleagues in order to pray for them during the 40 days of prayer. The goal is to come closer to them in a Christian relationship and bring them to Bible studies, fellowship with other brothers and sisters, and finally invite them to be Jesus’ disciple. First, as Jesus did to choose the disciples, so we are going to do. Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to give us the names. Second, after the Holy Spirit gives the names, we start praying and start calling them in order to tell them that the Holy Spirit gave their names in order to be prayed for during the 40 days of prayer, and then ask them if they have any special request for that period. Third, be faithful in studying the book in the morning and praying every opportunity during the day, and after 5 to 10 days of praying for them, let them know that

you are enjoying that moment of the day that you are praying for their names, and probably some of them will tell you that miracles are already happening in their life or some of them will tell you that their life became more difficult after you started praying for them. It happens because we know the devil will try to disappoint the prayer and the person for whom he is praying. Do not worry. Just keep praying and trusting in the Lord and keep in touch with the person as much as possible, as long as it is not bothering them during the whole 40 days of prayer. The Holy Spirit will be working in the heart of the prayer and in the hearts of the people for whom he is praying.

### **The Breakfast with God in Prayer**

While on the journey of 40 days of prayer, one of the goals of the program is the fellowship with Jesus and with each other. One of the biggest problems in plateauing or declining churches is the lack of love and Christian relationships. Davi Tavares (2009, p. 12), in his recent research, found that relational evangelism is not only very important but essential to win lost people to Jesus Christ. He mentions that Jesus reached people with love, kindness, and friendship. He argues that the world will only recognize Jesus as Savior when the sons and daughters of God practice love, friendship, and good relationships (John 17:21). He concludes by saying that this kind of evangelism is a fundamental part of the great commission of Jesus Christ (p. 12).

Breakfast with God in prayer is a fundamental part of the whole evangelism package in order to approach the disciples of Jesus as a team and together share the challenges and miracles that are happening in the battlefield. Sharing a meal and praying, praising and fellowshiping together makes each one stronger to keep fighting. The breakfast should happen during the 40 days of prayer, preferably 15 to 21 days after the

beginning. It could be done on a Sabbath morning before the Sabbath school. The program for the breakfast could be an hour and a half of Bible study, testimonies, prayer, and fellowship meal. If the breakfast is done on a Sunday morning, after the fellowship and the food, it is a good opportunity to also organize a prayer walk. But if the breakfast is done on Sabbath morning, the prayer walking will not be very well accepted, except if we cancel the Sabbath school program or the divine worship service.

### **Prayer Walking Partners and Survey**

The Bible says, “You’re blessed when you stay on course, *walking* steadily on the road revealed by GOD. You’re blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him” (Ps 119:1, 2, (The Message Translation, emphasis mine).

The prayer walker is a very important part of the prayer project. Everyone chooses one friend for a prayer partner. Partners will have opportunities to motivate each other in prayer and they can fulfill the duties together. They can call each other every morning and pray for their personal requests and also for their special five names. Beyond the duty of prayer, they also will be challenged to go out praying while walking and knocking door-to-door in order to survey people asking them many questions about public opinion. The main question will be whether or not they have had a chance to get a free guide to better understand the Bible, and would they take advantage of it? (See Appendix C) Actually, we teach people to claim the promise in Deuteronomy, which says “Every place where you set your foot will be yours” (Deut 11:24). Considering this promise of God, the prayer walk partners will be assigned to areas of the territory the church wants to reach. The partners will pray for every house in the territory and if possible deliver one missionary book to each home. Ellen G White (1885 November 3,



par. 12) declares that “Jesus is man’s intercessor, and we must make him our friend or we shall lose the case. Now is the time for us to *walk* humbly with God, to watch unto prayer, and be diligent students of the Scriptures, that we may know the truth and obey it” (par. 12).

According to the authors of the book *The Praying Church Sources* (Griend & Bagema, 1997), the prayer walk program also creates in the minds of the believers a vision for saving others. While praying, a renewal is brought to the church, and an atmosphere of evangelism is created. Jesus is still the center of the attention and therefore other people are attracted to the movement (p. 222). When Jesus sent His disciples two-by-two to pray, preach, heal, and save the people, they were prayer walking. (Sacks, 2007) states that revival will come when people get the walls down between the church and the community through prayer. And she concludes that the power of prayer in partnership with the proclamation of the Gospel will simply transform the entire community (p. 192).

### **The Reunion Day**

The Reunion Day is the end of the first part of the project. Actually, the 40 days of prayer will be called the preparation for the entire year of church development in terms of intensive growth. The Reunion Day is the end of the preparation and the beginning of the interactive evangelism work that the church will do with the personal effort of every member that participated in the preparation. According to Miguel Pinheiro (2010), on the Reunion Day following the 40 days of the journey all the participants and the friends that received the prayer are invited for a meeting of testimonies, thanksgiving, and praises (p. 7). This is a festival of testimonies, but it is also the best opportunity that the church has

to involve all those new people in a Bible class or personal Bible studies and even in some social project of the church in order to guide them to their final relationship with the believers and the conversion to Jesus Christ. The Bible has some examples of reunions. As Cox and Easley (2007, p. 185) comment, there is a special reunion day mentioned by Jesus, when in the sadness of the Last Supper moment, He pointed to the future and happy reunion at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Matt 26:29). In the same way, the commentator Warren W. Wiersbe (1996) noted, too, that Paul saw a future reunion of God's people when he wrote, "and shall present us with you." Death is the great divider, but in Jesus Christ there is assurance that His people shall be reunited in His presence (1 Thess 4:13-18). Apparently, both of the commentators above are talking about the same reunion but in a different flash. There is no doubt that reunions are healthy in the church of God, and the Reunion Day that I propose is an attempt to typify the great heavenly reunion with the saints of the Lord at His second coming.

At the Reunion Day, following the 40 days of prayer, the participants will share what the Lord has done for them and will glorify His name, people who prayed and people who received the prayer will testify of the love of God. It should be a special meeting with a great reception, well-elaborated program, worship, testimonies, prayer and fellowship with possibly a food banquet prepared for everybody that participated, especially for the ones who are coming to the church for the first time.

### Casting the Vision and the Mission

This section will show the importance of sustaining the right vision and the right mission of the church, and will explain how to implement the true mission of Jesus, using the opportunity of the 40 days of prayer program, providing seminars on different

subjects to teach the members how to fulfill the great commission. According to Aubrey Malphurs (2009), “Churches that don’t understand Matthew’s version of Jesus’ great commission are much like an oceangoing vessel that is plowing through fog-enshrouded, iceberg-infested waters without navigation equipment” (p. 7). The great commission is written in at least five different books of the New Testament: Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8. All of these passages are talking about the great commission of Jesus, but the most complete one is in the gospel of Matthew: “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

In order to understand the great commission of Jesus, Ellen G White (1958; 2002) states that “the Savior’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister” (p. 149). She is right in her statement. Many churches are in terrible situations because of the pastors that do not cast the right vision of the great mission and do not teach or train the church. The pastor cannot and should not do it alone. So, it is his duty to teach the members to be real disciples.

A set of seminars will be prepared in order to train the members; the seminars should be presented during the 40 days of prayer; the church should set up the date according to best possibilities. If the church has a Sunday evening evangelism meeting, the church can transform it into seven Sundays of training for the whole church. If the church does not have the Sunday evangelistic meeting, the training can be done on

Sabbath afternoons, perhaps transforming the youth program into a training moment for the whole congregation. Most likely, some of the members, without the right vision for the church, will complain about it but the pastor needs to be very well prepared for the objections. It was Ellen G. White (Ellen G. White, 1905) who stated that “every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted” (p. 149).

### **Discovering the Gift**

If we want to see our church involved in the mission of evangelism, it is important to help them to discover their individual gifts and then train them by helping develop their weaknesses and strengthening their strengths. The first seminar suggested by the researcher, following the Forty Days of Prayer Spiritual Enrichment Seminar would be “Discovering the Gift.” Christian Schwarz (as cited by Burrill, 2009, p. 60) puts it as “Gifted-based Ministry” the second of the eight characteristics identified by him, that should be present in healthy churches. Apostle Paul states that Jesus was the one who “gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,” but all of them should be used “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:11-13). Richards and Richards (1987) in their comments argue that Paul in this text is not talking about spiritual gifts but instead he is talking about gifted people with specific abilities to teach others and contribute to build the body of Christ. They state that the tasks of the leadership gifted-people are “to prepare God’s people for works of service. Leaders are not to *do* the work of the ministry; leaders are to prepare the laity to minister” (p. 923).

Although Richards and Richards are right in their statement of the leadership tasks of preparing others, I would say that even though the leaders have to prepare the others, they should also be involved in the ministry as their personal duty, because in doing so they are giving their led ones the good example. Jesus trained the disciples by doing ministry. As the apostle John states, “He has set us an example that we should do as He has done for us” (John 13:15). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the task of the leader is to motivate and teach others to develop their gift(s) and to fulfill their purpose and mission.

Marshall Shelley (1995) states that when we use our major spiritual gift, it is going to breathe life back into us. And when we identify our spiritual gifts and use them under the direction of Jesus Christ, we definitely make a difference (p. 161).

Helping the laity to discover their gifts is very important; however, teaching them how to put them into practice is much more than necessary. Burrill (2009) says, “It is not enough simply to know what one’s gifts are; one also must be deployed into a ministry that is utilizing one’s spiritual gifts.” He concludes by saying that it is not just a ministry, but it is a ministry based on one’s spiritual gifts (p. 60). According to Gerson P. Santos (2008), “The gifts were for the purpose of mending the saints and uniting them.” And he argues that the word *prepare* used by the apostle Paul (Eph 4:11-13) can also be used as *perfecting*. The perfecting involves, as the context suggests, an ordered ministry and government of the church. He also says that for the church to fulfill the mission the leaders should equip the saints, training them according to their gifts.

The seminar on discovering the gifts is very important but the main secret is the relationship with God. The conversation with Him in the same way as we do with a

friend (Ellen G. White, 1892) will enable us to ask and to listen and learn about the gift He gave to each one of us.

### **Discipleship Seminar**

Pastor Del Dunavant (2006), in his book *From Membership to Discipleship*, states that “too many of our members come into the church’s front door and out the back door because ‘the leadership’ failed to train them as disciples. It is possible that Seventh-day Adventists see themselves as members of a denomination rather than first being disciples of Jesus Christ” (p. 51).

The Discipleship Seminar is one of the more important sessions, because today we have many more members than disciples in the church. It is necessary to have a transition of mentality; a transformation of the mind is not easy. As the challenges of church growth face the pastor and the members, easily the real mission tends to be forgotten. Some hours of a discipleship seminar will not change their minds in one unique day, but it is the beginning. If we get people interested in the seminar, it means that some changes will happen. There is a lack of comprehension as to the meaning of the great commission given by Jesus to the disciples. According to Dunavant (2006), a study of discipleship often helps members make the mental transition to discipleship. He suggests a review of Matt 28:16-20, which is the great commission proffered by Jesus (pp. 52, 53). When we read the great commission, we will notice that there are four commands: go, disciple the nations, baptize them, and teach them to observe. Dunavant (2006) argues that there is only one command and three parts. Going, baptizing and teaching all describe part of what it means to disciple the nations. The only command

here is to disciple the nations. I believe Dunavant is right in his statement because if we obey the command of the discipleship commission, the results will be an intensive growth with knowledge, baptism, and new disciples. There is a natural process in order to be a good mature disciple. Aubrey Malphurs (2009) states that first you have a non-disciple that becomes a new disciple and finally a growing disciple. Or, in other words, mature disciples go through a process of pre-birth, new birth, and maturity. In fact, he says that it is so important that the church's spiritual health can be measured through this process. Asking the pastors how many people have become disciples (believers) and how many of these disciples are growing toward maturity will reflect the spiritual growth. His conclusion is that "it is imperative that every church make and mature disciples at home and abroad" (p. 19). In the Discipleship Seminar, I suggest topics such as Making Disciples, Discipleship, Equipping Disciples, Assimilating and Retaining New Members, Adventist Heritage, Combined Evangelism Program, Discipleship and Spiritual Growth, and Reclaiming Ministry.

### **Small Groups Seminar**

The small group concept is based on divine instructions. Ellen G. White (1902a) states that the "One who cannot err" has advised the formation of small groups "as a basis of Christian effort" (pp. 21-22). Jeffrey Arnold and Stephanie Black (1997), the authors of *The Big Book on Small Groups* noted that in the Scriptures, even though in the beginning the church met together in larger groups for corporate worship, the small groups also had a place in the life of the church." They pointed out that the apostles not only taught large groups, but they also went from house to house, visiting small groups in homes as they taught and made disciples (Acts 5:42). We also read that people met

together in their homes to break bread together and to use the opportunity to encourage each other to live out their faith in sustained obedience. Arnold and Black (1997) quote that “there were home prayer meetings like the one held while Peter was in prison (Acts 12:12), and Paul’s letters allude to “house churches” (Rom 16:5.)

The seminar on small groups should be very well organized in order to achieve the involvement of the whole congregation. While people are participating in the 40 days of prayer journey, they are open to any necessary ministry that the church should start. Remember that they are praying for five special friends and those friends will be invited to participate in the small group later on. The pastor will have a small group, taking the leaders of each small group as the prototype group. They should be meeting every week for prayer and study of the Bible and training tips for small groups.

It is very important that the pastor and the prayer ministry leader be aware that participants need to meet during the follow up in the journey of the 40 days of prayer. In fact, when the journey is in its second or third weekend, there should be a prayer breakfast where participants share their experiences and have some fellowship together.

Paul Yonggi Cho (1981), a specialist in home cell groups states that “church growth is a byproduct; the real secret is home cell groups.” He also says that a church should not have to depend on a single strong pastor, and small group ministry is the special way the church has to provide the venue for members to enjoy working together. Through understanding their gifts and sharing in the small groups, the Lord can utilize the gifts He has given and make the work of the pastor easier and more efficient. He finishes his statement by saying, “Our members have found this kind of involvement very rewarding, and evangelism has multiplied because of it. I believe small groups are the



plan of God to involve the members of one church in Jesus' ministry, transforming the minds of the members into a discipleship mind. According to Davi Tavares (2009), in his recent research about relational evangelism in North Brazil Union, the ministry that most influences the respondents is the ministry of small groups (p. 89). It means that this ministry should be much valued and the leaders should make every effort possible to implant the program in the church. The small group seminar proposed by this research project will motivate the membership to implant the ministry that surely will provide a better spiritual life and also a relational approach in order to bring sinners to repentance and give their hearts to Jesus.

### **Prayer Partners and Bible Studies Seminar**

While the journey of the forty days of prayer goes on, the prayer partners have the opportunity to be better acquainted with each other and the journey of prayer will motivate them to be together working toward the same mission to save the lost during the whole year. The Prayer Partners Bible Studies Seminar will facilitate the training process and help each member start and finish a Bible study with one unbeliever, trying to bring their candidate to be baptized and be a faithful disciple of Jesus as well. Ellen G. White (1902b) states that "our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. "We are to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world." (p.150) Along with her, I believe that it is our duty to go and make disciples. Therefore, teaching them how to study and share the Bible with others is a fundamental part of the discipleship. There is another statement of Ellen G. White (1902b) explaining what she saw in one vision: "hundreds and thousands visiting families and opening before them the word of God." She notices that "hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine

conversion was manifest.” She gladly declares, “On every side, doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence” (p. 126). I agree with White’s statements; however, I don’t see that happening in our churches. Nevertheless, the author of this dissertation believes it will soon happen in our days. But for that to happen, the church needs to be ready. The Prayer Partners Bible Study Seminar is necessary for this to take place.

This seminar will include topics, such as the importance of prayer partners, the importance of going two-by-two door-to-door, simple methods of giving a Bible study, inductive and relational Bible study, basic teaching skills, how to interpret the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, Bible class, reception ministry, and prayer and excellence.

These themes are very relevant and will take four or five meetings to cover all of them. Since one of the tasks of the project is to train the church during the journey of 40 days of prayer, it is expected that at least the basic subjects mentioned above will be covered.

### **Public Evangelism**

The church will also have in the schedule at least two specific kinds of public evangelism. There is a need for a good investment for that to happen effectively. The first one will start just after the prayer journey and the training seminars. Once the church is in training every Sunday evening, the transition to evangelism will be easy; they will be longing for that because of the preparation. The prayer partners will be working hard, praying and inviting the people that have received the prayers to come to the evangelistic meetings. For this evangelism, Bible workers should be hired in order to help with deeper

Bible studies leading toward decisions. One week of prayer will take place at the end of this first part of the project in order to help people make their decision.

The second evangelism model is based on the tent styles, but can be done in any place, such as a tent, rented auditorium, or even the church building. The date should be set up for the second semester. Also, using the prayer ministry as a base for that to happen, the prayers will be for God to indicate the right territory and the right place. After finding the place, the next step is to reunite the prayer warriors and go for a prayer walk in the place; every house should receive a prayer; the people don't need to know the church is praying for them, that is our secret weapon. They don't need to know the strategy either. The workers of the Lord will silently do the job and the Holy Spirit will be working kindly in the hearts of the unbelievers, preparing them to receive the seed of the gospel. In this second style of evangelism, the main purpose is to start a new congregation or revive an old one. Although the pastor and the disciples are working hard, there is still the need of hiring Bible workers as full-time employees. Therefore, a good budget should be granted from donations of the members, local church budgets, and superior's institution funds. Everybody can participate, but the local pastor should be the first to give the example. The format of the program can follow the traditional one, starting with social topics, such as family, health and Bible seminars. The seminars will be followed every day with the work of the warriors of prayer and, at the end, the small groups of prayer will be started in order to conserve the new believers on fire for the gospel and continue with the discipleship formation.

### **Week of Prayer and the First Harvest**

After all the training seminars, the church shall have planned a harvest through an evangelistic week of prayer. It will be good to invite an expert in evangelism if possible. He should come with a specific purpose, to preach Jesus, to visit with the brothers and sisters the people interested that are already ready to be baptized because of the studying of the Bible. The main purpose of the visitation will be to help the students of the Bible to make the decision for baptism. But surely, there will also be many people that are not ready to make that serious decision. Thus, it would be a secondary visit in order to pray and warm up the relationship between the person interested and the church. A plan of a continual harvest is recommended through the whole year. A monthly baptism would be a good idea.

### **Prayer Night Vigil**

According to Cross and Livingstone (1974, 2005) the word *vigil* comes from the Latin *vigilia*, which means wakefulness, watchfulness, watch, and a service held at night. And according to Philo (as cited in Cross) “the Essenes (a Jewish ascetic sect, mentioned neither in the Bible nor the Talmud, but referred to by Philo) spent a third of the night in prayer and reading, but nocturnal prayer formed no part of regular Jewish worship.”

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2003 ) defines the word vigil as (a) a watch formerly kept on the night before a religious feast with prayer or other devotions, (b) the day before a religious feast observed as a day of spiritual preparation, or (c) evening or nocturnal devotions or prayers, usually used in plural.

In the Bible, we can see different occasions that prayer vigils happened. Nehemiah and the workers kept watch on the walls of Jerusalem as they were being rebuilt, with one hand raised in prayer and the other on their swords (Neh 4). Although

Nehemiah's example cannot be characterized as a vigil, it gives us the idea of the necessity of a constant and vigilant care when we are in a serious work. In the New Testament, believers prayed all night for the liberty of Peter from prison (Acts 12:5-12). The best example is Jesus Christ, who spent several nights alone in prayer vigils; for example, He chose the disciples who would be with Him (Luke 6:12-16), in Gethsemane with the disciples before the crucifixion (Luke 22:39-46), and until today, Jesus is interceding for the saints (Heb 7:25).

The prayer night vigil is a program that will strengthen the church that is preparing disciples for the battle. Griend and Bagema (1997) define a prayer vigil as a concentrated prayer effort by a number of believers that agree to pray about specific needs for a definite period of time (p. 110). I suggest two dynamic prayerful night vigils during the year, one after the 40 days of prayer in the first semester and the other in the second semester before the evangelism campaign. The prayer vigil can be done preferentially for the whole night but there is no problem if some churches want to do it just for half or one third of the night, even during the daylight for 24 hours. There are many other different ways to do prayer vigils.

### **The Follow up With Prayer**

After baptism, it is very important to keep praying and watching all the time. The Bible says, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). The Scripture reveals many other weapons to fight against the enemy and we have to be aware of that. In this project, the main rule is an intentional incessant prayer movement, as says the apostle Paul, "And pray in the Spirit

on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph 6:18). If the warrior of prayer keeps on alert, inviting one of the new believers to be with him as his partner in prayer and to be a member of one small group, he will not only be a good disciple, but also a disciple maker. In other words, he will help the church do the follow up. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19, 20).

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, a prayer-based evangelism strategy was delineated, and I believe, if the church carefully follows the steps outlined in this dissertation project, the church will be reignited. The profiles of some selected plateauing churches in Brazil were studied as to when they were founded, how the church grew from the beginning until now, and why the church plateaued/stagnated. Factors discovered were the lack of spiritual nurture, the lack of leadership commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ, and a lack of the right vision of the real mission of the church—prayer evangelism. As Piotrowski (1999) suggests, since the leaders should be the first to give the example, a strategy concentrated on the role of the pastors and everyone associated with the leadership was created. They will be fulfilling their duties teaching and training every member who wants to be involved in the discipleship of Jesus and not only that but they will be doing their particular part of the ministry as well. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born to grow and it will be growing until Jesus Christ returns and establishes His eternal kingdom.

## CHAPTER 5

### A SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

According to an expert on prayer ministry, Cheryl Sacks (2007), “Having a prayer church is not just a good idea, it is the foundation from which everything else flows” (p. 29). The author of this research believes that prayer ministry is a movement that empowers the members of a church to grow qualitatively and quantitatively. Intentional prayer should be implanted in every church in order to be an effective house of prayer, preparing people to save others. To implement such a project, it is necessary to build a prayer evangelism culture. Once there is a church growth prayer strategy movement, the first step recommended is that the leader must have a strong, personal prayer ministry.

#### **Personal Prayer Ministry**

Jesus’ personal prayer life is an example to us; when He decided to start His ministry, He spent 40 days in personal prayer and fasting. Denis Smith (2009) declares that the 40 days of prayer prepared Jesus for the work He came to earth to do. He affirms that Jesus’ personal communion with the Father empowered Him to be victorious over Satan and to ultimately defeat him (pp. 33, 34). As Luke reported, “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside” (Luke 4:14). Ellen White (1946) declares that Christ in His ministry united prayer with work. Night after night, He spent wholly in prayer, and she urges the

Christian worker to do the same in order to have the Holy Spirit and save the lost (p. 91). The leader's first step is to follow the example of Jesus, and the second is to encourage church leaders to understand that this is the only way to start, maintain, and finish the things of God properly.

### **The Role of the Church Board**

According to the (Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 2005), the church board is composed of the principal officers of the church. Although it has a number of important responsibilities, the main concern is the spiritual nurture of the church followed by the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phase (p. 90).

Besides his personal prayer ministry, the leader must seek steadfastly to influence the minds of the officers and create a culture of spiritual nurture through prayer and meditation on the Word of God, with the goal of getting them all in tune with the correct purpose of their duties.

The Lutheran church on their Holy Trinity Website (2009) suggests that all the educational ministries of the church are called to teach, model, and mentor individuals and groups. It declares that a praying church is open to the Holy Spirit, who makes the impossible become possible. They point out that apart from Christ, we can do nothing, and yet, with Christ all things are possible (Phil 4:3 and Mark 10:27). They say that when the church becomes a praying church, it is not just one more program or strategy, it is an essential way God calls them to live (1 Thess 5:16-18).

Talking about spiritual life, Ellen White (Ellen G. White, 1915) declares, "Prayer is the breath of the soul" and in the sequence she insists, "Prayer is the secret of the spiritual Power." In other words, White is saying that if the spiritual life is not healthy, or



it is dying from stagnation, it is because the soul is having problems with its spiritual respiration. And the solution is prayer.

She also states, “Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Well-spring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience.” White reminds us that neglecting the exercise of prayer, or engagement in prayer spasmodically, as seems convenient, will cause us to “lose our hold on God, the spiritual faculties lose their vitality and the religious experience lacks health and vigour” (pp. 254, 255).

The humble recommendation to the church board is to make your church live in the essential way that God called you to live. Praying without ceasing, nurturing yourself in order to nurture the church. The church should never deviate from the original apostolic plan, which is praying intensively to receive the Holy Spirit.

### **The Role of the Church**

According to the Bible, the church should be called a “House of Prayer” (Isa 56:7). Denis Smith (2010), in his book *Forty Days of Prayer*, declares that when the church neglects one of the most important duties of Christians, the life of the church will decrease too, and so will the discipleship (p. 52).

The role of the church in this project is much the same as the role of the church board mentioned above. Ellen White (1893) is right when she says that “the church may be composed of those who are poor and uneducated; but if they have learned of Christ the *science of prayer*, the church will have power to move the arm of Omnipotence.” And she adds, “The true people of God *will have an influence* that will tell upon hearts” (emphasis mine). Basically, she is saying that prayer is very important but the prayer with a particular purpose will achieve and fulfill the mission set up for the people of God.

Another view expressed by Ellen G. White (1892) is that if the followers of Christ were awake to their duty, there would be thousands where there is only one today proclaiming the gospel in heathen lands. And the ones that could not personally be engaged in the work would yet sustain it with their financial support, their compassion, and their prayers. In that way she concludes there would be many more earnest workers for souls in Christian countries (p.162).

Prayer correctly applied will definitely and primarily change the life of a person and consequently influence a church or community to change as well. Sacks (2007) states that in a church that becomes a true house of prayer we will see prayer saturating every aspect of individual and corporate church life (p. 28). The recommendation for the church is to be saturated in prayer and accepting of the plan of the church board, and believe and follow the examples of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. In order to adopt a new culture of evangelism, there must be an understanding of and a commitment to following the prayer evangelistic way. Nevertheless, there are some steps that the church should consider relevant in order to start the prayer movement.

#### Choosing the Prayer Ministry Leader

Bjorn Pedersen (as cited in Sacks, 2007, p. 35) says that the prayer leader should be a member of the church who organizes, schedules, and provides general leadership for all the church's prayer activities. Although the pastor should be the one who would be the most excited about the movement of prayer, the leader should be chosen from the membership. This prayer leader should of course work together with the pastor; therefore, when choosing the leader, it is very important to allow the pastor to approve the appropriate person. Usually the church board will look for the most prayerful person in

the church, but it is dangerous to choose one person just because he or she loves to pray. Sacks (2007) suggests 10 characteristics of a prayer leader or coordinator. I think they are very necessary to prayer ministry but to apply them in prayer ministry with emphasis in evangelism, they will go through some adaptations, reduced to seven.

### **Called by God**

The pastor should be aware that when choosing a person for such responsibility, he should follow Jesus' example when He prayed and fasted forty days and forty nights in order to choose the disciples. The Holy Spirit will tell the pastor if God calls that person. Sacks also counsels, the pastor should approach the person and tell them about the vision and God's impression, and ask the person to pray first before accepting such responsibility.

### **Healthy Personal Prayer Life**

The person should have a passion for prayer as a sign that God is working to prepare the person for the call. Two experts in leadership, Kouzes and Posner (2008), declare that "leaders can't effectively and authentically lead others to places that they personally don't want to go" (p. 97). Sacks (2007) goes on to say that the prayer leader can only lead others to the depth he himself has experienced (p. 38). It is also very important that the leader has a very healthy personal prayer life

### **Spiritual Maturity**

This qualification is essential for a prayer leader, because all kinds of prayer requests will come to this leader, and if the leader does not have experience, he can innocently make things worse. Sacks (2007) reiterates that Paul admonishes that anyone

selected for church leadership should not be a recent convert or he may become conceited (1 Tim 3:6). In other words, the person should have been a believer for a while, and be well grounded and strongly based in the doctrines of the church (p. 38).

### **Leadership Gifts**

As mentioned before, the leadership gift is very important. Sacks says that many prayer movements have failed because the pastor just chose the most visible prayer warrior as the leader, and we cannot confuse the gift of intercessory prayer with prayer coordinator. If the pastor is able to distinguish the difference between these two, confusion can be avoided.

### **Ability to Speak and Teach**

The ability to speak and to teach are important because, as every department of the church needs training and practice, the prayer ministry needs someone who is able to conduct a meeting in a didactic, dynamic way so that people will feel comfortable participating. However, if the prayer coordinator does not have this gift, but he is good with relationships, he can always invite someone to conduct the meeting who is able to preach and to teach.

### **A Team Player**

No one can work alone in a community and have a steadfast success. The ability to delegate responsibility is so important because it will make the participants feel important and it validates them. The prayer leader with emphasis in evangelism will realize that the responsibility is not to do the entire task alone, but to train and equip others in order to see the seed spreading wherever the others want to go.

## **Good Reputation**

If a good reputation is respectable for any person who has some leadership responsibility, it is much more so to a person who is going to lead others to revival and influence them to convert unbelievers into believers. For the leader to maintain a good reputation and instill confidence is an essential attribute, otherwise people will not trust requesting prayer from the group.

## **The Role of the Church Leaders**

Leadership is a gift of the Lord, and, as Warren W. Wiersbe (1996) puts it, “God has ordained leadership for the local church. It is true that we are ‘all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28).” In spite of that, says Wiersbe, Jesus Christ as the Head of the church through the Holy Spirit has given gifts to people, and then given these people to the churches to exercise His will (Eph 4:7-16). Just as the flock needs a shepherd (1 Pet 5:1-5), so the family of God needs a leader (1 Thess 5:12). The author of this research recognizes that being a church leader in modern times is a great challenge but also a privilege. In order to transform a church that is in a state of plateauing or in decline, the humble suggestion to leaders in this project is to consecrate themselves to God through a stabilized life of prayer, developing the skills of true leadership based on the faithful example of Jesus Christ and finally fulfilling the Christian mission through the practice of the true discipleship.

## **Leader’s Consecration**

Commenting the text of Psalm 119:1-2, The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (1978b) states that “a leader must be strong even when others weaken. He must have courage when others are discouraged, and be able to inspire others with

courage.” Also, the leader “must gather warmth from the coldness of others. A leader for God must live close to the Lord, that he may be able to encourage those associated with him” (p. 2:180).

Consecration should be the process used by the leader in order to develop all the characteristics above. To be a leader of God’s people is a privilege but also a big responsibility; therefore, the leader should be ready for everything. And the most important recommendation for the church’s leader in this project will be a relationship with Jesus. In prayer and in the knowledge of the Word of God, the leaders will set a good example to influence the other disciples. As mentioned in chapter four, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12). Jesus Himself was tempted in everything (Heb 2:18). According to Icenogle, the author of the book *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* (1994), “Before Jesus could begin his liberating and empowering leadership of the group of twelve he had to work through his own personal temptations to gather people and power to himself” (Mark 1:12-13; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12). On the Mount of the Temptation, during His post-baptismal experience in the desert, He consecrated Himself through prayer and fasting for forty days in order to start His ministry. The leaders must follow Jesus’ example about consecration. Dunavant (2006) says that equipping members for ministry can only be done with much prayer and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The biggest challenge in equipping members, he declares, is related to the spirituality of the pastor, the leadership, and the congregation.

Concerning the leadership's consecration, Ellen G. White (1855; 2002) declares, "The presidents of conferences and the ministers should give themselves to the spiritual interests of the people and should therefore be excused from the mechanical labor attendant upon the meeting." She also defends the idea that the ministers should be ready to act as teachers and leaders, in the work of the camp when occasion requires. And with this spirit of consecration and training, there will be refreshment and a cheerful frame of mind helping them to accomplish the good work of the Lord. Thus, the Spirit of the Lord will prepare the honest soil of the hearts and the fruits will be gathered (p. 45). I used to say that a member's attitude is a reflection of the leadership. In order to implement such a project of leadership and the congregation's consecration, the leaders should definitely be the starting point. Ellen G. White (1892 April, 5 ) states, "Unless Jesus is formed within, the hope of glory, you will be a curse and not a blessing to the congregation, for the minister cannot bring the people to a higher standard than that which he himself reaches." Dunavant (2006) reaffirms that the leaders cannot give what they do not have, the leaders cannot lead people to experience God intimately if they are not intimately experiencing God themselves (p. 12). He is completely right when he says that the spirituality of the congregation will not rise higher than that of their minister's.

### Developing the Habit of Prayer

The habit of intensive prayer in the life of a leader is more than a priority; it is the only condition for God's will to be accomplished in his leadership. Charles A. Tidwell (1985), an expert in church leadership, noted that Jethro admonished Moses to listen to his counsels, but at the same time invoked God's presence with Moses for him to be able to obey the authoritative command of God. Tidwell highlights some major points of this

conversation. First, Moses should represent the people before God. He should bring their causes to God and intercede before God through prayer for their problems. Second, Moses should teach them the guidelines, the statutes and the laws as policies, procedures and rules. Third, Moses should show them the spiritual way they must walk. And fourth, Moses should show the people the work they must do (p. 39). Tidwell is correct in his statements; he tells us that without the habit of prayer Moses would never accomplish the other responsibilities.

According to an interview with Miguel Pinheiro (2010), the Spiritual Enrichment Seminar for the forty days of prayer (see Appendix A) will develop the habit, but, to consolidate the habit, it is necessary to keep on doing the same thing without failing a single day, for 180 days (p. 1). The recommendation for the leaders is to get into the habit of prayer through the journey of forty days and take it seriously; when the leader gets into the habit, he will be able to pass it on to the other disciples.

### Developing the Skills of Leadership

Besides sanctification and the habit of prayer, another strong recommendation to leaders of the church in this project is the spirit of discipleship, training each other in the same way as Jesus did.

### **Discipleship**

Andrew Knowles (2001) states that Paul reminds Timothy that being a minister of the gospel involves suffering. He encourages Timothy to accept the suffering and do the hard work of being a Christian evangelist and pastor. But at the same time, Knowles argues that Paul urges Timothy to teach the truth of Christ faithfully, and that the main characteristic of discipleship is to “train those who will pass it on to others” (p. 645). In



other words, he is saying that in order to develop leadership ministry skills you have to do the work first, suffering the rigors of the hard work, not keeping that only for yourself but teaching others. Unfortunately, there are leaders that do not like the idea of teaching others, and thus do not form new leaders. As Bruce Moyer (2011) would say, “Just as the primary purpose of an apple tree is to produce more apple trees, the work of a leader is to produce more leaders, to replicate others and empower them” (personal conversation).

The recommendation here is based on the example of Jesus who in His ministry, while working, was also teaching leadership to twelve men. Icenogle (1994) noted that Jesus’ model of leadership was based on small groups ministry, as we have seen in the model of Jesus with the disciples. Icenogle states that Jesus launched the small group movement of the early church by forming groups of men and women to fulfill the mission of Jesus together. Small group leadership development is about making disciples first and leaders second. I agree with this author and, at the same time, add that it was this model of small group leadership that reached the whole world, and will help to finish the work of the Lord.

### **The Role of Members**

To the members of the church, it is strongly recommended to accept Jesus and respect His commandments, to also respect the leadership’s instructions, and as a team fulfill the great commission of the Lord.

### **Obedience to Jesus’ Commands**

When one accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, he should accept Him as his Lord as well. To accept Him as Savior is easier than to accept Him as Lord. If accepted as Lord, there is a need of total obedience to His commands. We all know, because of the entrance

of sin into this world, that obedience is not a natural desire in the hearts of men and women. The scholar Luke Leuk Cheung (2003) explains that when the rabbis asked Jesus about which was the greatest commandment of the law (Matt 22:36), they asked because they not only had the Ten Commandments given to Moses in mind, but they also had in their minds the 613 commandments created by the Jews (248 positive ones corresponding to the number of parts of the body, 365 negative ones corresponding to the days of the year) and they wanted to trap Jesus into a debate of distinguishing between them, which were lighter and heavier, smaller and greater regulations (p. 107). But the Lord wisely answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:37-40).

One of the recommendations for the members, in this dissertation, is the same as Jesus recommended almost two millennia ago, “Love God . . . Love your Neighbor” (Matt 22:37). With these two commandments, Jesus also established the great commission, which is input love and obedience to the Lord and love and service to the neighbor. If the disciple loves the Lord, He will with pleasure talk to Him (prayer), and automatically will obey His commands, praying in love for the neighbors.

### Obedience to the Instructions of the Leadership

Another recommendation has to do with respect of the instructions of the leadership. The apostle Paul says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority” (Heb 13:17). In my experience of leadership over these 15 years, I have observed that the ones who respect the leadership become excellent leaders. If the member is obedient to the

leadership, even if he may disagree with the decisions taken, he will not be complaining but will do his best in order to accomplish the mission designed by God through the leadership's commands. In that way, the member is putting into practice the instructions of discipleship.

### Pray for the Leadership

Paul also recommends that the members of a church should pray for the leadership. Paul's prayer request is expressed as "*Pray for us*" (Heb 13:18). According to The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (1978; 2002), Paul was saying to "keep praying for us," or "make it a habit to pray for us." He compares the request with Paul's in Eph 6:19 and Col 4:12, which, in his opinion, means the same thing, the necessity of the leaders to have the church members interceding for them. The commentator concludes, stating, "Although he was a man of wide experience and great spiritual stature, Paul appreciated and sought the prayers of his brethren in Christ. Every true leader deeply appreciates the interest and prayers of those for whom he labors" (p. 493). Actually, in the opinion of this writer, the leaders don't just enjoy the prayers of the brotherhood, but they are the ones who need it the most. Peter Wagner (1992b), in his research with pastors, leaders, and members, noted that every Christian needs intercession, but pastors and leaders of the church, because of their responsibilities and influence on others, need much more (pp. 66, 67). Therefore, this research is recommending that the members of the church support the prayer ministry in the church.

### Obedience to the Great Commission

The members also need to understand the mission and, after understanding the mission, be transformed into disciples. The disciple is passionate about God, has passion

to save and passion to serve. When one becomes a genuine disciple, he becomes passionate about love—the mission of the church. Malphurs (2009) comments that most scholars would agree that the mission of the church is the great commission found in Matt 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-49, and John 20:21. It was given to the disciples as His last word, just before He was taken up into the clouds, to heaven, meaning that they should never forget about that. Malphurs also comments that some of the members may be tempted to argue that the great commission was given only to the disciples (apostles) and not to the church. Thus, this is the disciple's mission and not the church's. He notes that this is a poor argument, because in the book of Acts it is very clear that the mission was given to the disciples when they were yet disciples, and that they were called apostles later on in Acts only to emphasize their new role. Even though they were apostles, they still remained disciples, thus representing all the disciples that existed and the ones that would exist (p. 16).

If the membership understands the recommendations above, the implementation of such projects will be easier, especially if the member has really accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, obeys Jesus' commands, and understands the great commission in order to fulfill it.

### **The Role of the Church toward the New Members**

This section will bring some suggestions on how to maintain and sustain the new believers in the church, alive and on fire for the gospel. For that to happen there are some necessities that the older discipleship should learn about and put into practice helping the new members to become disciples.

## The Necessity of Relational Evangelism

Ellen G. White (as cited by Tavares, 2009, pp. 77, 78) appeals to each believer to follow Jesus' method and manner of meeting people. She accentuates the way Jesus worked in villages and cities, teaching in sympathy and tenderness; and her advice to all believers is to follow His example. White also suggests that the past methods of evangelism should be restructured, and every follower of Christ must develop kindness, courtesy, respect, confidence, humility, and consecration in order to be able to make their highest service to God. In other words, she loved the personal, relational evangelistic approach. I personally think that people like to be where they are welcome, treated well, and well loved.

The editor and researcher in church growth Larry K. Weeden (1988) states the following:

Research is now demonstrating that the *process* by which people arrive at a point of Christian decision is a key factor in whether they become responsible members or drop out. The effect of the evangelistic process on the eventual results is so significant, in fact, that it can be predicted *which decision makers* will grow into responsible church members within the first year and which will become inactive. What is particularly discomfoting is that many churches and Para-church groups today use methods that actually *increase* the likelihood of new converts' never becoming active church members. (pp. 110, 111)

In other words, he is saying the way the new believers are treated and seen by the older members, will affect how the new members are going to act later on.

Weeden (1988) also comments that unfortunately the decision of whether the person will be an active member or not has to do with the way people are treated in church, and how many new friends they have made. By that rule, definitely we are able to say if the new member will really be a part of the church or not. In his research, he concludes that excuses are given such as: "Our follow up program was lacking; they did

not really understand their commitment; it is sad that they did not find people in their age at this church; the results are up to God” (p. 111). Such excuses I attribute to a lack of the mission of Jesus, and lack of the love we already mentioned before (Matt 22:37-40).

If Weeden’s research is accurate, these pictures and the evidence in some churches of certain countries, such as in North America, Europe, and even in South America, are very much the same, I would humbly but with conviction recommend that the church create a church discipleship model based on the goal of fulfilling the lack mentioned above.

Russell Burrill (2009, pp. 102-105) has a very interesting suggestion for Seventh-day Adventist churches that I would recommend to the churches in Brazil. He says that the church should develop a discipleship plan considering the areas that the church has already developed skills and the weak points that should be yet developed:

### **Receiving People into Membership**

According to Burrill (2009) getting people into the membership is a skill well developed already and should be the first step in the Seventh-day Adventist model of discipleship. “We do an excellent job of reaching people initially, but it is what we fail to do after they join the church that creates problems for Adventists.” He states that it is indispensable to accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior and Lord of his/her life in order to be a member of the church. He also says that to know and be committed to the 28 fundamental beliefs and put into practice such teachings as paying tithe, keeping the Sabbath, practicing good health and so on, would certainly be evidence that the person is beginning to make Jesus Lord of his life, not only in words but also in deeds. The good job that we do with evangelism can continue being done in this project, but we must still

sharpen the skill a little, especially in the area of connecting lifestyle issues to a relationship with Jesus as Lord of one's life.

### **Becoming a Mature Spiritual Person in Christ**

Since the beginning of this dissertation, it has been the intention to highlight the importance of spiritual nurture in the life of the member through a strong relationship of love between the believer and God. Along with Burrill (2009), of all the issues dealing with discipleship, my personal opinion is this area is our greatest need. People may have a lot of knowledge of the Bible, the Adventist writings, and the church manual, but if they do not have a constant personal spiritual nurture, all the knowledge will be in vain. As states the apostle Paul, "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1Cor 13:2). This relationship of love will only be developed when people spend time with Jesus. A program recommended is the Spiritual Enrichment Seminar, of the 40 days of prayer that teach the member the habit of studying the Bible and how to progressively grow a life of prayer. Burrill (2009) highlights that the church should not simply encourage people to study the Bible and pray, but urges the church to teach the members how to study the Bible using concordances, commentaries, and dictionaries—feeding themselves with spiritual food. Concerning prayer, he also implies that the church should teach the members how to pray while remembering they have God as a friend (p. 103).

### **Introducing People into Ministry**

As soon as people join the church and enter the discipleship process, other members should begin to help them discover their spiritual gifts and their place of ministry in the body of Christ (Burrill, 2009, p. 105).

According to (Malphurs, 2004), small groups encourage lay ministry and it is one of the most effective ways to discover the gifts of the members. Also, it is one of the easier ways to put the gifts into practice. He noted that the Scripture also encourages lay ministry. In the New Testament, there are numerous commands and exhortations concerning the lay ministry (1 Cor 12-14; 1 Pet 2; Rev 5; 1 Thess 4:10-11). Paul tells the believers to do things to or for each other and admonishes the church to love each other. Malphurs concludes, stating that all of this can happen under the umbrella of the small group ministry (p. 378).

The recommendation here is that every member of the church should be motivated and persuaded to participate in a small group; every new believer as a requirement before saying yes to baptism should agree to be a member of a small group. If the members and new members are involved in the ministry, the problems of the church will decrease, and the health of the church will increase, bringing joy and fulfillment of the great commission of the Lord.

### **Turning Into a Missionary**

The recommendation here is based on the Samaritan woman, an unbeliever who met Jesus, and was persuaded to accept Him as the Messiah and became rapidly one of the great missionaries in Bible history (John 4:1-42). Ellen White (1898) states that this “woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary.” She declares, “Who drinks of the living water



becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver.” Because “the grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life” (p. 195). What is happening here is not simply admonishing new people to share their faith, but helping them to make witnessing a part of their lifestyle (Burrill, 2009, p. 105). Although I believe it is a matter faith, intimate personal contact as training is necessary. They have to be touched and they have to be taught. The Holy Spirit must be in their life moving their will into discipleship, and the leaders must be training the new ones to be missionaries.

### **Conclusion**

The recommendations above are based on the Bible, scholars’ experiences and writings, the writings of instructions to Seventh-day Adventists, and the ministry experience of the author. Prayer is the foundation of this project but its main goal is to cause an intensive growth in the churches that are plateauing or in decline. The author recognizes the limitation of this project, thus recommends further research, including additional studies of the factors contributing to the decline in church membership. Also, comparative studies could be done in those churches that have incorporated the prayer ministry practice

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW

Interview held with Pr. Miguel Pinheiro, the Head of the Christian Stewardship Department of the South American Division.

*How did you get this wonderful idea of Forty days of prayer?"*

Everything started from my own necessity to have a deeper experience with God. When I was nominated to work in a Christian Stewardship Ministry in Brazil's Northeast Union, I did not have any experience in this area, and by the context of the call, I understood that my mission was to create a good structure in the ministry in order to increase the tithe and offerings. I asked my president for one year in order to create a consistent project that would last. It was in 2002, and in August 2003 I went to a meeting in Foz Do Iguassu with Pr. Benjamin Maxon, the former General Conference leader of Christian Stewardship. This colleague spoke of Jesus and of the necessity of having a permanent communion with Him as a base and the principal work of Christian Stewardship. At the end of the meeting, he called the leaders and challenged us to seek for intelligent and creative manners to take the message to the church and the growth of tithe and offerings would come naturally. That was the way we started to conceive the idea of the SEE (Seminario de Enriquecimento Espiritual)—forty early mornings of prayer was the name given and used by some Unions, but today it is not used anymore. Because the movement has to do with habits, today we work with the emphasis on the

very first hour of the morning. We have forty days to develop the habit, and 180 days to consolidate the search of God in the first hour of the morning. The ones who did not take serious the daily commitment, at the end of the journey of early mornings would say, “Good! Finally, I finished my penitence of getting up so early every morning.” Since then we adopted the principle of the first hour of the morning according to Jesus Christ’s experience.

*When and where did you start this program?*

We started in May of 2004 at the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church of Natal in the Northeastern Mission, with 100 participants.

*How was the acceptance initially?*

We had a lot of time to promote, and because we started the process with the leaders, the church’s opinion-formers of the region really had to love it. From the beginning, the project was formatted with a strategic vision that would involve theory and practice; we did not want just to transmit information, but information with a strategy that would involve a period of maturation in such a way that the teaching would become a habit and consequently, part of the individual character. In this way, they would have 40 days to practice and after this they would come back to the reencounter when each person would tell how their experience with God was, and how they would continue with the habit. And further than that, in the beginning of the journey each participant was asked to pray for friends, people who were not Seventh-day Adventists, during the 40 days. At the day of the reencounter, each one would bring those people to listen to the testimonies of how the power of the Holy Spirit had operated in their lives. Many of those people made

the decision to give their heart to Jesus during the 40 days of prayer or they would make it at the moment of emotion, contrition and fellowship.

*What were the results of the first program?*

I don't need to tell you what the results were, because I already described them in the question above. From that moment on the movement grew amazingly. One more detail—from the beginning the participants pay to participate; this payment is for logistics (food, rent of the local . . .). He has to apply with antecedence, to receive the theory manual, and at the end of the seminar to receive the book of the journey of the 40 days of prayer, and we still do this. Paying valorizes.

*Do you have some results of any research or survey done about the program?*

The Journalist Heron Santana from Brazil's Northeastern Union made a research about the movement, and many others have been done, but to the purpose that you have, I believe that, this one will be better. By the way, it was published in the Brazilian Adventist Review (*Revista Adventista*).

*In your opinion, what is the impact and what is the contribution that this program brings to the church?*

I believe that the great contribution has been an awakening to seek God in the first hour of the morning as a habit. The base of the movement is the intimacy with God as a habit. Every other year we change the emphasis, but the continuing highlighting is alimented during this period. For example, the "SEE 1" launched the base, and the "SEE 2" highlighted Health and Worship. It worked the idea of the necessity of having a healthy body, understanding clearly the will of God in order to listen to His voice in the

first hour of each morning. The SEE 3, which is the phase that we are working in 2010 and 2011, talks about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and is a call to search deeply for the Father as did Jesus each morning and so successively.

This is the great contribution, but we cannot discard the growth in tithe and offerings that we had in the past five years in the South America Division. In the period of the quinquennium before, the South America Division increased 4.001% in tithe and had a decrease in offering of 39%. And right now when we are about to close this quinquennium, we have an average growth above the normal of 116% in tithe and 128% in offerings. Since 2005, we are the second division in tithe, and that had never happened before in the whole history of the church.

*What is the impact this program brought to your particular life?*

In these last years I no longer neglect the time with God in the first moment of each day. When it becomes a habit, it is part of your life. It completely changed the vision I had about the Christian life of a believer, a pastor, a father, a leader, a human being who depends daily on God and His Word. We were created for God to give the command in our minds and our hearts every day in the morning. This is what we need in order to live an authentic Christian life.

*How many times in a year would you advice a church to launch this program?*

It depends on the necessity. The SEE is not a program; it is a movement. Always when a new person is converted it is necessary to take the SEE and also people who are Adventists and did not involve themselves yet. Here in SAD, usually we separate the second Sabbath of December in order to launch the program; the main goal is to assist the new believers and the non-believers as well.

*Do you think this program will keep having success or will it tend to decline at some time?*

Every movement has its normal lifecycle. That is why we change the emphasis every two years, seeking to strengthen the basis, which is the intimacy with God. We also created a marketing of fidelity, which means that in order to participate in the SEE 2, it is necessary to have participated in the SEE 1. In that way, we have reached the majority of the members in the past five years. And each new phase increases the interest of the one who did not pay so much attention in the last ones. In order to participate in the actual one, he will have to participate in the first one. In fact, whatever movement intends to last longer, needs to be aware that innovation is necessary not only in the content but also in the intelligent promotion. None of the movements will grow by themselves; the leader has to be creative in order to have followers that will copy the ideas and reinforce the goal to be reached. Everything depends on who is the leader. The leadership that subsists is the one that is built with the right strategic vision of the Holy Spirit; He is the major leader of the movements of our church.

*Can you offer us some hints as to how one pastor can use this program to develop growth and evangelistic strategies?*

The main key would be search for all the basic information in order to start well. The ones that start in that way will generate good expectations and certainly will attract the indifferentists. The main audience to be reached is the membership of the church. The program came to fulfill a lacuna inside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and these members are the ones who have the goal to reach the ones outside of the church. It is not wrong to seek that objective, but we need to have our Flashes aimed to the ones inside as

well. Was it that the SEE met its need; feeding the ones inside. But as every movement might have an evangelistic view, during the forty days of prayer we have prayed for five close people that are not yet Seventh-day Adventists, and this has been demonstrated to be a tremendous evangelistic tool. Children, wives, husbands, and relatives in general, friends, work colleagues, and neighbors are many that came to the church through the intercessory prayer during the 40 days.

*Can you tell at least 10 steps of how one implants this program in a church?*

- 1- Start to pray about the purpose.
- 2- Define the segment that the church wants to reach out to at first (we recommend first the leaders, the ones who influence the church, in this case don't promote it publically).
- 3- Adopt the strategy of personal marketing for the first SEE, usually we don't announce it publically in the beginning.
- 4- Define the locale and the dates for the event and begin and finish the applications.
- 5- Provide the book, *Salvo Para ser Santos*. This is the book to use in the seminar and might be given at the time of application, in order that the participant read it before the event. In the seminar what was read will be restudied to deepen the knowledge. At the end of the seminar, the second book might be given. This is the book called *Comunhao e Santidade* which means "Communion and Holiness" to be used in the journey.
- 6- The leader should know very well the dynamic and the logistic.

- a. *Salvos Para ser Santos* (theory, motivation and preparation in order to start the practical process of the development of the habit of seeking God every morning).
  - b. *Comunhao e Santidade*—Participate in the journey of the forty days always in the first hour in the morning, preferentially at the same time in order to create the habit (each individual has his first hour; 5-6, 6-7, 4-5, it depends on the activities and the time to go to bed).
  - c. Do not break the chain during the forty days; this first stage is to form the habit.
  - d. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the five people you are going to pray for during the forty days. Tell them that you are praying for them and it was the Holy Spirit who indicated them. And ask them if they have some prayer request.
  - e. Reunion Day—After forty days of the journey invite all the participants and the friends that received the prayer for a meeting of testimonies, thanksgiving and praises, and tell what the Lord has done during the journey of the forty days of prayer.
  - f. Consolidation of the habit—On the reunion day set up the challenge for the next 180 days as a period of consolidation of the habit—Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy (Bible year reading).
- 7- Date for the next segment to be reached. Normally it is done after the forty days journey after the reunion.
- 8- Choose the next segment to be reached.



9- Define the marketing to be utilized in order to reach the proposed segment.

Segmenting the church depending on the size of the church is fundamental to having a longer lasting implantation for every stage of the movement.

10- Don't be in a hurry; usually the largest movements lose the strength when you try to do the thing in a hurry. Each phase of the SEE should last 2 years. After all, all of them will be available constantly for new believers and for the later ones.

Remember in general we reach the whole by part. Our church might learn this lesson in case it wants to have lasting and consistent movements.

*Thank you so much.*

## APPENDIX B

### BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE HARVEST

#### Lesson 1

##### The Bible

1. How did we get the Bible in the first place? (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20, 21)
2. Why should we study the Bible? (2 Tim 3:15)
3. What does a search of the Scriptures do for us?
4. Can I really trust the Bible? Why? (2 Pet 1:19; Ps 119:105)
5. Who is the one that helps us to understand the Bible? (John 16:13)
6. What do we gain by listening to the Word? (Rom 10:17)
7. How enduring is the Bible? (Matt 24:35)
8. In what way should we search the Scriptures? (Isa 28:10)
9. What must attend the reading of the Word of God? (Acts 6:4)
10. How important is it for us to receive the Word of God? (Job 23:12; Matt 4:4)

Name:

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Have any further questions?

## Lesson 2

### The Gift of Grace

1. What does grace do for us? How is grace described in the Bible? And who is the giver? (Eph 2:8)
2. How did grace come to us? (John 1:17)
3. What does grace save us from and give in exchange? (Rom 6:23; Rom 5:21)
4. What is sin? (1 John 3:4)
5. Why do we need the Law if we have grace? (Rom 3:20; Rom 5:20)
6. How does God's grace help us overcome the effects of sin in our lives? (2 Cor 12:9)
7. Does grace make it okay for us to sin? (Rom 6:15)
8. Who can receive this gift of grace? (Eph 4:7; Titus 2:11)
9. What is the final result of receiving God's grace? (Titus 3:7)

Name:

Address:

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Have any further questions?

## Lesson 3

### Salvation

1. Why did God give it, and why do we need salvation? (John 3:16, 17)
2. What did God's Son come to do? (Luke 19:10)
3. If we are saved by grace according to Ephesians 2:8; why do we still need to look to God's Son? (Acts 4:12)
4. How does a sinner receive salvation? (1 Pet 1:9; Acts 15:11)
5. Is faith and believing enough to be saved? (Heb 5:9)
6. How does obedience work with salvation? (Phil 2:12, 13)
7. When will eternal salvation be bestowed upon the saved? (Heb 9:28)
8. Will many be saved? (Rev 7:9)
9. How will the saved welcome the Savior? (Isa 25:9)
10. Would you like to be among these?

Name:

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Have any further questions?

## Lesson 4

### Signs of the Time

1. What did the disciples ask Jesus about future events? (Matt 24:3)
2. Is there any way to know the exact time of the end? (Matt 24:36)
3. What parable did Jesus give to show the nearness of the end? (Matt 24:32, 33)
4. What are some of the things we are to look for as signs of the end? (Matt 24:11, 24:6; Dan 12:4; Matt 24:7)
5. What description does Paul give of the last days? (2 Tim 3:1-5)
6. How does all this help us know and be prepared for that which is coming?  
(Matt 24: 33, 44)
7. What are some hopeful predictions of the end? (Matt 24:13; Ps 91:7)
8. How does the Lord feel about those who face the end time? (2 Pet 3:9)
9. What should these signs mean for the saved? (Luke 21:28)
10. Are you ready for the end times?

Name:

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Phone:

Have any further questions?

## Lesson 5

### The work of the Holy Spirit

1. Who is the Holy Spirit and what assurance does Jesus give about His work in our behalf? (John 14:16, 26)
2. Why do we need the Holy Spirit? (John 16:8)
3. How does the Spirit work in our lives? (1 Cor 6:11)
4. What are some evidences of his work in us? (Gal 5:22, 23; 1 Cor 12:1-4)
5. How should we respond to the indwelling Spirit? (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:16)
6. What did Jesus say is a *must* for everybody? (John 3:5-7)
7. Who does the Bible say are God's sons? (Rom 8:14)
8. Is there a danger in not receiving the Holy Spirit in our lives? Yes/ No (1 Cor 3:16, 17; Isa 63:10)
9. What is the warning to take note of? (Eph 4:30)
10. What is the great promise and invitation we have in the Bible? (Gal 6:8; Rev 22:17)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Have any further questions?

## Lesson 6

### The Law of Love

1. What did Jesus tell us was the test of our love for Him? How do we demonstrate our love for God? (John 14:15; 15:10)
2. How do we know that we know the Lord Jesus Christ? (1 John 2:3, 4)
3. What is the one thing that satisfies the purpose of the law? (Rom 13:10)
4. What did Jesus say was the great and second commandments? (Matt 22:37-40)
5. How lasting is this law of love? (Matt 5:18)
6. What is the only part of the Bible that God wrote in stone with His own finger? (Exod 31:18; Exod 34:28)
7. Can the keeping of the law of love save us? (Rom 8:3, 4)
8. How does the law benefit us today? (James 1:23-25; Gal 2:34)
9. What will be the resolve and the determination of the last day saints? (Rev 14:12)

Name:

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Phone:

Have any further questions?

## Lesson 7

### The State of the Dead

1. How did man come to be a living soul? (Gen 2:7)
2. Where does a man go when he dies? (Gen 3:39; Eccl 12:7)
3. What is it that returns to God at death? (Job 27:3)
4. What happens to the soul of a sinner at death? (Ezek 18:20; Rom 3:23)
5. Can the dead communicate with the living? (Eccl 9:5)
6. What is the state of the dead? (Eccl 9:10)
7. Is there any hope beyond the grave? (Job 14:14)
8. What will be changed when Jesus returns? (1 Cor 15:52, 53)
9. Having conquered death, what does our Lord have to unlock death's grip on us? (Rev 1:18)
10. What is the great assurance that Jesus gives us regarding the state of the dead? (John 11:25)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Have any further questions?



## Lesson 8

### The Second Coming of Christ

1. What promises did Jesus make to those who are awaiting His return? (John 14:1-3)
2. How certain is His coming? (Matt 24:35)
3. In what manner will Christ return? (Matt 24:27; Rev 1:7)
4. How sudden will Jesus' coming be and what will take place at His coming? (2 Pet 3:10)
5. What is the warning to those who await the Lord's return? (2 Pet 3:11, 14)
6. For what purpose did Jesus say He is coming back to this earth? (Rev 22:12)
7. When will Jesus return? (Mark 13:32)
8. What will it be like when Jesus returns? (Matt 24:37)
9. What are we encouraged to be before our Lord returns? How can we be ready? (Matt 24:44; Mark 13:33)

10. What is the hope of the saved? (1 Thess 4:17; Titus 2:13)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Have any further questions?

## Lesson 9

### Prayer

1. What did Jesus tell us about prayer? (Luke 18:1)
2. How often should we pray? (Ps 55:17; 1 Thess 5:17)
3. To whom should we be praying? (Luke 11:2)
4. In whose name should we pray and why? (John 14:13)
5. What are some benefits that are gained by prayer? (James 5:15, 16)
6. Why do we need prayer especially for this time? (1 Pet 4:7)
7. What should be our attitude and approach to God in prayer? (Phil 4:6, 7)
8. How does faith affect answers to prayer? (Mark 11:24)
9. What can hinder our prayers? (Ps 66:18)
10. In what way should we offer up our personal prayer requests?

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Have any further questions?

## Lesson 10

### Justification of Life

1. Why is there a need for men to be justified? (Rom 5:18)
2. Who is the one that justifies us? (Rom 8:33)
3. How are we justified in the sight of God? (Rom 5:1; 3:24)
4. How are those who are justified supposed to live? (Gal 3:11)
5. How do we go about living a justified life? (1John 1:9; Rom 2:13; Matt 12:37)
6. What does the Lord do for those living a just life? (Prov 3:33)
7. How does the Lord describe His righteous act on behalf of believers? (Rom 3:26)
8. What is expected of those who have seen the good works of God? (Mic 6:8)
9. Will you be amongst those whom Jesus will be satisfied to justify? Yes/ No (Isa 53:11)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Have any further questions?

## APPENDIX C

This survey's main target is to get the membership involved in the ministry of saving the lost and also has the goal to seek for people who are interested in studying the Bible in order to discover the truth.

### Public Opinion Survey

1- Do you think that the global warming is the direct result of human action?

Yes No Don't know

2. Do you think that our financial crisis is temporary?

Yes No Don't know

3. In your opinion, how or when will the war against terror end?

With the new president  With new world leaders  Don't know/no opinion  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. In times of crisis, what do you think is a human's biggest need?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. In your opinion, is there a God? Yes No Don't know

6. Is there a Bible in your home? Yes No

How often do you get a chance to read it? \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you had a chance to get a free guide to better understand the Bible, would you take advantage of it? Yes No

8. Which of these areas would you like more information about?  Family

Relationships  Health  Bible Prophecies

REGISTRATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

Outlines of a prayer guide book, which will be used for a special forty days of prayer,  
preparing the people for the whole project.

Forty Days: Prayer and Devotions to Prepare the Church to Save the Lost

1. The Lord is there when you pray
2. The Lord commands us to do
3. The Lord gave us the example
4. The Lord instructs us
5. The Lord is with us
6. The Lord gives us strength
7. The Lord walks side by side with us - I
8. The Lord walks side by side with us - II
9. The Lord walks side by side with us – III
10. The Lord expects us to confess our sins
11. The Lord has sent us the Holy Spirit
12. The Lord intercedes for us
13. The Lord expect us to intercede for others
14. The Lord loves us
15. The Lord advises us to love one another
16. Discipleship and the mission
17. Discipleship and the Holy Spirit

18. Discipleship and the fruits of the Holy Spirit
19. The Discipleship empowered by the Holy Spirit
20. Discipleship and a life of prayer
21. Discipleship prayers and evangelism
22. Discipleship and Christ's method of evangelism
23. Discipleship sharing the gospel
24. Discipleship and spiritual nurture
25. Discipleship and relationship with God
26. Discipleship and the later rain
27. Discipleship and the Laodicean Church
28. The church duty
29. The church and the disciples
30. The church maturing disciples
31. The church training the disciples
32. The church equipping the disciples
33. The church and the leadership
34. The church and the new disciples
35. The church and small groups
36. The church and the Bible studies
37. The church and the movement of prayer
38. The church and the tools for evangelism
39. The church and post secularism
40. The church ready for Jesus Christ's return

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## VITA

Name: Otoniel de Lima Ferreira

Date of Birth: October 6, 1967

Place of Birth: Terra Boa, Pr. Brazil

Married: to Geovania A. Silva Ferreira, Children: Patrick Ferreira

### EDUCATION:

2011 Doctor of Ministry, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI USA.

2005 Master in Pastoral Theology (Equivalence) Unasp, Arthur Nogueira SP

1995 Bachelor of Theology UNASP, Arthur Nogueira, SP Brazil

### ORDINATION:

1999 Ordained to the S.D.A. Gospel Ministry

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2011 Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism - Salt-Iaene, Bahia

2009-2011 Student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

2007-2009 Publishing Director, Northeastern Conference, NY, R&H

2005-2007 Pastor of the District for Boa Vista's Church in Curitiba, PR

2003-2005 Pastor of the District for Central Church in Cascavel, PR

2001-2002 Evangelist at ASP Conference in Curitiba PR. Brazil

2000-2001 Publishing Ministry Director, ANP Maringa PR. Brazil

1998-2000 Pastor of the District for Santo Amaro e Hospital do Penfigo in Campo Grande, MS

1996-1998 Publishing Ministry Director, ASM, Campo Grande, MS

1995-1996 Pastor of the District for the Central Church in Assis-Chateaubriand, PR