Retaining Young Adults Through a Wholistic Formational Discipleship Program at the Immanuel Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church

John S. Nixon II
Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

RETAINING YOUNG ADULTS THROUGH A WHOLISTIC FORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM AT THE IMMANUEL TEMPLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

John S. Nixon, II

Adviser: Jon Dybdahl, Ph.D.
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: RETAINING YOUNG ADULTS THROUGH A WHOLISTIC FORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM AT THE IMMNAUEL TEMPLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: October 2013

Problem

The Immanuel Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the University-saturated city of Durham, NC. As such, it has the potential for a thriving young adult population of active churchgoers. Instead, the young adult attendance at ITSDA mirrors that of most American Christian churches as it is in decline. The result is an increasingly aging church with few youngsters energetically engrossed in the life of the congregation.
Method

Research was conducted and a wholistic formational discipleship program was tested as a means of addressing the issue of young adult attrition at ITSDA. The program included these steps:

1. An 8-hour young adult spiritual retreat was conducted for ages 18-35 affiliated with ITSDA.
2. A baseline survey was dispensed to establish a benchmark for spiritual fitness and church attendance/involvement.
3. A five-week discipleship class was held to introduce and teach the five wholistic formational discipleship foci.
4. An exit survey was administered to collect data for comparison to the baseline.
5. The data was evaluated, conclusions were made and recommendations were suggested.

Results

Forty-six participants completed the baseline and exit surveys. The data was collected and analyzed for patterns and trends to be used towards a possible solution. There were more female participants than male, 66% to 34% respectively. The typical respondent was a single, childless female between the ages of 22 to 25. Most respondents recorded an improved result at exit as compared to baseline. There was a marked increase in the level of involvement from Time 1 to Time 2. While about 5% of the young adults indicated that they were not involved at baseline, none of them selected that category after the intervention. It appears the wholistic formational discipleship program encouraged a positive statistical increase in young adult church involvement.
Conclusions

Some recommendations emerged as a result of this project; 1) I will develop a three month WFD curriculum to determine whether a more extensive time frame will increase young adult retention levels; 2) In future research I will elect to use a ten-point Likert scale over a four or five point worded Likert scale in the survey instruments; 3) Further attention should given to assessing the degree to which program participants are involved as a result of the merits of the WFD program or because of the presence of a charismatic leader.
RETAINING YOUNG ADULTS THROUGH A WHOLISTIC FORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM AT THE IMMANUEL TEMPLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
John S. Nixon, II
October 2013
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by

John S. Nixon, II

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Date approved
DEDICATION

To my gorgeous wife, April: Your patience and encouragement throughout this journey has been astounding. You never cease to amaze me. I adore you. You complete me.

John and Jubee, now I’ll have time to play! I love you both!
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past 6 years I have received love, support and encouragement from a number of people, several of which I’d like to recognize in this section. Thanks to Dr. Henry Felder who has been a mentor, critic and confidant. His perspective helped me to strive to create quality work. I would like to thank Dr. Colwick Wilson for the countless hours of advice and counsel and for performing the statistical tabulations of the surveys and proofreading of my dissertation.

During the young adult spiritual retreat Elder Raymond & Dr. Ernestine Lassiter opened their beautiful homestead to us for the whole day. They also provided a sumptuous meal for our enjoyment. I will always remember their kindness and generosity. Marcia Conner played a critical role as event planner for the retreat and discipleship class. Her organizational expertise gave the entire program a sense of professionalism and class. I will always be grateful to her.

To Karen Logan, my secretary, for inputting all the statistical data into the spreadsheet. Thanks for taking the time to complete such a tedious task. I want to thank Dr. and Sister Fortune for all their prayers and reassuring words. Every time they inquired about my progress I was encouraged to finish strong. Thanks to Dr. Milton Blackmon and Dr. Ontario Wooden for keeping me accountable during the writing process. They never let me take too long of a break.
I will forever be grateful to my original conference president and first lady who also double as my father and mother-in-law, Elder Vanard and Mrs. Ruth Mendinghall. They were responsible for nurturing me in my start to ministry and provided a wealth of support and encouragement throughout my Doctor of Ministry process. It was Elder Mendinghall’s administration that approved my going to Andrews Seminary both to receive my Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees. Without that authorization my education to this point might not have been as fruitful.

A big word of thanks goes to my advisor, Dr. Jon Dybdahl and second reader, Dr. Peter Swanson for all their suggestions and feedback during the writing process. Finally, I want to thank my Mom, Dr. Januwoina Nixon, Dad, Dr. John Nixon, Sr., my brother Paul Nixon and my little sister Clarise Nixon for all their editing expertise. It’s really nice to have good writers in the family.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

Throughout my thirteen-year-long career as a pastor I have noticed a glaring problem common to all five of my churches. In just about every congregation, I have observed an overabundance of absent 18-35 year-olds. I began in ministry at age 21 so I was surprised when young people did not just automatically return to church because there was a young pastor present. Early on I tried my best to effect positive change in a way that I thought would entice this age group back to church, but to no avail. What’s more, I received much resistance from the older generations of congregants in a way that stifled what little efforts I attempted to inspire. I became increasingly frustrated by the reality of young adult absence and devoted even more time to prompting positive change within this demographic.

As I progressed in ministry from district to district I found that with each larger church, resistance toward the idea of engaging 18-35s in church decreased. In other words, the larger churches were filled with members who seemed to have sensitivity towards reclaiming young adults into the church, while the smaller churches I pastored resisted the idea with fervor. It was almost as if the smaller churches were endeavoring to remain small. But though the larger congregations wanted to fix the problem I found it was equally as difficult to reverse. There seemed to be some embedded church repellant
that kept young people away that we had to address. I began searching for “the problem.” What I found was that “the problem” is more complex than a lack of good music or relevant programming. Whenever I ask young people what it is about church that keeps them away, I get a different answer just about every time.

After 13 years in ministry I am still searching for “the cure.” That is why I chose “Retaining Young Adults Through a Wholistic Formational Discipleship Program at the Immanuel Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church” as the subject matter for my project. I am passionate about this issue because I have spent my entire ministry in the 18-35-age bracket. If we do not attend to the wholistic needs of this demographic group in our church, it will limit our ability to be effective in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Statement of the Problem

Young adult attendance within the Seventh-day Adventist church in the United States has declined dramatically over the past 10-15 years. Most Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States exhibit a median age that is notably higher than the national average.\(^1\) Some have suggested an over reliance on the Information Model, focusing on “…religion that is primarily cognitive and intellectual”\(^2\) and believing that as long as one gives correct information, people will do the right thing. An alternative approach is one that suggests the development of a Wholistic Spiritual Formation model, which would be concerned with ministering to the whole person. If attrition within this age group

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\(^1\)The median age for the general public in the U.S. is 36, and in Canada, 37. For the SDA church in North America it is 58, which includes un-baptized children living at home. Paul Richardson, “The Graying of Adventism: What Does It Mean?” *INNOVATION* Newsletter, November 1, 2006, 1.
continues, the Seventh-day Adventist church would be unable to sustain itself especially in the face of the aging of its current membership. This demographic group is most likely to have younger children and is arguably in the most productive years of their lives. The loss of the resources from the absence of this group within the Seventh-day Adventist church would have a significant impact on the mission of the organization.

**Purpose**

This project seeks to uncover the factors that impact church attendance within the young adult (18-35) population such as: environmental considerations, external factors, peer dynamics, demographic influences or ecclesiastical concerns. This will be done at the local church level with external information from current literature and an original pre/post survey research design. The project will then observe additional changes as a result of the implementation of the Wholistic Formational Discipleship model. The final step will involve implementation of an intervention that will address the needs as revealed through the combined research.

**Justification for the Project**

The problem with young adult retention at Immanuel Temple (hereafter known as ITSDA) is not unique. Over the last 30 years the Seventh-day Adventist church has seen a significant decline in its young membership, specifically ages 18-35. The median age for the general population in the U.S. is 36 while in the Seventh-day Adventist church is 58, including unbaptized children living at home. These figures prove to be troubling

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when one considers the role young people have traditionally played in the SDA church, even its inception. Historically, the Seventh-day Adventist church was known for its youthful leaders. For example, Ellen Harmon (White) was only 17 years old when she had her first vision, while James White was a mere 28 when he first published the Present Truth. In fact, of the 12 early prominent and commonly identified pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church, 8 of them were in their 20s or younger when they got seriously involved in spreading God’s message of the last days. John Andrews (21), Merritt Cornell (25), O.R.L. Crosier (24), John Longborough (22), Uriah Smith (21), Stephen Haskell (20), Ellen White (17) and James White (28) are all young examples from this age group who played prominent and significant roles in the seeding of the gospel at the beginning of the Adventist church. Possible causes of this decline need to be identified with a view of incorporating such information in a solution focus ministry.

A preliminary supposition to be further explored regarding the decrease in youth and young adults ages 18-35 is that the Seventh-day Adventist church has mostly neglected to teach and model proper wholistic formational discipleship as a means of developing an authentic relationship with God.

**Delimitations of the Project**

The scope of this project is limited to young adults ages 18-35 that currently have or have had some affiliation with ITSDA church in Durham, NC. This project does not seek to be exhaustive and will not try to research 18-35s of every socio-economic category. Therefore, on account of the demographics of ITSDA, individuals from a lower economic and educational background will be excluded from this project and the sample used will effectively be confined to members (and attendees) from other socio-
economic groups. This particular focus has been chosen as it grows organically out of the ministry context where I find myself at the moment.

**Limitations**

The research methodology employed within this dissertation project is quantitative in its scope and will employ baseline and exit survey instruments. Though this method has the inherent strength of producing quantifiable and reliable data it also has some weaknesses. “The greatest weakness of the quantitative approach is that it decontextualizes human behavior in a way that removes the event from its real world setting and ignores the effects of variables that have not been included in the model.” This is a limitation of the research methodology I have chosen.

**Expectations for the Project**

This project will strengthen my leadership skills and effectiveness as I seek to do God’s will in growing His kingdom. It will also help to increase the membership of youth and young adults ages 18-35 at ITSDA Church. I expect this project will transform the focus of church life and mission for the ITSDA church from informational to formational and provide a program for wholistic formational discipleship to its members. This project will provide potential strategies for other pastors to lead their young adults into healthy, authentic formational discipleship.

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Methodology

The theological reflection focuses on three key areas. First, I sought to establish the Biblical foundation for a move towards the wholistic formational discipleship model in church life. Second, I examined formational discipleship as the centerpiece of the Christian life. Third, I explored how formational discipleship affects the attendance and retention of postmodern young adults.

Next, I reviewed current literature. This includes books and articles that attempt to pinpoint the overarching problem of young adult attrition in the Christian church, resources that explore the values and beliefs of postmodern young adults as well as works that examine the impact of formational discipleship on Christian life.

Then, I conducted an intervention involving 46 current and former young adult members from Immanuel Temple who were invited to participate in an intense, 6-hour spiritual retreat entitled, “Formed for His Purpose.” The retreat exposed its participants to the five key areas that make up the Wholistic Formational Discipleship program. A baseline survey, aimed at investigating participants’ current interaction with the principles of formational discipleship and plotting current levels of church participation, was administered at the beginning of the retreat.

At the conclusion of the retreat, the group was invited to attend a 6-week Formational Discipleship Sabbath School class that met on Sabbath mornings from 9:45-10:30am. Each week the participants and I explored a different aspect of the wholistic formational discipleship program. At the end of the 6-week Sabbath school class, another survey was administered to measure changes in impressions, behavior or church involvement within the group. All collected information was then compared to recent
data from the current literature on the subject matter.

Finally, I wrote up the entire experience and added it to the final work of the dissertation project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Andrews University Theological Seminary, which should be completed by August 2013.

**Definition of Terms**

Language is only useful as it correctly conveys a person’s intended thought. Words then are meaningful only as they convey clearly what is meant by the appropriate term usage. Below are a list of terms and their definitions to help clarify what is meant when these terms are used within this manuscript.

*Information Model (informational):* The information model refers to the traditional method and mode of conducting church life and function where disseminating correct information prevails as the mode of creating acceptable behavior. This model is focused largely upon effecting behavior and seems to deemphasize the importance of heart transformation.

*Transformation Model (formational):* The transformation model refers to the mode and method of conducting church life and function where a personal transformation process is encouraged and valued in the lives of churchgoers. This model is focused largely upon the transformative power of an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ.

*Wholistic Formational Discipleship:* Formational Discipleship is the term used to denote the various actions involved in pursuing a life that experiences God in a deep and meaningful way including: worship, confession, repentance, prayer, meditation, Bible
The word wholistic is used to denote the way that this method touches every aspect of a person’s life.

*Eutychus Generation:* This term is used as a metaphor to describe the generation of young adults, ages 18-35, who were in church in their formative years though unknowingly in a dangerous position, “asleep in the window.” Just as Eutychus fell out of the window to his death in Acts 20:9, so also this generation has fallen out of the church and is effectively dying spiritually. Just as Paul raised Eutychus back to life, so also this generation can be revived and their spiritual lives resurrected to the glory of God.
CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

The issue of young adult attrition within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has been a topic of focus in recent years. Many books, papers, essays and articles have been written on the subject. Numerous theories have been postulated and various strategies have been outlined in order that a solution to this endemic problem might be reached. I believe the words of Scripture lay out some clear principles that can help to inform how the church goes about trying to remedy the situation as well. The objective of this chapter is to expose some of those principles in a clear and concise way so as to contribute to the overall discussion of young adult retention in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

It is important to note from the outset that this project is not gimmick-driven. It is not focused on ways to “give them what they want” or “cater to young peoples’ emotions” in order to hypnotize them into staying in the church. This paper is not written along those lines at all. The purpose of this paper is to discover Biblical foundational principles that can guide and instruct the ITSDA church in Durham, NC on how to retain its young adults.

This subject matter is important because of the staggering statistics found in the Seventh-day Adventist church with regards to young adult attrition. Many of our
Adventist scholars and researchers have released statistics that inform and shape the scale of the crisis our church now faces. For instance research done by Dudley (2000) shows that, “At least 40-50% of SDA teenagers in North America are essentially leaving the church in their middle twenties” (p. 35). Paul Richardson, director of The Center for Creative Ministry, posits: “The median age for the Seventh-day Adventist community in North America, including the un-baptized children in church families, is 58. The [midmost] age for the general public is 36 in the U.S and 37 in Canada. “¹ They also report, “Adventist congregations in the U.S. generally have significantly fewer teenagers and children than do other religious groups.”² Additionally, Brewer (2007) reveals, “More than 1,000 local Seventh-day Adventist churches in the North American Division have no children or teens at all.”³ These findings strongly suggest that the Seventh-day Adventist church is older and has a significant number of congregations that do not even have young adults attending at all. If immediate action is not taken the Seventh-day Adventist church may never recover its youth.

The proposed solutions and suggestions will neither be presented nor expanded upon in this chapter. The purpose is simply to establish the need for this research and give the Biblical roadmap for the recommended intervention.

The term “The Eutychus Generation” is used frequently in this chapter and is based on the story found in Acts 20:7-12. The Acts 20 narrative serves an appropriate


metaphor for the current situation we find in Adventism. Like the young Eutychus in Acts chapter 20, many of today’s young adults are sitting in a dangerous position in the third story window of life; they are unaware of the imminent danger that their posture poses to their spiritual wellbeing. At the same time the church members around these youngsters do not seem to recognize the danger either. They are simply content that their youth are “in church.” However, the youths unmoved by the content and liturgy of the services are bored and become sleepy. They inevitably fall into a slumber and plummet from the window to their demise. Now the crisis is apparent and the entire crowd lends its attention to the consequences of the lack of engagement of the young. They did not initially recognize the dangerous posture of their young but now they huddle around in search of a solution.

Though Acts 20:7-12 may not provide a flawless exegetical foundation for the current crisis in the church, it does seem to be a salient and useable metaphor. The term “Eutychus Generation” is fitting because, unlike terms used in normal youth perception theory, it does more than simply reveal the mindset of the young person, but also gives a window into the attitude of the concerned older generation. When examining Acts 20:7-12 the mindset of the crowd is not directly revealed but it can be inferred. It is plausible to postulate that if one of the congregants had noticed young Eutychus sitting in a vulnerable view he or she would have issued a warning to aid in his eluding death. However, the text mentions no such occurrence and Eutychus apparently goes unnoticed until his life is lost and then restored by a miracle.

4 Many books and articles that discuss the plight of young people, as it pertains to their attitude toward church life, usually focus attention on the mindset of youth and the outside worldly influences that
The description of the Eutychus metaphor and its application to young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist church points to the comprehensive nature of this Biblical narrative. That is, it accurately captures a number of the salient features of the youths in the contemporary Adventist church. For example, many young adults spend their formative years physically in the church building but dangerously disengaged from the life of the church. Their parents, grandparents and other concerned adults were satisfied with their attendance at the various religious gatherings and somehow overlooked the reality of their disengagement. What resulted was an eventual falling away altogether and a mass exodus on the part of many young adults. This metaphor challenges the church to explore and grapple with the precipitating factors associated with the crisis and to identify and develop divinely informed solutions to this problem. The call to attend to the needs of this demographic group within the Seventh-day Adventist church is especially poignant given the theological significance of Christ’s injunction to “…go the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6).

**The Lost Sheep**

The explicit message of the commission of Jesus to His disciples on their first missionary journey was “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:5, 6, NIV). This clear focus was manifested within the framework of the call of Jesus to the twelve disciples and giving them power and authority over all kinds of sicknesses. Specifically, the Scriptures declare, “He called His twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1, NIV).
This passage points to a clear mandate from Jesus to His disciples about how they should respond to the work of the kingdom. That is, He gave them a deliberate sequence of attending first to the ‘lost sheep’ of Israel (Matthew 15:24). This theme seems to be consistent with a pattern throughout the ministry of Jesus that He and His ministry begin with the “lost sheep.” The literary analysis that follows illustrates this biblical perspective.

Literary Analysis

Verse 2: \textit{aposto/lwn} — “a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ; apostle, messenger, he that is sent.”\textsuperscript{5} Just before he lists the names of the called in verse 2, Matthew refers to the group as “apostles” for the first time in his book. The word means, “sent ones’ or commissioned representatives. . . . A ‘sent one’ acted on the full authority of the sender to the extent that he accurately represented the sender’s mission.”\textsuperscript{6}

Verse 5: \textit{paraggei÷laß} — “to transmit a message, i.e. (by implication) to enjoin:—(give in) charge, (give) command(-ment), declare.”\textsuperscript{7} Here Jesus gives a command. He is not simply making a suggestion about the way He thinks may be the best course of action for effective evangelism. He is clear and it suggests a specific pattern and plan on His part.

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\textsuperscript{5}James Strong, \textit{A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek New Testament; with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version} (1890), s.v. “\textit{avpo, stoloj},” 15.

ei`ß oJdoyn e`qnw◊n mhY ei`se÷lqhte— “literally ‘Do not go away on the road of the Gentiles’—i.e., Do not go in the direction of . . . the Gentiles; ‘Do not take the road to Gentile lands’ (NEB).”

This is a clear prohibition on the part of Christ. His emphasis underscores a deliberate plan as it pertains to the promulgation of the Gospel.

Verse 6: poreu/esqe de« ma◊llon— “But go instead.” This is much more than a simple alternative choice. The Greek ma◊llon has a connotation of “much better.” The Strong’s Greek Dictionary reveals, “more (in a greater degree) or rather:—better, far, (the) more (and more), (so) much (the more), rather.”

Jesus is giving His “far, more, much better” plan.

pro/bata ta› aÓpolwlo/a— Lit: “Sheep the lost.” The Greek aÓpolwlo/a— from ajpo/llumi meaning “to destroy fully (reflexively, to perish, or lose), literally or figuratively:—destroy, die, lose, mar, perish.”

The Greek phrase conveys the idea of being so lost it is as if the sheep have been destroyed. This lost is much stronger than simply misplaced, mislaid or gone astray. It is clear that it will take earnest, focused, and intentional effort to win them back. There is also a strong indication that the members of the kingdom or the ‘lost sheep’ are clearly lost even while still remaining Israelites. This is consistent with the experiences of many of the young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist church. As a result, the relevance of the message of

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Jesus to His disciples is applicable to the defined demographic group that is of interest in this project.

Reclaiming Wandering Sheep

There is no doubt that Christ had a definite plan in mind as He gave charge to His apostles to evangelize the surrounding areas. Jesus was specific and purposeful in giving an exact order of procedure. This underscores His intentional plan to begin with the lost sheep of the house of Israel; that is, those who were once saved and are now lost.

Within Christ’s words is a formula for any evangelistic effort that is to be undertaken by His children. Christ’s method is clear: we are to start by regaining those who were once a part of His body and are no longer. Focusing on these “lost sheep” even takes precedence over targeting new converts. This is the first aspect of the biblical/theological rationale for this project. Following Christ’s method for His disciples, this project will focus on discovering and understanding ways to win back and retain young adults between the ages of 18-35. This emphasis is deliberate insomuch as it follows the pattern of Christ and His disciples in the developing of the early Christian church.

This project will not focus on making new young converts—though I believe new disciples will be a natural byproduct—but rather on reengaging the previous believers. For the sake of this study they are the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:6).

This document seeks to respond to the essence of the crisis within the Seventh-day Adventist church concerning young adult attrition. There is an apparent disconnect between young adults and current church methodology and practice, evidenced by their

\[10\text{Ibid., s.v. "avpo, llumi," 14.}\]
observable propensity to separate themselves from the church once they are old enough to make their own decisions. It is my hope that by communicating a practical process to retain and reengage “the lost sheep” other insights will be reached, helping to inform the Seventh-day Adventist church about developing future strategies to win the “unchurched” 18-35’s of the world also.

**In Spirit and Truth**

Jesus addresses the woman at the well and says, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23, 24, NIV). Christ is speaking with a Samaritan woman at the site of Jacob’s well. Jesus is Jewish and the woman is a Samaritan; their peoples are avowed enemies, forbidden to talk with one another. The woman raises an issue common to the Jewish-Samaritan conflict regarding the true place of worship. Her people worship on “Mount Gerizim, the Samaritans’ holy site equivalent to Judaism’s Jerusalem, was in full view of Jacob’s well.” Christ’s answer modifies the subject of the discussion from the place of worship to the spirit of the worshipper. More accurately, the response of Jesus elevates the conversation from the temporal to the eternal. Christ’s discourse sets the stage for a new discovery about the nature of true worship, which, can be better understood through the following literary analysis of the passage.

Literary Analysis

Verse 23: αὐθεντικός — pertaining to being what something should be —
“genuine, sincere, true.”

Here, the Greek implies something of greater importance than a focus on correct doctrine. The connotation here is authenticity or genuineness. This is by no means fake or put on, but sincere, honest and heartfelt worship.

προσκυντά — “one who worships — ‘worshipper.’”

In this case the Greek reveals the true worshipper not as one who merely performs a series of acts associated with worship (i.e. clapping, shouting, waving of hands) but instead, one whose actions grow out of their existence. This true worshipper is an adorer.

προσκυνών — “to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore):—worship.”

Again, the Greek describes more than what usually comes to mind when one thinks about worship. It is usually thought of as no more than a series of acts specific to certain worship connotations (clapping, singing, and shouting). But the Greek language seems to illuminate a range of meaning that leads one to view worship as a condition of the heart that leads to certain worshipful acts. The genuineness of the act can only be judged by the condition of the heart.

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15Ibid., s.v. “προσκυνέω,” 61.
pneu/mati - “Wind, breath, things which are commonly perceived as having no material substance; by extension: spirit, heart, mind, the immaterial part of the inner person that can respond to God.”

According to this we communicate with God in worship through *pneuma*. This clarifies an unfamiliar aspect of worship especially when considered alongside *alaythia*-truth.

*aOLhqeï÷aˆ* - “True, truly, truth, verity.” This definition describes objective truth, that is, something that is true as opposed to being false. This *truth* is not as much about being genuine as it is concerned with correctness and fact. When considered alongside *pneuma* - spirit, it is very enlightening. Spirit and Truth taken together seem to describe two different but essential aspects of true worship—one dealing with authenticity and the other correctness.

*pathÝr toiou/touß zhtei√* - “The Father is seeking such.” *zhtei* is from the root *zhte÷w* which means, “to look for, seek out; to try to obtain, desire to possess, strive for.”

God is literally seeking out and trying to obtain these true worshippers in order to have an experience with them.

Verse 24: *dei√* - “to be something which should be done as the result of compulsion, whether internal (as a matter of duty) or external (law, custom, and...
circumstances) — ‘should, ought, to have to do’. According to the Greek text Jesus is saying that in order to be a true worshipper you must have both pneuma and alythia. One without the other will never constitute true worship.

True Worship

A close examination of the Greek reveals a significant amount of depth as it pertains to what constitutes true worship. John lays out the requirements as spoken by Jesus to the Samaritan woman. Genuine worship has less to do with the location or even the specific acts, and has everything to do with the heart of the worshipper. Jesus gives the formula for true worship in John 4:24, “His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (NIV). It is very clear that true worship must maintain both of these elements in order for it to be acceptable to God. This is precisely where the second rationale for this project emerges.

The phrase “in spirit and in truth” describes the essence of definitional framework that is embodied in wholistic formational discipleship; a key term that is used in this project. The pursuit of objective truth is an important component of our spiritual development especially since it aids in avoiding spiritual deception—an invaluable quality to possess in the last days of earth’s history. But, according to Jesus in John 4, objective truth is not the only worthwhile aspect of spiritual life and development. The church is in danger if it appears to reduce the Christian walk to a pursuit of knowledge alone because the focus is much too narrow. In fact, it mirrors the heresy of Gnosticism, which teaches salvation through a special or secret knowledge. The Bible reveals

Christianity as something much more wholistic in nature, something that involves more than the intellect, touching the whole person.

The formational discipleship model refers to a wholistic approach to a spiritual pursuit of God and the things of God. It differs from the information model in that it is concerned with being formed by God instead of simply learning new information about Him. The word “formational” is used deliberately to convey the idea of one being formed. This is an apt metaphor because forming requires touching. Isaiah 64:8 says, “…we are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand” (NLT).

Isaiah describes God as the Great Potter who shapes and forms the clay with His fingers and His palms. If God would be successful in forming us into His image, He must be invited to get intimately involved in our lives. This is at the core of formational discipleship—God interacting intimately with humanity in order to transform us into His likeness.

An understanding of true worship as described by Jesus in John 4 is essential if wholistic formational discipleship will ever be realized. According to Jon Dybdahl, “Worship, the only response to grace, is the place where heart and mind coalesce.”

Christ may have had this in mind when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well. True worship must involve more than mere intellectual ascent if it is to reach the purpose for which it was created. This is a difficult feat in many churches because, as Dybdahl notes, “The enlightenment period of the last 150 years has intellectually squeezed God out of life… [so that for most Christians] religion is primarily cognitive

and intellectual.” 22 There is often little personal contact between God and humanity under the information model of religion. This is precisely where we find the beauty of the phrase “spirit and truth.”

Many understand fully the alaythia (truth) part of the text, but struggle with the pneuma (spirit) aspect of the equation. Spirit and truth are of equal importance for those who seek an authentic experience with God. Worship is the key ingredient in true biblical spirituality, and true worship—according to Jesus—must involve both spirit and truth. All of this can be understood in the word “wholistic.”

**Wholistic**

The word wholistic describes the concept of something that engages the whole person, not just the intellectual part but the emotional and spiritual aspects as well. We are intellectual, emotional, and spiritual beings and if formational discipleship is to be wholistic it must involve all of these parts. If a wholistic approach to religion is desired one must resist the temptation to apply the principles of stoicism in worship and church life. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy writes, “The Stoics did, in fact, hold that emotions like fear or envy (or impassioned sexual attachments, or passionate love of anything whatsoever) either were, or arose from, false judgments and that the sage—a person who had attained moral and intellectual perfection—would not undergo them.” 23 It is essentially a doctrine of perfection through the cutting off of emotion. It seems that


this teaching has made its way into many Seventh-day Adventist churches and has made emotion a negative feature in worship. Churches that de-emphasize or demonize the emotional aspects of human response in worship will likely have trouble appealing to the Eutychus Generation. Thus, one of the roads to re-engaging the church’s young adults leads through wholistic formational discipleship.

In seeking to encourage people to experience God, it is important to adopt a balanced approach. Imbalance in any direction creates a certain lack of genuineness in the worship experience. Worship in spirit and in truth reveals the ultimate balance because it engages both the head and the heart. However, getting people in touch with their emotions is not the whole solution and as such there should not be an overemphasis on the experiential aspects of worship.

**On All Flesh**

When speaking about the last days, the prophet Joel wrote, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29).

In the broader context of Joel’s prophecy, Judah has been devastated by a massive locust plague and severe drought, and the prophet Joel sees this as an indication of the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31). Recognizing the crisis, he calls for the repentance of the entire nation. He does not interpret this “day of the Lord” the way many of those in the nation did—as a judgment on the surrounding nations and blessing for Israel—but as a day of punishment for God’s people as well. “Restoration and
blessing will come only after judgment and repentance.”  

In this passage, Joel has begun a new section that focuses on God’s blessings to His repentant people as opposed to destruction. God spoke to Joel about the situation surrounding the gift of His Spirit on humanity in the last days. The apostle Peter quotes this same text on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:16-21. It is clear when a literary analysis is done that these words have a last day connotation.

**Literary Analysis**

Verse 28: yIj…wr_tRa JKwoUpVvRa- “pour out my spirit.” According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament “this verb is used 113 times . . . and generally involves the emptying of a container.” So that this outpouring of the Spirit of God in the last days will not simply be like pouring a little bit of water from a pitcher into a glass. Instead it will be like taking that same pitcher and dumping the entire contents on the glass. The Hebrew suggests that this outpouring of God’s Spirit in the last days will be a large and seismic event.

rDcD;b_lD;k_lAo- “upon all flesh.” TWOT explains, “the particle k;Dl has a root that means ‘to be complete, whole.’” This serves to differentiate from “all” meaning “every.” God will “pour out his Spirit in full abundance and complete refreshment.”

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“your son.” “NE; b is basically but not exclusively a reference to the male offspring of human parents.” In this case the prophet Joel is speaking about males.

“and your daughter.” “Daughter, female child of any generation (granddaughter, etc.); by extension: any female, girl, woman.” The prophet Joel is referencing women in this text.

“your elder.” “zāqēn is probably a derivative of zāqān (beard). It is a stative verb which in the Qal denotes the state of being which follows being young.” Here Joel wants to highlight those of advanced age. The outpouring of God’s spirit will not exclude them.

“your young man.” TWOT reports, “bāhûr and its derivative b’hurîm may both be understood to be derivatives of bāḥar ‘to choose,’ in that the picked or chosen men in a military context are usually the young men.” Here again, Joel wants his readers to know that the outpouring of God’s Spirit will not bypass the young either.

Verse 29: “and even upon the slave” “’ābad [root] appears 290 times in the Old Testament.” The noun from that root means “slave, servant,” usually male. In this instance, Joel wants his readers to know that the

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29 Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “!qEz”, 1:249.

outpouring of God’s Spirit will even affect the lives of the lower class. Being poor does not disqualify a person from receiving the outpouring of God’s Spirit in the last days.

A maidservant is a female servant. Joel shows that the outpouring of God’s Spirit is not limited to lower class males, but also the females of this category.

As one reads this text in English and in Hebrew, it becomes clear what God’s last day church is supposed to look like. Here in Joel 2, we see a description of the cast of characters involved in the last events of earth’s history. The people that receive the outpouring of God’s Spirit do not all look the same. They are not all old, or all men, or all wealthy. The picture that emerges is multigenerational, includes both genders, and even crosses socio-economic lines. Joel’s prophecy references old men and young men, sons and daughters, even servants are in view. This is what God’s people should look like in the last days. “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

If the Seventh-day Adventist church would accurately reflect Joel’s last day picture it would need to address the issue of the underrepresentation of young adults. One of the keys to recalling this age group lies in the implications of Joel’s prophecy. Since the varied generations and genders of humanity have received God’s Spirit simultaneously in Joel’s prophecy, it may be safe to conclude they are also working together on some level. This is another biblical principle on which this project is built—intergenerational interaction. The word wholistic has both an individual and corporate

application that includes to one’s entire self in addition to the whole body of Christ. The battle to reclaim the church’s youth will be won through the collective effort of the body of Christ.

There may be those who suppose the job of retaining young people belongs solely to ministers and thought leaders of the church. But the words of Joel 2 suggest something entirely different. There is a distinct role that the older generation has historically played within many successful movements—that is, the role of mentor. Because they have lived and experienced so much of life, their perspective is irreplaceable. As members from the older generation begin to take a genuine interest in young people it will have a magnetic effect on their lives and they will be pulled back into a genuine relationship with God. When young people return to the body of Christ they will want to remain because there is multigenerational interaction—that is, someone with wisdom and knowledge has taken an authentic interest in them. There is a temptation to think that the only way to attract and keep young people is by using other young people as bait. But a more comprehensive approach will have a greater chance of success. The spirit of this method is found in the implications of Joel 2.

**Conclusion**

The story of Eutychus found in Acts 20:7-12 is a fitting metaphor for the phenomenon the church is experiencing right now. Luke describes a scene where the people of God have come together to break bread and fellowship with one another. The apostle Paul was present and begins to speak to them about the goodness of God. Luke says that a young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window. Paul continued to speak, probably longer than expected, and Eutychus falls into a deep sleep. Eutychus
was clearly unaware of the dangerous position he was sitting in. Yet the people in the room were unaware of his danger as well. They were involved in listening to Paul’s words and took no notice of Eutychus.

The Bible says that once Eutychus goes to sleep, he falls from his position in the window and is taken up dead—now this young man has everyone’s attention. Everything stops; all the people huddle around the boy in response to the crisis. Luke describes a scene where Paul works a miracle by placing his body over the body of the youngster and hugs him with all his might. Paul’s words are, “trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him” (Acts 20:10 KJV). Eutychus’ life was renewed that day and all the people were comforted.

The focus of our method may need an adjustment. Instead of using gimmicks and lively instruments and engaging entertainment to “keep them in the church,” we should focus more on encouraging a genuine connection with God. Church attendance is only meaningful in that it encourages and represents an authentic relationship with God. We can reach this Eutychus Generation by focusing on wholistic formational discipleship—that is, encouraging and putting people in touch with the real Jesus who wants to be actively involved in people’s lives in order to form them into His likeness.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are a few fundamental ideas that this project seeks to explore. First, that there is indeed a problem within the Christian church in general and also within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination more specifically, with regard to retaining young adults in the life and fabric of the church. Second, that it is possible to recapture this demographic and return them to an active role in the church. Third, that as we seek to explore the solution(s) to this pervasive problem we will discover that many of the answers lie within the tenors of the basic theology of wholistic formational discipleship. The following will explore the literature that contributes in part to this subject matter.

This literature review is not meant to be exhaustive but does examine a significant body of literature relevant to this project and consists mostly of recent literature but does include some older works. It is meant to be a work in progress that will be updated and revised as new recourses are examined and observed.

I have organized the literature into seven topics. The order is as follows: Motivating Factors, Dropout Myths, The Information Model, Defining Formational Discipleship, Formational Discipleship Model, Winning Them Back and Spiritual Disciplines.
Motivating Factors

The first task of this study is to uncover the possible reasons and motivating factors for the young adults’ absence in the Christian church in general and the Seventh-day Adventist church in particular. A review of the relevant literature exposes many factors that expose the church’s lack of young adults participation.

The literature chronicling the reasons for the high young adult dropout rate has much in common. Many of the same themes and patterns can be observed across denominational lines with respect to this subject. By the time teenagers reach college age, 18-22 years of age, the dropout rate from church becomes staggering. In their book *Essential Church?*, Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer reveal, “[Of the] myriad of reasons…for leaving the church…one dominant theme was that eighteen to twenty-two-year-olds did not see their faith like their parents’ faith. The church connection was lost with the younger generation.”¹ The Literature seems to express that same sentiment in one form or another as the issues surrounding the large young adult dropout rate are explained.

According to David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, one main issue facing the church and their ability to effectively woo young adults surrounds the perceptions about Christianity held by “outsiders.” They assert that the Christian church seems to have an “image problem” that affects both the outside view of the church and also provides a motivating factor for many young adults to leave the church. Many see the church as

“hypocritical,” “too focused on getting converts,” “antihomosexual,” “sheltered,” “too political,” and “judgmental.”

Doug Horchak suggest that another reason for the mass exodus on the part of the young adults is a lack of relevance in their lives. The church is not able to answer life’s deep questions. The church’s “lack of relevance” when it comes to “connecting the dots” is ever-present in the lives of these young adults. He notes, “many people find that their church’s teachings don’t seem to help them make their lives any better.”

The literature reveals the Seventh-day Adventist church has the same problem as other mainline Protestant denominations in that they are losing many of their young adult members. Studies have shown “40 percent to 50 percent of those who are baptized members in their midteens will drop out of the church by the time they are halfway through their 20s.” When surveyed and asked about their reason for leaving the church, young adults cited issues or factors such as “alienation,” irrelevance,” “intolerance,” and inconvenience. It is clear from the research that these young adults are in search of things that many of the SDA churches are not able to offer them. They want “sincerity, genuineness, and intellectual meaning for their lives.”

According to the literature, if the church is not meeting one of these deeply felt needs young adults will likely lose interest.

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3Doug Horchak, “Some Young Adults Are Leaving Church,” *Vertical Thought*, April-June 2009, 5.
5Ibid.
6Ibid., 15.
and disengage themselves from its association.

**Dropout Myths**

The literature reveals several myths surrounding the reasons for the high dropout rate of young adults from the Christian Church. For example, one of the myths that is often identified is that of the young adult seeking and searching for freedom. Many believe that “young adult dropouts leave…because of their desire for personal freedom. The truth is quite the opposite.”\(^7\) The authors of *Essential Church?* discovered many of the young adults they surveyed expressed a deep connection with their church to the point that they took ownership in their congregation. The blame is typically placed upon the prodigal young adult, but this study sheds new light on the subject and redistributes some of the responsibility for keeping “the backdoor closed.” “While students are certainly accountable for their own actions, the church also has the responsibility to make students a valued part of ministry.”\(^8\)

Another myth relates to the idea of premeditation and forethought. Many church dropouts do not plan to leave church before they go. That is to say, their departure is not usually predetermined. In her explanation of the results of a survey on Why Young Adults Quit Church, Audrey Barrick mentions a lack of preparation or scheduling on the part of the dropouts. She says, “Only 20 percent of the church dropouts said that while attending church in high school, they planned on taking a break from church once they

\(^7\)Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer, *Essential Church?*, 80.

\(^8\)Ibid., 83.
That means 80 percent of young adult dropouts did not plan to leave. This sheds an interesting light on the subject, one that reveals an issue of possible neglect on the part of Christian leadership. It may well be that for the majority of dropouts a slight act of intentionality from the church leaders may have prevented the decision to leave in the first place.

One more apparent myth is that young adults leave the church because of anger toward God or because they question their faith. However, the literature reveals another reality that seems to suggest the majority of young adult dropouts are not angry at all, “but quietly and without emotion they exit the local church. Few are angry with or have stopped believing in God. Only 16 percent of dropouts reported that they left…because they no longer wanted to identify with organized religion.”

The Information Model

Much attention has been paid to the concept of a God-shaped life that encounters Him regularly as opposed to a fact-based religion that is intent mostly on acquiring knowledge for intellectual ascent. Several authors have proposed encouraging the idea of a formational experience with God instead of an informational knowledge of God. They believe and teach this as part of a wholistic approach to spirituality. Dybdahl points out the reality of early Protestant Christianity as being essentially wholistic in nature. The Pioneers of the early Protestant Church encouraged more than a simple intellectual

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10 Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer, Essential Church?, 86.

11 Authors like: Jon Dybdahl, Hunger; Leonard Sweet, The Gospel According to Starbucks; Henry Blackaby, Experiencing God just to name a few.
knowledge of God. They promoted disciplines like prayer, fasting and meaningful worship experiences. The deaths of many of the early Protestant Christian founders led to a change in focus from the wholistic view of religion to an intellectual emphasis. As he says, “The original wholistic view of religion faded away.”

Some of the literature is even aimed at leaders, in an attempt to influence them away from the ever-popular intellectual ascent model of Christian Leadership. Many Christian pastors and leaders have fallen into the trap of competing over popular methods of “ministry as mechanics”, as McNeal points out. They often spend most of their time trying to be “successful” in ministry instead of paying attention to the details of “heart-shaping” that would lead a person to an authentic life of spiritual formation. There seems to be an assumption that pastors and “spiritual leaders already understand spiritual formation and automatically apply these disciplines in their own lives.” But the truth seems to be, at least according to McNeal, that “Functionalism has replaced spiritual formation [so that] program manipulation and methodological prowess often serve as mere stopgap strategies to substitute for genuine spiritual leadership.”

The problem does not stop here because the evidence reveals a longing on the part of parishioners to know God deeply, at the formational level, and yet the official teachers and leaders of Christianity have neglected to make spirituality a number one priority. Dybdahl points out a 1994 survey by the Murdoch Trust involving more than 800 respondents, that when asked to rate the top five priorities in pastoral training listed: “spirituality as the number one priority in the perfect pastor, [while the] pastors rate it

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12Dybahl, Hunger, 16.

number four. Seminary professors do not even rate spirituality as in the top five priorities for pastoral training. Their most important item is theological knowledge.”14 The literature has revealed an all too apparent problem within the ranks of Christianity that will continue to perpetuate if something drastic is not done to reverse the mode of thinking when it comes to the battle over informational vs. formational ministry.

Countless books, articles, papers and magazines are dedicated to helping people learn more information about God. In these volumes much attention is spent explaining methodology and process in order to achieve a certain goal, usually building an edifice, raising money, increasing church membership or having a “successful” ministry. As McNeal says, “Although we have the best churches humans can build, God remains conspicuously absent in many of them.”15 What has precipitated this mode of thinking in many ways is this fascination with ministerial success that is found amongst the top spiritual leaders in the Christian culture. The suggestion seems to be that the right information can make you a successful spiritual leader. The focus seems to be on methods and practices instead of on encouraging an authentic, spiritual connection with a real God.

A lot of attention is paid to the world of business to find inspiration on how to run church more efficiently and effectively. Many corporate structures and business schemes are studied and secrets are revealed about what makes companies special and successful. These principles are then translated into “how to” books for the average pastor or church leader to use in ministry. Like the book Simple Church by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger

14Dybahl, Hunger, 14.

15McNeal, A Work of Heart, 11.
who use Apple, a popular computer company, as their model for simplicity in a world of increasing complexity. They point out Apple’s simple design of their computers and mp3 players and the simplicity of the controls and the ease of use. Rainer and Geiger credit Apple with understanding the need for simplicity calling them “pioneers of the simple.” They continue to unfold practices and processes that will simplify ministry goals and objectives but spend very little time talking at all about the formational aspects of ministry. And yet they claim, “this book will help you design a simple process for discipleship in your church.”

There is nothing wrong with the information in the book, but a gaping hole is left where an apparent connection should be. Within the definition of the word “discipleship” should be an implied understanding of formational ministry.

**Defining Formational Discipleship**

A shift in focus has taken place in the literature, in recent years, as the informational model has shown its vulnerability amongst the Christian population. It seems that many have acknowledged the fact that the informational model of religion “[implies a] definition of religion that is primarily cognitive and intellectual.”

The problem is that the informational model has very little to do with helping the Christian to experience or encounter God as a person. Because the informational model has for so long been used to run church life, many people display an unquenched passion for an authentic relationship with God. This is precisely the focus of formational discipleship.

Mulholland defines spiritual formation as, “a process of being conformed to the

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image of Christ for the sake of others.”

His definition reveals the drastic difference between the formational and informational models. While the informational model seeks to supply information in order to gain an understanding of God, the formational model is intent on “the experience of being shaped by God towards wholeness.”

McNeal calls it “heart-shaping.” He thinks the term spiritual formation could be confusing to some since “it conjures up mystical processes and practices that defy investigation and categorization.”

This is precisely why the term formational discipleship has been chosen, in order to alleviate the potential for the confusion of terms.

This act of formational discipleship clearly involves a relationship between God and man. There is an exchange that takes place between the human and Divine that Rutter calls “the double longing.” He explains how we discover our own longing for God and a deep sense of His presence. As we begin our pursuit of Him we discover that He longs for us, but His longing is much deeper than ours. This causes us to increase in our desire for Him and creates a stronger longing within us.

This explanation of the “double longing” contributes to the definition and understanding of the concept of formational discipleship.

**Formational Discipleship Model**

Because of the glaring deficiencies within the ranks of the Christian church, much

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19 Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 16.


21 Thad Rutter, Jr., *Where the Heart Longs to Go* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 17, 18ff.
of the literature has made a deliberate turn towards the encouragement of formational discipleship. People are longing for “the direct touch of the divine” and the literary works available today reflect a response to this need. As this visceral human need has demonstrated itself the literature has responded in kind. Whereas books formerly were all about information, they now often seek to take the reader on a journey of discovery. The old informational model has been discarded at times for the formational model and the numbers seem to support the decision. Rick Warren’s famous book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, has sold 25 million copies and claims at the outset to be a 40-day journey into discovery and purpose. Part of the reason for its popularity seems to be the fact that it approaches the spiritual life from a perspective of formational discipleship instead of just giving the reader information. This quality serves to feed the whole person and not just their brain. Warren makes it clear from the beginning of his book that the purpose of it is transformation. He uses interaction as a tool to draw the reader in so that the experience can happen.

In terms of particular formational discipleship ideas, Warren expands the bounds of worship from something that is to be understood into something that is to be experienced and participated in. He gets the reader in touch with the heart of worship which is “bringing pleasure to God” which Warren says “…is not part of your life; it is your life.” Here he expands the definition of worship and moves it from informational to experiential.

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24Ibid., 63.
The thrust of the formational discipleship model is the idea that we must move from information to formation, from a simple “knowledge about” to “knowledge of.” But according to the literature it needs to be balanced. There should be no preference of emotion over the intellect or vice versa. “In worship we may need to intellectualize our emotions and to emotionalize our intellect.” The point is the intellect and the emotions need to be in harmony with one another. The worshipper should seek balance and wholeness as he or she presses toward the ideals of wholistic formational discipleship.

One way this happens is through the experiential aspects of worship. One must allow their “…knowledge about God [to] become knowledge of God.” Franklin Segler and Randall Bradley point out two Greek words for knowledge that illustrate the difference: “Ginosko means knowledge about a fact . . . Epiginosko is the knowledge of experience such as one exercises in coming to know God.” Almost all of the literature surveyed about spiritual formation and formational theory includes worship. It seems to be the key ingredient in the making of true formational theology. Dybdahl writes, “…worship is the central priority of God’s people.”

**Winning Them Back**

Most of the literature that gives statistics and survey results about why young people are leaving the church also provides suggestions, methods and possible solutions.

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27 Ibid.

to this current crisis. The literature seems to be encouraging, in that “with little effort [it is surprising] how many who have left could be rescued.” 86 SDA young adult dropouts were surveyed and asked, “How likely is it that you might return to the Adventist Church someday?” 26 percent said it was “somewhat likely,” while another 15 percent said it was “very likely.” Yet another third were uncertain, “making the picture appear hopeful for nearly three fourths of the dropouts.” The literature seems to agree that recapturing young adult dropouts is not a lost cause.

The literature provides another suggested solution in finding a way to reconnect the idea of faith with the particular church. The research shows that many of the young adults who leave the church do no feel that they are also leaving their faith. They simply do not have a connection between the two entities. When conducting an interview with a man who had once been a young adult dropout but was now back in the church a discovery was made about this important connection (or lack thereof) between faith and the church. Rainer and Rainer reveal that when Joe recounted his conversations with parents during his time away from the church, and their pleas with him to return to church, the reason they often gave was simply, “You need to get back in church” without any other explanation.

The underlying attitude of the Joe’s parents provides a discovery for the authors. They seem to uncover a key difference between Generational thinking when it comes to church. “This line of…argumentation…worked with the older generations, but it does not resonate with the latest generation of young adults. This

29Dudley, Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church, 93.

30Ibid.

31Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer, Essential Church?, 27.
generation...believes...they have faith. But unless [they] fuse faith and church they will see no reason to stay....”

There needs to be a reawakening of moving young people from conversion to discipleship. “God has converted our children, but we have failed to disciple them.”

The literature also intimates that a return to the core values of Biblical spirituality will begin to cause religion to have deep meaning in the lives of parishioners and will have the effect of keeping and recapturing young adults back into church once again. Most young people are asking deep and challenging questions that they have traditionally felt the church was unable to answer. However, the essence of biblical spirituality at its core is well suited to answer life’s deep and meaningful questions. A return to these formational principals will undoubtedly provide a means of retention for the church and its young adult population.

The Spiritual Disciplines

The spiritual disciples can also provide a retentive barrier for young adults to remain engaged in church life. A close examination of the current literature pertaining to spiritual formation will reveal some similarities in the treatment of the information. Most of the literature that encourages a deep connection to God also encourages a use of certain spiritual disciplines. Almost all of the literature includes specific spiritual disciplines like: Worship, prayer/meditation, fasting and simplicity. One well-known source for outlining the practice of spiritual disciples is Celebration of Discipline by Foster. In his work he outlines, in great detail, three areas of spiritual discipline known

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32Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer, Essential Church?, 27.
as “The Inward Disciplines,” “The Outward Disciplines,” and “The Corporate Disciplines.” As he points out, “In one form or another all of the devotional masters have affirmed the necessity of the Disciplines.”

Because of the foreign nature of the idea of using spiritual disciplines in Christian life many of the authors find it necessary to distinguish their Christian form of practicing spiritual disciplines from the forms found in Eastern religions. For instance, when speaking about meditation Foster made clear the distinction between Eastern religions and Christian meditation when he said, “Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind. The two ideas are quite different.” Many Christians have a gross misunderstanding of meditation and in some cases even fear it. Dybdahl uses words like “wrong path” and “true meditation” to show the possible reasons for this aversion to things that seem to resemble Eastern Religions. Other writers seem to be influenced to clarify their Christian motivations as they delineate the various avenues of the spiritual disciplines. They seem to attempt to distinguish themselves from Eastern religions even when they do not specifically mention them by name. Such is the case with Mulholland when he writes about fasting. He says, “One of the main purposes of fasting is to wean us from our dependence upon God’s gifts…to become dependent upon God alone. We have a tendency to grasp…the gifts of God. Whenever our grasp of something God has given…becomes…an idol, a discipline of fasting is needed.” In his short paragraph Mulholland mentions God four times and


34Ibid., 20.

35Mulholland, Invitation to a Journey.
also mentions the word idol. He, as well as other authors writing about the spiritual disciplines, seems to distance his mode of practicing the disciplines from that of the world of Eastern Religions.

The literature also explores the spiritual discipline of devotional spirituality. It exposes our reason for being created and uplifts our relationship with God as being higher than any other. We actively work on our relationship with God when we focus on devotional spirituality. Many people are now longing for Him and do not even know it. “No other person, possession, or position will satisfy our deepest longings.” Nurturing spirituality then becomes paramount in the lives of those who seek a meaningful relationship with their Creator. This is at times hard to come by. Sometimes the reason for this is because of an intellectual barrier. One way to overcome this barrier is by presenting and articulating the message of salvation in Scripture clearly. These things for the believer become a means of building up their own faith and trust in a real God. As they prepare simple teachings to share with those who may be interested in the Gospel they will find themselves understanding more of God’s Word. This is a simple way to encourage members into a real, meaningful relationship with God as they work for the salvation of other souls for Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Performing this literature review has been beneficial because it has helped to shape the direction of my dissertation topic and has given me a clearer understanding of the overarching themes and ideas prevalent in the academic and theological world. The

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36 Kenneth Boa, Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 196.
available literature on my topic is plentiful and thus provides for a thorough treatment of the subject matter. The sheer volume of available literature on and related to the subject, the mass exodus of young adults from the Christian Church, is eye-opening as a testament to the depth and seriousness of the prevailing problem. At first I was overwhelmed and thought the problem to be insurmountable, but after reading such encouraging statistics and anecdotal evidence about recapturing these young adults I became hopeful again.

Each section of this literature review is revealing as it casts light on newfound theories and debunks myths that help to shape our understanding of how to interpret the evidence and how we might be able to address the situation.

My original theory has been reinforced through this literature review. I have maintained a view of shared responsibility between the church and its absent young people as to the cause of their departure. However, I now also understand that the same problems prevalent in the experiences of those who leave the church are evident in the lives of those who are never won to Christ in the first place. Issues like hypocrisy, intolerance, bigotry and judgmentalism all play an active role in keeping young adults from joining our churches. A survey of the literature has given me a greater appreciation for the current predicament. It is a profoundly severe problem that cannot be ignored.

It is encouraging to find so much available literature on the subject of reclaiming our wayward young adults. It gives a strong indication that our church does not have its proverbial “head in the sand“ with regards to this vital issue. It appears that the church is studying the root causes of the problem with the intention of taking effectual corrective action.
It is additionally reassuring to observe the Seventh-day Adventist church’s involvement in performing studies and writing books aimed at enlightening its leadership about this prevailing problem. Every book I read on the subject was optimistic about finding a workable solution. None of the literature was the least bit pessimistic. No one said “it can’t be done” or “it’s too late…they’re lost.” The other encouraging aspect of this is that the suggestions on how to recapture these young adults are very simple and do not seem to take much effort. However, it does mean we no longer have any excuse to not get involved in trying to win back our young people. These simple solutions call for swift and decisive action.

This literature review has been instrumental in giving me a new understanding about some of the myths that are purported about why young people leave the church. I was very surprised to see the data on the subject because it goes against my natural feelings about the topic. First of all, I always thought the majority of absent young adults are either rebellious, angry or at the very least wayward. I now understand, according to the surveys and other evidence, that for many of them there is simply a disconnect from church but usually not from their faith. There is a different mentality and understanding that takes place within the mind of today’s youth that is a large divergence from the previous generations’. Whereas my grandfather’s generation tied faith to the entity of church, today’s youth do not make the same automatic connection. For my grandfather and people of his generation to leave the church is to walk away from salvation. But for today’s young adult, walking away from church does not affect faith, spirituality or relationship with God at all. This fact is a big indictment on the church because it suggests that many of those young adults who are now gone may not have ever left had
we found a way to engage them and help them to connect this idea of living faith with the church.

This goes back to my argument for shared responsibility between the young adult and the church as the reason for their departure. The young person can make their own decision, but it would seem to me that the church could and can do more to keep people involved in the fabric of the congregational life. This is precisely why I chose to name this group of absent young adults “The Eutychus Generation,” because just as in the story of Eutychus found in Acts 20, this current generation is sitting in a dangerous position in the window sill of life. None of the people from the older generation notice them in a dangerous position because they are just happy their child is in church. The dangerous position represents the teenager sitting in church but is uninvolved and disengaged from the life of the church. If we do nothing they will eventually fall asleep in the window and fall out of the sill and plunge to their death. But if we find a way to engage them they will willingly come down from that dangerous position and get involved in the inner workings of the body and find meaning. Then there is a chance that they will stay in the church when it comes time for them to make their own decision.

We must be more committed to engaging our young people, not just so that they will stay in church, but also so that they will be fit for God’s soon-coming kingdom. This generation is good at seeing through pretense. If our only motivation is to keep them in church they will see through that and be turned off again. We must learn to be genuine, loving and open with our young people in order to make them ready for God’s kingdom.
Because of what I have been exposed to in the literature I am committed to working hard to make sure that all young people under my influence will feel a sense of belonging, pride and ownership in their church. I am convinced now that it does not take much.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This chapter will provide a description of the research project developed and executed at Immanuel Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church. The information presented in this chapter will be discernably built upon the foundations of the Theological Reflection and Literature Review found in chapters 2 and 3, respectively. I will start by laying out the context for ministry in the Durham, NC area, including a short profile of the city itself and the church body located at 2102 S. Alston Ave. Durham, NC. I will then present a descriptive narrative recounting the events that took place during the 6-week research project. The narrative will guide the reader through the modes, methods and mindset that helped to frame the research project from start to finish.

The chapter is outlined in this way:

1. Profile of Durham, NC
2. Profile of ITSDA
3. Development of the Hypothesis
4. Assumptions and Expectations of the Project
5. Planning the Young Adult Retreat
6. Disseminating Information
7. Adaptation of Retreat Format and Documents
8. Development of Baseline and Exit Surveys
9. “Formed For His Purpose” Spiritual Retreat
10. 5-Week Young Adult Discipleship Class
11. Preliminary Observations about the Program
12. Conclusion
**Profile of Durham, NC**

Durham is a diverse city located in an area known as the Research Triangle (Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill) in North Carolina. There are three major Universities located in the area—Duke University (Durham), University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) and North Carolina State University (Raleigh), not to mention several other universities and colleges in the area. The presence of these schools creates a rich diversity in areas such as age, race, education, income and religious perspectives (and influences). The most relevant demographic category for this project is age, since the presence of these universities creates an instant pool of young adults ages 18-35. Many young adults come to the triangle for undergraduate education (typically 18-22) as well as graduate education (25-30), including law school, dental school and medical school. Because this is true, the 18-35 demographic is fully represented in each of these schools.

**Profile of ITSDA**

ITSDA is a 455-member church located in Durham, NC. The church was started in 1911 when Elder G.E. Peters held an evangelistic crusade in a tent on the corner of Pine and Piedmont Ave. ITSDA was the first Seventh-day Adventist church established in the Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina area and at 101 years old is the oldest Seventh-day Adventist church in the Research Triangle.

Because of the rich and deep-rooted history of the church, there is a natural traditional philosophy that prevails throughout the congregation. Like many other traditional churches, ITSDA has a tendency toward maintenance and upkeep of the organization rather than advancing the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church. In many cases, our church has confused the upkeep of the organization as the mission of the
church. For this reason, activities and programs that do not conform to the normal course of action are often met with resistance and apparent hostility. Since many of the activities and programs that interest young adults are outside of the traditional paradigm, it makes ministry to 18-35 year-olds a bit more arduous than necessary.

There is also an apparent underlying fear that the new young adult population will take over and push the longstanding leadership and influence out of the church. Many of the older members of ITSDA treat the young adult population as a threat to their understanding of organized church structure. This often encourages an illogically emotional response to any young adult ministry-related suggestion or proposal. While these older members do not make up the majority of this attitude, they are the loudest ones, making them the vocal majority.

On the other hand, there is a much larger group of older members of ITSDA who are extremely supportive of the young adults and their agenda in church. They often invite these students into their homes for Sabbath lunch and give them a home away from home. These members encourage young adult participation in the fabric of church life, inviting them to prayer meeting, business meeting and the like. These members make it their job to seek out and find new, young adult students in order that they might show them some consistent and sustained kindness while the students matriculate through school. This act has been the motivation for many of these students to put down roots in the Triangle and raise families here as members of ITSDA. Many of these older, supportive members have children of their own who were recently in the 18-35 age group. This may be part of the reason they are so supportive of young adults at ITSDA.
Development of the Hypothesis

I have observed that even though our church has many young adults ages 18-35 in attendance, many of them are from out of town or they are newer members. I noticed that a great number of young adults that grew up at ITSDA are missing. I wondered about was this is and hypothesized that there was something about their past history with ITSDA that has discouraged them from coming to church regularly.

ITSDA, like many other Seventh-day Adventist churches, has a strong emphasis on presenting the Truth of God’s Word. This focus on truth encouraged a lopsided approach to spirituality over the years that implicitly taught members to rely heavily on correct information to achieve spirituality. Over the years, the paradigm for how the world learns has shifted so that instead of simply getting facts and information about something, people now want to have an experience to gain further understanding.

I surmised that this cultural shift in focus from what I call the information model to an experiential emphasis has kept our church from maintaining the interest of its young adults because ITSDA has not embraced this new model in its teachings and practice. The indigenous young adults no longer attend for more interesting alternatives. I further inferred the interest of the homegrown young adults was never captured while they were adolescents and were still coming to church. Based on the age in which they began to leave the church, it seems as though the moment they were able to decide for themselves whether or not they would attend church, they chose to go elsewhere.

I hypothesized that a focus on wholistic spirituality could and would influence young adults to become reengaged in church to the point that it would retain them.
**Assumptions and Expectations of the Project**

Since the project was carried out in a real life context of my church I hoped that it would reach beyond the fulfillment of the requirements of my DMin degree and also provide a spark that would ignite enthusiasm and excitement within the young adult population of the church. I had an expectation that this program would be effectual and help to galvanize the young adults of ITSDA.

I thought the activity and focus on young adults at church would help them to become more enthusiastic, but I assumed that there would not be much young adult participation in my research. I thought I would have 20-25 participants at most. I was thoroughly surprised to have 46 participants.

Another assumption I made was that the young adults participating in the program would not be acquainted with the various aspects of non-traditional Adventism. I supposed they would be uncomfortable with things like Christian meditation, prayer journaling and singing aloud during private worship. These are not part of a typical traditional Seventh-day Adventist upbringing and therefore would be foreign to many or most of the participants in my program. My preliminary observations seemed to support my assumption.

Lastly, I expected the spiritual retreat would be enough to both help acquaint the young adults to many of the aspects of formational discipleship as well as give me adequate research material to test my hypothesis. But after speaking with my advisor, Dr. Jon Dybdahl, he suggested I follow the retreat up with a Sabbath School class to further explore and explain the aspects of my WFD program. He felt the discipleship class would be necessary to give a better understanding to the rationale that supports each
of the aspects of the program. I believe his assessment was correct and am grateful to him for making such a suggestion.

**Planning the Young Adult Retreat**

I developed a 6-week Wholistic Formational Discipleship program. It included a Young Adult Spiritual Retreat followed by a 5-week Young Adult Discipleship Class. The retreat was designed to provide a “spiritual jumpstart,” so-to-speak, while the discipleship class would give the experiential building blocks and the step-by-step instructions and activities about how one should engage in a wholistic life of spirituality. The retreat was an all-day (8 hour) event on a Sabbath and the Discipleship class followed on the next 5 Sabbaths.

I began by soliciting the help of Marcia Conner, a member of ITSDA who acts as the church’s unofficial event planner. I have worked closely with her over the years as Pastor of ITSDA since 2008. She has planned many successful events at our church and has shown an extraordinary ability to pull off a well-ordered, professional, classy program. She is great at managing people and making sure all the important details are covered. As the former City Manager for Durham, she is more than capable of getting things done. She works well under stress and seems to thrive in stressful situations. Because she thrives in stressful situations and does not shrink in the midst of hardship, I thought she was the right person to lead the planning of the Young Adult Spiritual Retreat.

We sat down one day in my office and planned out all the particulars of the retreat and discussed several venues as sites to host the event and settled on a property owned by one of our church members. One day while thinking and praying about how to best go
about this research project, I remembered that one of my Elders, Raymond Lassiter, offered his assistance if he was needed in any way. He mentioned that he understood the rigors of doctoral work since he recently labored with his wife through her doctoral process. I called him and asked if we could use his property for the retreat and he was delighted to oblige. He owns a large property known as the Lassiter Homestead with about 100 acres of land. It has been owned by his family for four generations and was the place where he grew up. There is a nice natural, undeveloped area where an old barn and some pieces of original equipment were kept. The homestead was the site of a tobacco farm 50 years ago. The rustic and timeworn feel of the acreage facilitated the natural feel we pursued as we attempted to encourage participants to commune with God in nature.

Marcia and I visited his property one day and further planned as we visualized where everything would be located. Being out in nature can often set the atmosphere allowing one to commune with God more easily. For this reason the Homestead was an ideal spot, providing excellent staging for the young adults to commune with God. I owe Marcia and Elder Lassiter a big debt of gratitude. They were both tremendously helpful to me in the execution of a successful retreat event.

**Disseminating Information**

It was important that I make contact with as many young adults as possible to insure an adequate sample size. I utilized several communication methods to make contact so that no one would slip through the cracks. I used church bulletin announcements, email, text messages, Twitter, Facebook and word of mouth to get the word out and garner participation.
I began with a bulletin announcement that I highlighted and brought to the attention of the congregation from the pulpit for a few consecutive Sabbaths. The bulletin announcement invited all young adults between the ages of 18-35 who were interested in participating in a young adult discipleship program to sign a sheet of paper affixed to my office door. The announcement garnered about 7 participants.

I followed that up with email invitation to 98 young adults asking for an RSVP to help with planning. The email was thorough (see appendix B) at 409 words long, and explained the various aspects of the retreat in intricate detail. All the pertinent information was included like date and time of event, specific topics to be covered, address of Lassiter Homestead, etc. The email also detailed other aspects of the overall 6-week program including the dates, times, location and topics to be covered in the 5-week discipleship program. Attached to the email were some pertinent documents advertising the event, driving directions to the Lassiter Homestead and an informed consent form.

Because the email was so lengthy, there was a risk that the recipients would not read through the whole thing, or they might elect to read it later because it was too lengthy to read through all at one time. I knew there was a chance that the pertinent details would go unnoticed because of the sheer volume of information. But I thought it was worth the risk because I wanted to be sure everything was clear; I did not want any participant to be involved under false pretenses. This is also why I used so many different methods of communication so that even those who do not like reading long emails would be included.

I sent the email to myself and to Marcia Conner, and then entered the email
addresses of the young adult participants in the “blind copy” line to increase their level of privacy. I asked the participants to click “reply all” so that both my event planner and I would receive their RSVP and thereby get an accurate count of those who planned to participate. I received 30 RSVPs.

Finally, I sent out text messages to those who had not yet RSVP’d inviting them to check their email for my invitation. I did not get many more RSVPs from that but there were several who showed up to the retreat on the day of the event. I would like to think my text message is what helped to precipitate that action but I can’t be sure.

I then posted my invitation on Twitter and Facebook inviting any young adult between the ages of 18-35 who was affiliated with ITSDA to meet us at the Lassiter Homestead at the appropriate time. I know that ITSDA young adults utilize both of these communication methods, but I can’t be absolutely sure what effect they had on attendance or participation.

**Adaptation of Retreat Format and Documents**

As I conceptualized how I would develop the young adult retreat, I thought back to my seminary days and remembered a spiritual retreat that was assigned as a required activity in association with my Spiritual Formation class in my first semester at Andrews University. Dr. Joseph Kidder taught the class and the retreat had a dramatic affect on my spirituality. After participating in the retreat, I realized that my spirituality was not as sturdy as I had thought. I struggled that day with things like quiet contemplation and silent prayer. I left there with a renewed sense that I needed to really work on my personal relationship with God in a deliberate and discernable way. Instead of starting
from scratch or reinventing the wheel, I decided to adapt the retreat format and documentation from Dr. Kidder’s event.

I emailed Dr. Joseph Kidder and explained my situation. I informed him that I wanted to conduct a young adult spiritual retreat as part of my dissertation research for my DMin project and asked if he would be willing to allow me to utilize his format and document. He said “yes” and sent me his latest, updated retreat booklet entitled, “God’s Presence in My Life: A Spiritual Retreat.” I reviewed the document upon receipt and began the adaptation process immediately. The first change I made was to the physical size of the document itself. Dr. Kidder used full 8½ x 11 sheets of paper stapled together. I wanted my retreat document to be more like a traditional booklet. I still utilized the 8½ x 11 size, but in landscape orientation and folded in half and stapled down the middle like the binding of a book. The change in size made the booklets more portable and easier to use.

It also allowed me to design a retreat logo and utilize it on the front cover of the booklet. I used a picture of a man’s hands shaping a lump of clay on a potter’s wheel. I entitled the retreat “Formed for His Purpose.” All this gave the retreat an official, well-planned and professional feel—something I have found is of vital importance for young adult respect and participation. Anything that appears to be shoddy or half-done will be met with skepticism and disregarded as worthless. I wanted to make a good first impression to insure seriousness of attitude throughout the, 8-hour spiritual retreat. I thought the design of the retreat booklet aided that effort tremendously.

I then deleted everything on pages 1 and 2 except for “Rules for Groups,” which explained the four guidelines used to direct the various group discussions. These changes
cut down the amount of booklet pages from 17 to 14. I made other minor adjustments and corrections to the format and layout of the document as needed. I did not change any of the texts from the original document, as they were just right to help bring the young adult participants face-to-face with God, so to speak. I am very grateful to Dr. Kidder for his generosity to me in this circumstance. He saved me a lot of time and energy.

**Development of the Baseline and Exit Surveys**

The job of the baseline survey is to establish a standard from which to judge the apparent effectiveness of the WFD program by comparing it to the results of the exit survey at the end of said program. I began the process by looking at various sample surveys to get an idea of how to craft a survey from scratch. I then began to develop a series of statements that I thought would help me expose the issues involved in my program. The statements were intended to get a sense for the participants’ levels of “spiritual fitness.” These are the four questions I used to determine spiritual fitness:

1. How comfortable is the participant with practicing spiritual things?
2. How does not attending church affect the participant?
3. How often does the participant attend church?
4. When the participant attends, how involved is he or she?

The process involved a lot of work with many edits and redoes but in the end what I had were a baseline survey and an exit survey that closely resembled one another and were intended to be administered 5-6 weeks apart. The baseline survey would establish the standard and the exit survey would record the change when the two were compared. I used a 5-point, worded Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree) for the first half of the survey and then a 4-point, worded Likert scale (Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never) for
the second half. I ended the baseline survey with some demographic questions that I did not repeat on the exit survey.

To insure complete confidentiality, the anonymous baseline surveys were distributed without a place to write one’s name. Instead, each survey had a unique number written in the top, right-hand corner. When completed, each survey was individually placed into a yellow manila envelope and the subject was asked to write his/her name on the outside of the envelope. It was then sealed and was not reopened until the time when the exit survey was ready to be distributed, at the end of the six weeks. At that time the envelopes were opened and the baseline surveys were removed in order to reveal the unique number in the top, right-hand corner. New exit surveys with numbers matching the baseline surveys were inserted into the appropriate envelopes and resealed.

On the final day of the 5-week Sabbath school class, the subjects were given the envelope with his or her name on it and were instructed to complete the survey that was inside. At its completion, they turned in the survey to me and kept the envelope with their names on them. At no time were the surveys read while in the named envelopes. The data was collected, examined and compared according to the matching numbers only.

“Formed for His Purpose” Spiritual Retreat

The young adults began to arrive at the Lassiter Homestead at 9:30am, the scheduled time for the beginning of our continental breakfast. Upon arrival each participant was given a “Formed for His Purpose” retreat folder, complete with retreat booklet, composition book, retreat schedule, pencil, Informed Consent form and manila envelope with baseline survey inside. They were asked to sign in on the attendance
record—filling in their name, email address and phone number. They were then given specific instructions about how to fill out the baseline survey in accordance with the prescribed method for preserving anonymity (referenced in the previous section). They were asked to fill out their surveys before the start of the retreat to insure an uncontaminated baseline. The baseline was intended to gauge the participants’ state of mind before they experienced any of the WFD program.

Once the surveys were collected, the subjects were able to eat some of the assorted continental breakfast food items that were placed under a tent with chairs. As the numbers grew, the young adults began to mingle and socialize more readily. This continued for about 30 minutes and we began the program with opening prayer at approximately 10:00 am. After prayer, I addressed the group with some introductory remarks regarding the differences between the Christian approach to spirituality and the one found in Eastern Religion. I wanted to begin by settling the minds of many who might recoil at the suggestion of things like meditation, recitation and contemplation. I ended my introduction with an orientation to the retreat booklet.

I then asked the participants to count off from numbers 1-6 to form small groups. The entire group was then dismissed from the main tent into six designated sections around the Lassiter Homestead. Three groups were located under tents provided by a local funeral home; the other three were out in the open air seated in a circle on metal chairs. The first order of business was for the members of the small groups to get acquainted with one another, recording the vital information for each group participant. Approximately 15 minutes were dedicated to this task before moving on to the first morning session activity.
A dinner bell conveniently hanging beside the wall of one of the barns on the homestead was utilized to signal the movement from one activity to the next. I kept close watch of the time and made sure to ring the bell twice as the “5-minute warning bell” and once to signal a change to the next activity in the retreat booklet. This allowed for free movement from one activity to the next without the interruption of needless talking.

After the breakfast and introduction phase we spent most of the morning in silence, a difficult task for many. The initial morning session was to be completed in solitude and silence. It was a contemplative exercise where the participant was instructed to read the Word, interpret the Word and then apply the Word.

The writing exercise for the morning session made up the “Applying the Word” section. It was entitled, The Life Review. In it the subject is required to “look back over [one’s] life to consider [one’s] experience [to determine] what [one] can discern about God’s provision, care and love” (retreat booklet pg. 2). A full 45 minutes were allotted for The Life Review. Next was the Small Group Share. After hearing the bell, the participants met in their small groups and shared with one another the things they had discovered in The Life Review. The Small Group Share went for a full hour before we broke for lunch at 12:30pm at the Lassiter home, about ¼ mile walk from the retreat site.

After lunch, which lasted approximately 1-hour, we walked back down to the retreat site to begin our afternoon session with the Prayer and Promise Walk. I preferred physical activity after lunch instead of a sedentary, sleep-promoting activity like meditation right after lunch. The Lassiter’s have a section of the homestead where the position of the trees creates a natural amphitheater of sorts. The trees in that section are very tall and spaced out so that their leaves create a shade roof. Eight laminated texts of
Scripture were nailed to eight different trees, spaced accordingly to allow for several people to view each text simultaneously. The entire group was instructed to enter the mini trail beside the old barn, spread out and read the texts found on the eight placards. They were told to meditate on those texts for a few moments and then write down their response in silence. The exercise was complete when all 8 texts were read and responded to in writing. That activity took 35 minutes.

35 minutes were also allotted for the next activity, Meditation/Reflection on the Text. In this activity, the participants were asked to perform a thoughtful, unhurried and silent reading of John 15:1-17 and 1 Timothy 4:9-16. They then had to respond to several questions pertaining to each passage of Scripture meant to provoke deep thought and reflection on the Word of God.

The next activity, a Joyful Response, was also scheduled to take 35 minutes. In this activity the participants were encouraged to create an artistic response to God based on the John 15:1-17 text. The artistic rendering could be in the form of a written Psalm, poem, prayer, song, picture, a coat of arms, or some other artistic expression. Colored pencils, markers and crayons were provided for this activity. This activity, like the previous one, was to be completed in solitude.

The last activity of the day was another Small Group Share and would take 45 minutes to complete. In this group share the subjects were instructed to share their Joyful Responses with one another. Each group was to be careful to follow the rules outlined for small groups at the beginning of the retreat. The small group rules became vitally important during this activity because participants tend to be shy about sharing their
artistic responses to God, especially if they are not artists. The small group rules read as follows:

1. Do not preach or give advice. Listen empathetically.
2. Maintain confidentiality. Things shared in the group should not go out.
3. Give equal time to group members. Do not monopolize discussion.
4. Let people share naturally. Do not force people to share.

All the activities ended roughly at 4:00pm and the next hour was dedicated to a retreat wrap-up and debriefing session under the main tent. Here, the participants shared their responses and reactions to the day’s events. They expressed their discomfort, joy, satisfaction and delight with certain parts of the spiritual retreat and with the event as a whole. We closed out the festivities with a Ball of Yarn activity. We all stood in a tightly packed circle, shoulder-to-shoulder, and I began by throwing a big ball of yarn across the circle to someone adjacent to me while blurting out a word that described the retreat. While throwing the yard I simultaneously held on to a piece of the ball. Each person who catches the ball must throw the ball while holding on to a piece of it while yelling out a word describing the retreat. In the end we had a big web made of yarn signifying our connectedness to each other because of the share experience of the retreat. It was a fitting end to a spiritually uplifting day.

5-Week Young Adult Discipleship Class

The purpose of the discipleship Sabbath School class was to take time to explore in greater detail the various aspects of the WFD program. My hope was that the greater attention paid to each aspect of the WFD program would better equip the participants to assimilate the different aspects of the program into their spiritual lives.

At the start of the first class session I distributed the baseline survey to all those
who did not participate in the Spiritual Retreat. I wanted to be sure that everyone involved in the program was able to fill out the survey instrument in order to garner as many test subjects as possible. This method entered a new and distinct group into the research group, bringing the total to 3. I now had a group that attended the retreat and the discipleship class, a group that only attended the retreat and one that only attended the discipleship class.

We began each Sabbath at 9:30am with a light breakfast and then went into our class time at 9:45am. It was difficult to get a large enough group to arrive on time so that we could begin promptly at 9:45am so on most Sabbaths the lesson began at 10:00am. I anticipated timeliness might be a problem since I was dealing with a population of people who were not accustomed to attending Sabbath School from week-to-week. For this reason, I advertised and maintained the light breakfast to begin at 9:30am. From my observations, the breakfast had a small positive effect on timeliness because I never had to begin the lesson any later than 10:00am. The average attendance for the discipleship class was 20 participants per Sabbath.

There are five separate and distinct subjects within the WFD program. Each week we focused on one of the five prongs. Here are the five subjects in order of how we examined them in the program:

1. Individual & Corporate Worship
2. Practicing God’s Presence
3. Intergenerational Interaction
4. Becoming a Student of the Word
5. Service

I began the program by defining WFD as an organized program designed to address the whole person as it pertains to developing authentic Christian spirituality.
WFD is a concept that finds its roots in wholism and seeks to move beyond the surface to achieve deep, genuine and lasting spirituality. It is based on what I call the “formation model” as opposed to the “information model.” That is to say, WFD is intent on helping a person to be formed into the image of God, not just be informed about Him. This explanation served as the foundation for everything we discussed thereafter. All five subjects were understood within the framework of that definition.

Every week, each participant was required to sign-in on the attendance record on the table at the entrance. They were then instructed to place their cell phones into the basket that sat beside the attendance sheet. I wanted to continue our phone fast inspired by the spiritual retreat to encourage focus, concentration and a deeper connection with God. I was careful to provide plenty of extra Bibles so that those who normally use their cell phone Bible would not be without the Word of God.

On the first day of the discipleship class, each participant was given a composition book, pencil and a “40-Days of Fasting” booklet. The composition book was to be used for taking notes in class and as a prayer journal at home. Participants were instructed to write his or her name on the book and to bring it with them to every discipleship class session. At the end of each class the young adults were given a homework assignment that instructed them to practice that day’s lesson and a spiritual discipline in some particular way. They were also given a different fast to practice weekly. There was usually a prayer journal assignment as well. I wanted the young adult participants to immerse themselves in spiritual things for the entire 5-week program.

There was another unintended consequence at work that I had not planned but God was certainly leading in our church family. Not long before my WFD program
began, ITSDA had undertaken a stewardship campaign to raise funds to pay off its church mortgage in order to expand its ministry by building a new edifice on the campus. We were in an intensely spiritual phase as a church body that included a 24-hour prayer vigil and church wide 40-days of prayer and fasting. Every Sabbath, just before the start of my sermon, I would announce the new weekly fast to the congregation. I used those same fasts for my young adult group, but I announced every fast to them first during the Sabbath School time. I believe this played a major role in solidifying the young adults as part of the ITSDA family and encouraged their involvement in the stewardship program in a way that I had not seen before. In this way, both the stewardship campaign and the young adult discipleship class were enhanced by the presence of the other.

Preliminary Observations About the Program

Before I collected any data or turned in my surveys to the statistician for tabulations of any kind, I made some observations about the program in general. According to my attendance logs, there were 46 participants at the spiritual retreat. Most of them stayed for the entire day and seemed to be thoroughly engaged and positively contemplative about their spirituality and standing with God. There were many young adults who I had never seen at church before. I attributed that largely to the fact that it was a special outdoor event away from the church building. My suspicions about that were apparently confirmed when I noticed that many who do not usually come to church, who came to the outdoor retreat, did not subsequently attend the discipleship class, which was held at the church.
Conclusion

Thus completes the account of my research methodology and implementation to the best of my knowledge. This chapter attempted to trace my flow of thought from inception to culmination of the research project as it was influenced heavily by the Scriptural material displayed in the Theological Reflection as well as by the literature exhibited in the Literature Review. It fulfilled its design by first giving an overview of the ministry context. It then took the reader through the mindset, expectations and thoughts that helped to shape the research methodology. Lastly, it gave a detailed narrative carrying the reader through the 6-weeks-worth of events that made up the research project.
CHAPTER V

DATA ASSESSMENT & RESULTS

Introduction

The impetus for my project grew out of two principal motivating factors. The first factor was my general longing to see more people my age actively involved in church. I was 29 years of age when I arrived in Durham in April of 2008 as ITSDA’s new pastor. When I observed the congregation I noticed many missing young people in the 18-35-age range. Having spent my entire ministry as a “young adult” I had a natural desire to see more people my age represented in the church family. In spite of the built-in attraction of ITSDA to young adults, because of the potential for peer relationships due to the church’s proximity to area colleges and universities, there was an alarming absence of indigenous Durham-raised young adults. I immediately wondered about the reason for their absence.

The second motivation for the subject matter of this project grew organically out of the process of evaluation of the region where ITSDA resides. It did not take long to recognize our potential for increased young adult involvement due to our unique location in the Research Triangle of North Carolina. Because of the large number of colleges and universities in the area it was apparent that God had placed a special mission upon Immanuel Temple to get active in winning young adults to His Remnant church. These facts made choosing the subject of my project feel obvious and appropriate. The entire
project was bent toward this aim and only needed a suitable way to measure the success or failure of the intended intervention. Of the various methods from which to choose I selected the baseline and exit survey approach to quantify the apparent result of my WFD program. Below you will find a description of the research method, a summary and evaluation of the project data, and a conclusion tying it all together.

**Description of the Method**

The research component of the project was meant to aid in uncovering significant factors germane to the retention of young adults at Immanuel Temple Seventh-day Adventist church in Durham, NC. I wished to discover whether a six-week wholistic formational discipleship program would engender in young adult members a deeper appreciation and excitement for God and the things of God. The success of such a program could be expected to increase the young adult community’s church attendance and involvement. My first task was to find a tool of measurement with which to adequately gauge these factors and results. I decided to utilize the survey approach.

I had no experience with formulating surveys so I began by looking for online research instruments that could help to shape the scope of my questions with regard to wholistic spirituality. I also consulted some “how to” materials online like, “Designing Surveys That Count” — a workshop cosponsored by The Community Research Center At Keene State College and Monadnock United Way, facilitated by Therese Seibert, PhD. This PDF document outlines the various factors to be considered as one attempts to conduct survey research.

Next, I perused several online surveys related to formational discipleship to get a feel for the flow and structure of a good survey instrument in hopes of finding one that I
could modify for my research needs. I found one such assessment online at http://tda.lifeway.com, entitled “Transformational Discipleship Assessment.” Lifeway Research designed this assessment tool for anyone who wants to better understand or measure his or her spiritual development from the perspective of eight attributes of biblical maturity. They are:

1. Bible Engagement
2. Obeying God and Denying Self
3. Serving God and Others
4. Sharing Christ
5. Exercising Faith
6. Seeking God
7. Building Relationships
8. Unashamed (Transparency)

I was curious about how Lifeway created its assessment so I signed up to take the online survey and created a username and password. After completing the entire assessment, I saved my results and the survey questions themselves. I then began to craft my own survey in accordance with Lifeway’s transformational discipleship assessment. I started with the baseline survey and chose questions aimed at establishing a standard from which deviations could be measured. By comparison to a similarly worded exit survey to be given at the end of the six-week discipleship program, I hoped to gain knowledge that would be useful in addressing the needs of young adults at ITSDA. With the exception of the demographic portion of the survey, each query was designed to measure spiritual fitness across five distinct areas of concern:

1. Individual & Corporate Worship
2. Practicing God’s Presence
3. Intergenerational Interaction
4. Becoming a Student of the Word
5. Service
My original baseline survey had a total of 30 questions: 5 questions per WFD area and 5 demographic questions about gender, age, marital status, church attendance and level of church involvement to round out the set. My advisor believed the questionnaire was too long and recommended I shorten it to avoid a potential intimidation factor on the part of the research subjects. I shortened the document to a 20-question survey by deleting two questions per category—leaving 15 spiritual fitness questions and 5 demographic ones—for a total of 20 questions. The modification immediately made the appearance of the survey less intimidating because it was now comprised of two front-and-back pages instead of four double-sided sheets. My next task was to develop an effective exit survey.

The key to designing a successful exit survey is a close similarity to the baseline survey. If the exit survey is too dissimilar the connection to the baseline will be lost and meaningful measurements will not be attained. It is also important to number the questions on the exit to match the baseline so that when the tabulations are calculated the responses from both documents can be matched. I decided to keep everything the same with the exception of two questions about whether or not the research subject attended the spiritual retreat, Sabbath school class or both. I also asked respondents to list which week(s) of the 5-week Sabbath school class they attended. Once the surveys were distributed and collected, I sent them off to a statistician to be tabulated. The following chronicles the summary and evaluation of the project data.

**Summary and Evaluation of the Project Data (Outcomes)**

Along with a data evaluation in this section I offer an explanation of the survey instrument to provide insight into the thought process, rationale and basis for the choice
of questions. I use 4 and 5 point worded Likert scales throughout the surveys, and explain the ways in which the questions were meant to fit into the categories addressed in the WFD program.

In order to tabulate the results of the survey instrument, number values were assigned to each word response, ranging from 1-5 in one case and 1-4 in the other. In the first set of 5-point Likert scale responses, “Strongly Disagree” was assigned the number 1 and “Strongly Agree” was assigned then number 5. The numbers in-between were assigned the progressive responses in ascending order. I followed the same model for the 4-point Likert scale. “Never” was assigned the number 1 and “Frequently/Often” was given the number 4. The numbers in-between were arranged in ascending order to the remaining options. Here are the results:

1. I feel comfortable sharing my belief in Christ with others
   
   □ Strongly Agree
   
   □ Somewhat Agree
   
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   
   □ Strongly Disagree

Question 1 of the baseline and exit surveys was chosen to measure a person’s comfort level with sharing his or her faith. This fits into the final category of the WFD program—Service. The average response in the baseline survey was 4.52, indicating a significant level of comfort in the area of sharing one’s faith on the part of the test subjects. The mean increased slightly to 4.60 in the exit survey results. Though the slim
increase was not statistically significant I was happy to see that the number did not decrease.

2. Whenever I miss church it negatively effects my week

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

Question 2 was designed to determine the value one places on Corporate Worship—session one in the five-part WFD program. Survey takers registered an average score of 3.72 on the 5-point Likert scale at baseline, but that number jumped to 4.16 in the exit survey taken after the 5-week WFD intervention. With a p-value of .003\(^1\) the change is considered to be statistically significant and can be therefore deemed a legitimate result. This outcome is important to the study because it suggests the WFD program may have had a positive impact on the respondents’ overall attitude regarding the importance of church attendance.

3. If I go several days without reading my Bible I feel unfulfilled

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

\(^1\)Any p-value under .05 is considered to be statistically significant.
This question was chosen to test Spiritual Discipline—session 2 of the WFD program entitled “Practicing the Presence of God.” Subjects recorded an average score of 3.91 at baseline that increased to a 4.11 at exit. Though the result is not statistically significant due to the p-value of .085, the importance of the outcome to the overall report can still be appreciated, as the uptick follows the trend of the study as a whole.

4. I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in church

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Somewhat Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Somewhat Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Question 4 was formulated to gauge one’s attitude towards the idea of spiritual pedagogy—lesson 4 in the 5-week WFD Sabbath school class entitled “Becoming a Student of the Word.” I wanted to test the subjects’ openness to the idea of being taught at church as opposed to merely hearing a sermon. I also wanted to set the question apart from a general “openness to the Bible” query and so added the words “in church”, for clarity. The response statistic moved from 4.73 at baseline to 4.89 at exit. The p-value for this question registered at .033, making the upward movement statistically significant and therefore relatively accurate. The importance of this outcome can be seen in that it suggests another possible positive response to an area of the WFD intervention.
5. I express praise and thanks to God in my private devotion even during difficult personal circumstances

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

This question falls under the category of spiritual disciplines. It is worded to encompass more complexity than the first question on the subject. It raises the issue of one’s comfort with praising God individually in private devotion as well as gaging respondents’ personal relationship with God. The responses to this question represented one of only two times in the survey that the mean at baseline was higher than at exit, 4.61 and 4.58 respectively. Though the change is minor and not statistically significant (p-value .808), it should still be noted that there was a miniscule drop in positive response between appraisals 1 and 2. The statistical variance is not large enough to indicate a negative affect of the WFD program intervention.

6. I intentionally try to get to know the older members of the church

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

This question was chosen to speak to the concept of Intergenerational Interaction—week 3 in the 5-week WFD Sabbath school class. The concept teaches that
each generation represented at a given church should strive for meaningful interaction with people of other generations. Respondents seemed to be fairly uncomfortable with the idea initially, scoring an average 3.45 score in the opening appraisal but improved to 3.73 in the subsequent assessment. With a p-value of .080 the move is interesting though not statistically insignificant.

7. Volunteering to help others does little to enhance my spirituality

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

This question was included to once again measure the subjects’ commitment to service. This time it was posed in a negative form in order to repeat the query without apparent redundancy. Survey takers answered at 1.75 at baseline and 1.87 at exit. My expectation was that the score exit would be lower than the original baseline score. The higher score at exit in this instance could reflect poorly on an aspect of the WFD program since it seeks to encourage service as a way to enhance spirituality. Fortunately the number remains very low on the 5-point Likert scale and therefore maintains a general feeling between “strongly disagree” and “somewhat disagree.” The respondents are still very much in the “disagree” segment of the “agree or disagree” continuum.
8. It is important for me to take notes during the sermon to maximize my learning experience

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

This question speaks to the issue of spiritual pedagogy. The WFD program encourages the participant to become a student of the Word of God, which at times involves utilizing classroom or academic strategies to get the most out of Biblical teaching. The average answer at baseline was 3.59 while the exit turned out a mean of 3.60. The results of question number 8 were statistically insignificant and the change from baseline to exit was virtually unnoticeable. This conclusion might indicate a deficiency on the part of the WFD program and its director in conveying the importance of note taking as a legitimate means of enhancing one’s spirituality. Another possible reason for the lack of improvement could be because of the overly saturated academic environment in which the study was conducted. Most of the participants were students at one of the many area universities where note taking is an essential part of scholasticism. Put simply, note taking was not a novel or new idea so there was no noticeable change.

9. It is important to participate in the parts of the worship service that are not as interesting to me

☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

This statement is meant to probe the issue of individualism in worship, specifically, whether the respondents value the communal expectations and rewards of corporate worship over the individual freedom of private devotion. The respondents registered a 3.40 initially and subsequently scored a 3.67. Since p-value demonstrates the “probability of obtaining a test statistic at least as extreme as the one that was actually observed,”\(^2\) it can alter the perception of a seemingly noteworthy increase in test results at exit. Such is the case with this question. The p-value for question 9 is 0.115 so this increase is not statistically significant and the result therefore cannot be trusted as being reliable. The outcome does however follow the overall upward trend of the study.

10. I volunteer to participate in some form of community service

☐ Often
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

Beginning with survey question ten, I switched to a 4-point worded Likert scale to represent the available responses. I felt that the new scale (Often/Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely and Never) was more appropriate to accompany the queries in this segment of the survey. The questions here focus on actual practice instead of philosophical beliefs or opinions. Question ten is concerned with the frequency of involvement in community service. Respondents reported a participation rate of 2.98 at baseline and increased that

to 3.00 at exit. Again, this change was insignificant from a statistical perspective (p-value) but the ascending tendency should not be discounted.

11. When I attend church, I associate with the both the elderly and the youth

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

This query is concerned with the practice of intergenerational interaction. It represents the second of the two downward trends in the study results. Respondents began with a mean of 3.32 and ended at 3.31. Since the change is so minute it does not reflect negatively on the effectiveness of the WFD program. Nevertheless, it is important to note the downward trend.

12. I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

This question measures the important issue of church attendance among young adults outside of the 11 o’clock worship service on Sabbath mornings. Since my WFD program was aimed at encouraging a deep and authentic relationship with God I wanted to see how many of the young adult participants were involved in church with a level of what I would call “significant attendance.” I hoped to get an idea about how many of the participants were already actively involved in church at that level and I was anxious to
observe whether or not the responses would register higher on the exit survey. The average score for this question was 2.23 at baseline and increased to 2.56 at exit. With a p-value of 0.016 this factor comes in as statistically significant and therefore reliable in its measurement. This outcome is important to the study as it helps to support the argument for an effective WFD retreat and Sabbath school class to increase young adult attendance and church involvement.
13. I participate in fasts

☐ Frequently
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

Of the spiritual fitness survey question results, this one registered the lowest p-value score of all. Respondents to the baseline assessment scored an average 2.27 and then increased to a 2.76 in the exit survey. The p-value was found to be 0.000, giving it the greatest level of statistical significance of all the survey questions. This result however is by no means the most important of the study; it is just interesting to note a p-value of 0.000. Fasting falls under the category of Spiritual Disciplines and demonstrates the discipline of self-denial in particular. It is highly likely that many of the participants scored a higher exit survey percentage on this question because they were encouraged to perform certain fasts during the WFD Sabbath school class. Whether or not the participants continued to fast after the program was over was not within the scope of this study.

14. I meditate on God’s Word

☐ Frequently
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

Baseline results to this question came in with a mean of 3.27, which at exit increased to 3.40. Because the p-value was 0.109 this variant was not statistically
significant, and is therefore not particularly reliable. The same upward trend is observable in this conclusion as well and adds to the mood of the whole study.

15. I pray

☐ Frequently
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

The results at baseline and exit were exactly the same for this last question, both registering a 3.89 on a scale of 4. Almost everyone who participated in the study already had the basic practice of prayer in his or her tradition. Because the question was so general, a high average score among the participants was fairly predictable.

**Summary of Tables**

The data evaluation and tabulations returned some interesting results. When certain factors are compared and considered together a new picture begins to emerge. There are many new and interesting possibilities that come to the fore, a summary of which follows.

Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the matched samples of participants connected with this project. Forty-six young adults ages 18 to 35 completed both the baseline and exit surveys. I was pleasantly surprised by this fact because I assumed a much smaller sample size at the outset. My optimistic estimate of possible willing participants was 30 young adults. With respect to complete data collection the results were favorable. Except for the question concerning which
discipleship session participants attended (41% missing data), most of the respondents consistently answered all of the questions. Interestingly, the analysis of the impact of missing data across the survey shows no specific pattern. It appears to be random.

Table 1. Percent distribution of respondents by age, gender, marital status and number reporting having children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-29</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-35</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whether Respondents Have Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Children</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Have Children</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest group of respondents (27.3%) was between 22 and 25 years of age. Two age groups (26 to 29 and 30 to 32) accounted for 20.5% of the total number of participants. The oldest and youngest age groups (33 to 35) and (18 to 21), each represented 15.9% of the participant population. There were more females (65.9%) than males (34.1%) and more single young adults (77.3%) than married (20.5%), or divorced (2.3%). (91%) of young adults reported having no children. Distilling all the
demographic information together, the typical participant in this project was a single childless female between the ages of 22 to 25.

The percent distribution of participants attending church and their level of involvement at the time of the survey is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of church attendance at baseline and exit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Attendance</th>
<th>Baseline (%)</th>
<th>Exit (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or three times a month</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a quarter</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice a year</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I no longer attend church</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At baseline, just about three quarters (72.7%) of the young adults reported attending church at least twice a week (13.5%) or once a week (59.1%). Eighteen percent attended two or three times a month and 2.3% were in church once a quarter and once or twice a year respectively. An interesting pattern emerged when the results from the exit survey were evaluated. The 5% of the participants who attended once a quarter or less had improved the frequency with which they attended church. Also, while 4.5% percent attend once a month at baseline, a little less than half that number now attends once a month. Similarly, there was a seven percent increase for those attending two or three times a month to twice a week from baseline to exit (90.9% versus 97.8%). This increase in frequency of attendance from baseline to the exit survey was statistically significant.
(p=.000). These facts encourage a positive outlook on the effectiveness of WFD.

The level of involvement in church was evaluated at baseline and at the exit survey and summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Level of involvement in church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Involvement in Church</th>
<th>Baseline (%)</th>
<th>Exit (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holds a church office</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very active in a church ministry</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat involved in church</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend church for sermon and then goes home</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very involved at all</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a marked increase in the level of involvement from Time 1 to Time 2 (p=.000). While about 5% of the young adults indicated that they were not involved at baseline, none of them selected that category after the intervention. There was also a 12-percentage point decrease in the number of young adults who attended church just for the sermon as compared to those who attended with the same mind set at the exit survey. Additionally, there was a 10 percentage point increase for those respondents who were somewhat involved and a 6 percentage point increase in young adults who reported being very active in church ministry post intervention. As expected, given the time between the baseline survey and the exit survey there was no meaningful change in the number respondents who said that they held a church office. Also, there was a noticeable drop (-11.8%) in “Attend church for sermon and then goes home.” This drop coincides with the increase (+10.3%) in “Somewhat involved in church.” It seems that those who used
to only come to church for the sermon are not a bit more involved in church life. These factors present a strong case for the effectiveness of WFD.

Table 4 presents the percent distribution of the responses of the young adults to the question about their generational status at baseline.
Table 4. Generational status of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generational Status</th>
<th>Baseline (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great-great grandparent(s), great grandparent(s), grandparent(s), and parent(s)</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belong to the church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great grandparent(s), grandparent(s), and parent(s) belong to the church</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent(s), and parent(s) belong to the church</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother and/or father belong to the church</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a first generation church-goer</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest number (56.8%) of respondents indicated that their grandparent(s) and parent(s) belong to the SDA church. About 16 percent reported that their great-great grandparent(s), great grandparent(s), grandparent(s), and parent(s) and mother and/or father respectively belong to the church. Nine percent of the respondents said that their great grandparent(s), grandparent(s), and parent(s) belong to the church. Finally, 2.3% of the participants reported at baseline that they were ‘first generation church-goer.’

Means and standard deviations and p-values for the fifteen main variables for both baseline and exit surveys that are the focus of this project are shown in Table 5.
Table 5. Means and standard deviation for young adults attitudes, beliefs, and religious activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable sharing my belief in Christ with others</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever I miss church it negatively affects my week</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I go several days without reading my Bible I feel unfulfilled</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in church</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I express praise and thanks to God in my private devotion even during difficult personal circumstances</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intentionally try to get to know the older members of the church</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering to help others does little to enhance my spirituality</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for me to take notes during the sermon to maximize my learning experience</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to participate in the parts of the worship service that are not as interesting to me</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I volunteer to participate in some form of community service at church</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I attend church, I associate with the both the elderly and the youth</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in fasts</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I meditate on God’s word</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pray</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p <.10; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < .001
The general pattern of results points to a change in scores from time 1 to time 2 suggesting that the intervention had some positive impact on at least the trajectory of the responses of the young adults. The overall pattern is that of movement of scores on the positive side of the response categories. However, it is important to note that not all of the changes were statistically significant and as such should be interpreted within the framework of the observed differences that are meaningful (statistically). Specifically, the young adults reported a marginally significant positive difference from baseline to post intervention for the following variables: ‘I feel comfortable sharing my belief in Christ with others’ (M=4.52, SD=0.55 to M=4.60, SD=0.65; p=0.134), ‘If I go several days without reading my Bible I feel unfulfilled’ (M=3.91, SD=1.24 to M=4.11, SD=1.03; p=0.085), and I intentionally try to get to know the older members of the church (M=3.45, SD=1.11 to M=3.73, SD=1.01; p=0.080).

Statistically significant findings (at a p-value of 0.05 and below) were observed for the following variables: ‘Whenever I miss church it negatively effects my week’ (M=3.72, SD=1.20 to M=4.16, SD=1.01; p=0.003), ‘I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in church’ (M=4.73, SD=0.59 to M=4.89, SD=0.32; p=0.033), ‘I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting’ (M=4.73, SD=0.59 to M=4.89, SD=0.32; p=0.033), and ‘I participate in fasts’ (M=4.73, SD=0.59 to M=4.89, SD=0.32; p=0.033). These results suggest that the scores of the young adults increased across the aforementioned variables from baseline to post intervention. For example, the respondents were more likely to attend Sabbath school and/or Wednesday night meetings and participate in fasts at the time of the exit survey. Overall, the positive significant change from the baseline perceptions about: the impact of missing church
services, being open and responsive to Biblical teachings presented at church, attendance at church services, and participation in fasts to views expressed at exit suggest that the young adults were impacted at some level by the intervention.

Table 6 shows the items that were statistically different from time 1 to time 2 for both females and males.

Table 6. Differences within gender groups across baseline and exit responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables (Females)</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th></th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th></th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whenever I miss church it negatively effects my week</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td><strong>0.030</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td><em>0.036</em>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in fasts</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td><strong>0.001</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variables (Males)**

| Whenever I miss church it negatively effects my week | 3.64     | 1.01 | 4.07 | 0.92 | **0.028** |
| I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in the church | 4.60     | 0.83 | 5.00 | 0.00 | +0.082 |
| I participate in fasts | 2.07     | 0.70 | 2.73 | 0.70 | **0.001** |
| I meditate on God’s word | 3.47     | 0.52 | 3.67 | 0.49 | **0.082** |

+ p < .10; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < .001

First, females (M=3.78, SD=1.34 to M=4.15, SD=1.10; p=0.030) like their male counterparts (M=3.64, SD=1.01 to M=4.07, SD=0.92; p=0.028) reported significant positive change in their perception of the negative impact of missing church each week. For both groups, the negative impact was greater post intervention as compared to baseline. A similar pattern of findings was observed for the degree to which both gender
groups participated in fasts. There was a highly significant change with an increase in frequency in participation in fasts for females (M=2.36, SD=0.87 to M=2.82, SD=0.86; p=0.001) and for males (M=2.07, SD=0.70 to M=2.73, SD=0.70; p=0.001). Among females (M=2.21, SD=0.92 to M=2.54, SD=1.04; p=0.036) alone, there was a statistically significant increase in likelihood to attend Sabbath school and or Wednesday night prayer meeting. Males (M=3.47, SD=0.52 to M=3.67, SD=0.49; p=0.082) unlike females were more likely to meditate on God’s Word and to be ‘open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in the church’ (M=4.60, SD=0.83 to M=5.00, SD=0.00; p=0.082). However, both of these changes were marginally statistically significant.

Tables 7, 8, and 9 present the findings for differences within three age groups (18 to 25, 26 to 32, and 33 to 35) respectively on the fifteen key variables used in this project.

Results are evaluated across the two time periods associated with this study and only the statistically significant findings are reported in the tables. Overall, all of the findings reported here indicate a positive increase as reported after the intervention as compare to the baseline scores. Across all three age groups, there was a statistically significant change from time 1 to time 2 for level of participation in fasts. However, for the 33 to 35 (M=2.71, SD=1.11 to M=3.14, SD=0.90; p=0.078) year old group this difference was marginally significant. Unlike the respondents age 26 to 32, the other two age groups reported significant positive change in terms of attendance at Sabbath school and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting.

Unique among the 18 to 25 young adults was the view that missing church negatively impacts the rest of the week (M=3.95, SD=1.18 to M=4.53, SD=0.84; p=0.004), along with the increase levels of being open and responsive to the teachings of
the Bible as presented in the church (M=4.58, SD=0.77 to M=4.95, SD=0.23; p=0.069), and reported levels of mediating on God’s Word (M=3.32, SD=0.48 to M=3.68, SD=0.48; p=0.015).

Table 7. Differences among 18 to 25 year old respondents across baseline and exit responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whenever I miss church it negatively effects my week</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in church</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>0.069+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>0.083+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in fasts</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I meditate on God’s word</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.015*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, only among the 26 to 32 year old respondents, intentionally getting to know the older members of the church (M=3.47, SD=1.07 to M=3.88, SD=1.05; p=0.090), was marginally significant. Additionally, there was a significant change in the mean scores from baseline to exit (M=3.65, SD=1.27 to M=4.00, SD=1.06; p=0.009) for the variable that states that it is important to take notes during the sermon to maximize the learning experience.
Table 8. Differences among 26 to 32 year old respondents across baseline and exit responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th></th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th></th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intentionally try to get to know the older members of the church</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.090+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for me to take notes during the sermon to maximize my learning experience</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.009**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in fasts</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.007**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ p < .10 * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < .001

Finally, Table 9 shows that only among the 33 to 35 year old young adults were marginally significant in reported levels of perceptions about feeling comfortable about sharing their beliefs in Christ with others (p=0.078) and that it is important to participate in the parts of the worship service that are not interesting to the respondent.
Table 9. Differences among 33 to 35 year old respondents across baseline and exit responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th></th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th></th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable sharing my belief in Christ with others</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.078+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to participate in the parts of the worship service that are not as interesting to me</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.094+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.047*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in fasts</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.078+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ p <.10 * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < .001

Conclusion

The overall trend of the research appears to present a positive outlook on the WFD intervention as being constructive, effective and beneficial. The initial impetus for completing such research was to have a positive effect on young adult attendance and engagement in the ITSDA church. That goal, at least in part, was realized through this process. Several important findings lead to this conclusion, particularly as can be observed in the results of survey questions 2, 4, and 12. All three of these survey questions resulted in an upward movement from baseline to exit and demonstrated reliability in the form of statistical significance (p-level less then 0.05).

I was very pleased to notice an improvement to a 4.16 from a 3.72 as it relates to the effects of missing church (survey question 2). For me this was the most telling of all the results of my WFD study because it reflects a positive attitude towards church. If the
number had declined or stayed the same it might have indicated that church is irrelevant to ITSDA young adults and thus has no negative effect on participants’ lives when it is missing.

I was also excited to notice the increased exit result on question 4 dealing with responsiveness to biblical teachings as presented in church. This finding was important to my study also as it spoke to the participants’ attitudes towards the teachings of Scripture. The Bible seems to be losing its relevance for the contemporary young adult and I hoped my WFD program might have a positive influence in returning it to its rightful place. I was encouraged to notice an increase from baseline to exit.

The outcome of survey question 12 was critical to my study because it measured church attendance for things other than the 11 o’clock service on Sabbath morning. When asked if participants attend Sabbath School or Wednesday night prayer meeting there was an increase from baseline (2.23) to exit (2.56). I believe this increase can be attributed mostly to the WFD program that was in session during Sabbath School time, so that there was a direct correlation between WFD and church attendance. Furthermore, when the 5-week WFD Sabbath School class was complete the WFD participants launched a new young adult Sabbath School class and many more young adults were observed participating in the choir loft of the church sanctuary. I was pleased that something visible and real came out of the WFD exercise that could be observed by all who attended the Adult Sabbath School class from week-to-week.

Since this intervention encompassed a 6-week timeframe it is reasonable to assume improved results over a longer interval. The results of the research were
significant enough to make a meaningful contribution to the ongoing conversation about young adult attrition and involvement in church life.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The leadership journey I have been on since the beginning of my DMin program until now has been fruitful beyond my expectations. I originally set out with the overambitious goal of solving the church’s problems with regard to young adult attrition, but quickly learned that my aspirations were unrealistic. I discovered that solutions to complicated problems like this one do not come quickly or simply from one research project alone. On the other hand, an intervention and research analysis like this one, when combined with Scriptural study and recent literature, can add another perspective to the on-going discussion regarding young adult retention in the church. It can add one more puzzle piece to fit into the overall solution as we all strive to solve this conundrum together. This chapter will seek to summarize my DMin project by reviewing the four stages of the project process, namely Theological Reflection, Literature Review, Intervention and Data Evaluation. After the summary I will provide some conclusions about the project and will conclude the chapter with some recommendations and lessons learned along the way.

Summary

Chapter one was written to offer insight into the background and rationale for the
project. It was also meant to provide a roadmap describing the course the project would take throughout the various stages of research. I organized the chapter into sections for better understanding. They were: Personal History, Statement of the Problem, Purpose, Justification for the Project, Delimitations for the project, Limitations, Expectations for the project, Methodology, and Definition of Terms.

The theological reflection of chapter two was meant to orient this study as a spiritual endeavor. I began with a survey of Acts 20 and then narrowed the focus to the story of Eutychus, the young man who fell asleep in a window while listening to a sermon and fell to his death. His dangerous position in the window along with his age was used to represent the contemporary generation of young adults who are spiritually at risk. Upon closer examination I noticed more connections to the contemporary situation, which verified my decision to use the Eutychus story as a metaphor for the narrative that would drive this project. I therefore labeled the young adults who would be the focus of the study as the “Eutychus Generation.”

I performed a literary analysis on three separate but essential passages of Scripture, namely Christ’s evangelistic missionary directive in Matthew 10:5, 6, the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4:23, 24 and Joel’s last day prophecy in his second chapter (Joel 2:28, 29). Each biblical study was meant to offer a spiritual justification for the way I intended to conduct my research and intervention throughout the project. I concluded chapter 2 with a summary of the conclusions and findings from the biblical investigation.

Chapter three, the Literature Review, sought to review relevant literature that contributes to the subject of young adults and their relationship with the Christian church.
Most of the literature represented recent scholarship. I organized the literature into eight categories. They are: Motivating Factors, Dropout Myths, The Informational Model, Defining Formational Discipleship, Formational Discipleship Model, Winning Them Back and Spiritual Disciplines. I offered a brief summary of each important work while quoting and further summarizing the basic tenor of each work as it contributed to the topic. I concluded chapter 3 with a summary of the chapter while sharing some of my thoughts and impressions about what I had learned from the literature.

Chapter four provided a description of the research project developed and executed at ITSDA. The information presented was built on the Theological Reflection and Literature Review of chapters 2 and 3. I began by laying out the context for ministry in the Durham, NC area, including a short profile of the city itself and the church body located at 2102 S. Alston Avenue. I then presented a descriptive narrative recounting the events that took place during the 6-week research project. The narrative of Chapter 4 was meant to guide the reader through the modes, methods and mindsets that helped to frame the research project from start to finish. I ended the chapter with a conclusion recounting what I had accomplished during the intervention phase of the project process.

Finally, chapter five assessed the data and offered the results and outcomes of the evaluation process of the research project. I also used the opportunity to explain the thoughts and feelings behind the choice of questions for the survey instrument. The chapter was organized into five sections: Introduction, Description of the Method, Summary and Evaluation of the Project Data, Summary of Tables and Conclusion.

**Impressions and Conclusions**

There are several conclusions that I have drawn both from the research analysis
and through anecdotal evidence that was observed during the intervention and afterwards. I will share those conclusions in this section.

I was pleasantly surprised by the reception the young adult spiritual retreat was given both by the participants and the other members of the church. I was not prepared for the kind of enthusiastic participation I witnessed from the ITSDA young adults. I had anticipated about 20-30 young adult participants at most and was surprised by the nearly 50 partakers who arrived on site. I have concluded that their enthusiasm could be the result of a few factors.

First, because the retreat was held on Sabbath during normal church hours it offered a new and exciting alternative to worshipping in a church building and was therefore a pleasant change of pace. It seems the group was seeking something different from normal church attendance. Many of the participants do not attend church on a regular basis. It is possible they feel guilty about being in the House of God because of things they are involved in away from church. The choice of venue may have encouraged a stronger diversity within the group and therefore strengthened the sampling for the research portion.

Secondly, because the event was proficiently advertised several weeks in advance there was a certain amount of buildup for the occasion. We chose not to promote the retreat several months in advance because it would seem too distant and people would not remember it when it came around. Instead, we elected to aggressively advertise one month before the affair to increase the awareness and excitement. We utilized several communication methods to get the word out including: email, text messaging, Facebook and party mailers. Each announcement technique was executed purposefully and timed
deliberately to make it harder and harder to ignore. The young adult retreat began with
an electric feeling in the air.

Thirdly, ITSDA rarely plans young adult events that involve large amounts of
them interacting with one another at the same time. I believe the thought of sharing time
with so many young people at once was appealing to the group.

Finally, the event planner, Marcia Conner, is well known at ITSDA as an
everesting organizer and executer of high-quality, professional events. The retreat was
planned up to her usual standards and young adults knew it would not be a waste of their
time. They could be sure the venue, meals and snacks, activities and materials would be
of high quality and worthwhile.

The level of participation during the five-week young adult WFD Sabbath school
class also surprised me. There were at least 20 participants in attendance at each lesson
during the five-week follow-up that took place at the church. This was surprising since
the follow-up did not have the cachet of the retreat. The meetings were held in the choir
room. Also, Sabbath school began early for the group, and the ITSDA young adults have
a reputation for weekly tardiness, but not on this occasion. All these factors made the
reality of consistent young adult participation surprising. It is plausible to conclude the
continental breakfast provided before each weekly Sabbath school class had a positive
effect on attendance.

Finally, the overall effect of the intervention seemed to have a noteworthy
outcome on the increased involvement and engagement of the young adults at ITSDA. A
reasonable assessment of the research seems to support this conclusion. What is not
measurable in the research but apparent in church life is the support of the intervention by
the church members and leadership at ITSDA. There has been an overall positive change in the mood and feeling on the part of young adults throughout ITSDA. Excitement and enthusiasm appeared to accompany the young adults participating in the WFD program. It is difficult to measure feelings objectively. Subjective emotions are not easily reduced to survey results. For this reason these sentiments are not included in the research section of the document. Even so, there was certainly an overwhelming sense amongst the members of ITSDA that the young adults involved in the WFD program were being positively influenced. This was evidenced through the comments I heard from various people at the church.

At the completion of the WFD program’s Sabbath school component a new Young Adult Sabbath school class was launched. They met every Sabbath morning from 9:30a – 10:30a in the choir loft of the sanctuary along with the other adult Sabbath school classes, who also met in the sanctuary. I observed the continuation of this Young Adult Sabbath school class until I left ITSDA in March of 2013 and moved to Atlanta, GA.

**Recommendations**

**Methodology**

From a methodological perspective I learned a few things that I might do differently the next time. First, rather than the five-point, worded Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree) in some parts of the survey and the four-point scale (Often/Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely, Never) in other parts, I would instead use a uniform 10-point, numbered Likert scale (1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10) with “very little” to the extreme left (over the number 1), “very much” to the extreme right (over the number 10) and
“neutral” in the middle (over the numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7). There are a few reasons for this change.

First, it was more difficult to tabulate the worded scale because a conversion process had to be accomplished first. Each word had to be converted into a point value (number) so that the calculations could be completed utilizing a tabulation program. To accomplish this feat each word was assigned a number and rerecorded onto an excel file and sent off to the statistician. My church secretary, Karen Logan, completed the conversion and then sent the results to Dr. Colwick Wilson for calculation. It would have been much simpler to begin with a numbered scale, making the conversion process unnecessary.

Second, there were times in the baseline survey when the four and five point scales were inadequate to give respondents room to improve in the exit survey. Many who chose the equivalent of a 4 (“agree”) on the baseline survey may have felt improvement during the intervention but were uncomfortable recording a 5 (“strongly agree”) on the exit survey. They may have, on the other hand, been comfortable moving from a 7 to an 8 from baseline to exit. I fear I may have sacrificed some data accuracy as a result of my decision.

Third, I would consult with an experienced statistician beforehand working out all the kinks of my baseline and exit surveys if I had to do it all over again. I did some minor consultation with people who had experience with designing research instrument but I did not go through a rigorous process with a research expert. I would be careful to do so the next time. By no means was my research contaminated or disqualified, but I
might have avoided some inconveniences had I gone through the rigorous process beforehand.

Practical Ministry Lessons

From a practical standpoint I learned it is of extreme important how one decides to garner participation from the research subjects. Integrity and character must be at the forefront of every decision when it comes to soliciting participation from human subjects. I tried to maintain that integrity throughout every aspect of my study. I think it is important to maintain openness, honesty and candor about everything involving the research subjects.

Though I fulfilled my obligations as a research conductor, I am not certain to what degree the young adults participated in the research because they knew they were helping me to complete my D. Min. research. Since I am considered a young adult there may have been an overriding sense of compulsion to be helpful from my fellow young adults. Or there may have been a general desire to be supportive in getting their pastor a degree. My sense is that this did not play a major factor but the thought still lingers about whether or not 46 people would have taken part in the research had they not been privy to the ultimate goal of my receiving a Doctoral degree. It would be ideal for the WFD program to be tested and judged solely on the merits of the program itself in order to more accurately gauge the success or failure of the program, but I fear my involvement makes that impossible on some level.

I also considered how I might increase my weekly worship attendance even more than was observed during the course of my project. Since the principles of WFD seemed to be so readily embraced I would increase the frequency of the young adult spiritual
retreats to once per quarter. This would allow the young adults to use the quarterly activity as a kind of spiritual tune up. My belief is that by simply practicing the principles of WFD young adults will develop a love for God and the things of God. This should translate into a love for His church as well and attendance would therefore increase.

Also, I would plan a WFD Sabbath School class to be ongoing and indefinite. I would develop an extensive WFD curriculum and train young adult teachers to facilitate the classes from Sabbath-to-Sabbath. This would help to engrain the principles of WFD deeply into the hearts of the teachers and participants and would likely positively affect church attendance.

Lastly, I would implement the principles of WFD into the worship services so that they would be obvious and observable. This would encourage young adults to participate in the weekly worship services and would likely create a sense of anticipation for the Sabbath and participation in corporate worship.
My Personal Journey

As I contemplate my experience through the Doctor of Ministry journey I realize just how much I have changed throughout this process. I am a third generation Seventh-day Adventist and the son of a pastor. I was challenged from the very beginning of this process to think outside the “Adventist box” as I struggled to devise and implement the principles of WFD. In the beginning I had an aversion to anything that seemed to encourage emotionalism, shallowness or eastern mysticism. I spent many hours reading and studying the fine points of biblical spirituality so that I could divorce myself from my natural tendency towards stoicism. Many books helped to bring me around, but the most effective was Hunger by Jon Dybdahl. For the first time I was able to see biblical spirituality as having its roots in the Word of God and being supported by Ellen White. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Dybdahl for pouring his heart into his book in such a meaningful way. I praise God for the spiritual journey I have been on over the last 6 years and I will strive to keep this effect permanent in my life.
APPENDIX A

WHOLISTIC FORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
BASELINE SURVEYS
Wholistic Formational Discipleship Baseline Survey
For: Pastor John S. Nixon, II

There are no risks in participating in this study. Return of this survey serves as implied consent.
This is an anonymous survey and participation is voluntary. Participants may discontinue at any time without explanation or penalty. You must be between the ages of 18-35 to participate in this survey.

Questions regarding this survey or its related research should be directed to:

Pastor John Nixon, II
2102 S. Alston Ave.
Durham, NC
27703
(919) 596-0913
pastornixon@mac.com
Instructions: Please fill in the box that best describes your feelings and opinions.

1. I feel comfortable sharing my belief in Christ with others.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

2. Whenever I miss church it negatively affects my week.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

3. If I go several days without reading my Bible I feel unfilled.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

4. I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in church.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

5. I express praise and thanks to God in my private devotion even during difficult personal circumstances.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

6. I intentionally try to get to know the older members of the church.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

7. Volunteering to help others does little to enhance my spirituality.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree
8. It is important for me to take notes during the sermon to maximize my learning experience.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

9. It is important to participate in the parts of the worship service that are not as interesting to me.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

10. I volunteer to participate in some form of community service.
    - Often
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never

11. When I attend church I associate with the both the elderly and the youth.
    - Frequently
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never

12. I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting.
    - Frequently
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never

13. I participate in acts.
    - Frequently
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never

14. I meditate on God's Word
    - Frequently
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never

15. I pray.
    - Frequently
    - Sometimes
    - Rarely
    - Never
16. **Age**
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30-32
- 33-35

17. **How often do you currently attend church?**
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Two or three times a month
- Once a month
- Once a quarter
- Once or twice a year
- I no longer attend church

18. **When you attend church, how would you describe your level of involvement?**
- I hold a church office
- I am very active in a church ministry
- I am somewhat involved in church
- I come for the sermon then I go home
- I am not very involved at all

19. **How many generations of your family belonged to the church before you?**
- 4 - my great, great-grandparent(s), great-grandparent(s), grandparent(s), and parent(s) belonged to the church.
- 3 - my great-grandparent(s), grandparent(s) and parent(s) belonged to the church.
- 2 - my grandparent(s) and parent(s) belonged to the church.
- 1 - my mother and/or father belonged to the church.
- I am a first generation church-goer

20. **Gender**
- Female
- Male

21. **Marital Status**
- Married
- Single
- Divorced

22. **Do you have children? If so, how many?**
- Yes, I have ___ child(ren)
- No, I do not have any children
Wholistic Formational Discipleship
Exit Survey
For: Pastor John S. Nixon, II

There are no risks in participating in this study. Return of this survey serves as implied consent. This is an anonymous survey and participation is voluntary. Participants may discontinue at any time without explanation or penalty. You must be between the ages of 18-35 to participate in this survey.

Questions regarding this survey or its related research should be directed to:

Pastor John Nixon, II
2102 S. Alston Ave.
Durham, NC
27703
(919) 596-0913
pastornixon@mnc.com
Instructions: Please circle the answer or fill in the box that best describes your answer.

1. I feel comfortable sharing my belief in Christ with others.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. Whenever I miss church it negatively affects my week.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. If I go several days without reading my Bible I feel unfulfilled.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. I am open and responsive to the teachings of the Bible as presented in church.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. I express praise and thanks to God in my private devotion even during difficult personal circumstances.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

6. I intentionally try to get to know the older members of the church.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
7. Volunteering to help others does little to enhance my spirituality.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

8. It is important for me to take notes during the sermon to maximize my learning experience.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

9. It is important to participate in the parts of the worship service that are not as interesting to me.
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Somewhat Agree
   □ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   □ Somewhat Disagree
   □ Strongly Disagree

10. I volunteer to participate in some form of community service.
    □ Often
    □ Sometimes
    □ Rarely
    □ Never

11. When I attend church, I associate with both the elderly and the youth.
    □ Frequently
    □ Sometimes
    □ Rarely
    □ Never

12. I attend Sabbath School and/or Wednesday night prayer meeting.
    □ Frequently
    □ Sometimes
    □ Rarely
    □ Never

13. I participate in fasts.
    □ Frequently
    □ Sometimes
    □ Rarely
    □ Never
    □ Frequently
    □ Sometimes
    □ Rarely
    □ Never

15. I pray.
    □ Frequently
    □ Sometimes
    □ Rarely
    □ Never

16. Did you complete the baseline survey?  Yes  No

17. How often do you currently attend church?
    □ Twice a week
    □ Once a week
    □ Two or Three times a month
    □ Once a month
    □ Once a quarter
    □ Once or twice a year
    □ I no longer attend church

18. When you attend church, how would you describe your level of involvement?
    □ I hold a church office
    □ I am very active in a church ministry
    □ I am somewhat involved in church
    □ I am not very involved at all

19. How many generations of your family belonged to the church before you?
    □ 4 – my great-great grandparent(s), great grandparent(s), grandparent(s), and parent(s) belonged to the church
    □ 3 – my great grandparent(s), grandparent(s) and parent(s) belonged to the church
    □ 2 – my grandparent(s) and parent(s) belonged to the church
    □ 1 – my mother and/or father belonged to the church
    □ I am a first generation church goer

20. Did you attend the spiritual retreat at the Lassiter Homestead?  Yes  No

21. Did you attend the discipleship class?  Yes  No

If so, which session? 1 2 3 4 5
APPENDIX B

RETREAT DOCUMENTS
About the Program

A spiritual retreat is a “definite period of time, a set apart from man’s normal life for the purpose of reconnecting with God.” This is important for Christians to utilize because of the many things in life that compete for our time and attention. Our society has become increasingly more busy, thus making spiritual retreats even more essential. Even Jesus had fond of spiritual retreats. In Mark 3:19, the Bible says, “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’” Jesus encouraged His men to take time away from the noise and the busyness of life to get some spiritual rest. We would do well to practice this approach more often.

This retreat is designed with young adults in mind. I believe our generation of young adults is faced with a unique challenge of keeping God present in every area of life. We are more comfortable now than ever with living divided lives. Young adults are experienced multi-taskers and thus have given themselves to being able to carry on several things at once. This same skill has seeped into our spiritual lives and we are comfortable living life as a dichotomy. But the true Christian must be wholly to God.

For this reason, I believe special attention must be paid to the periodic maintenance of one’s spiritual life, where we contemplate our standing with God and acknowledge His love in the light of our circumstances. I cannot think of a better way to accomplish this than through a well-planned, holistic spiritual retreat.

May we be blessed as we reconnect with God and His will for our lives today.

A Young Adult Spiritual Retreat

Lassiter Homestead
309 Lassiter Homestead Rd, Durham, NC 27713
Rah Pendarvis, John B. Acker, 99

Rules for Small Groups

1. Be not pushy or active. Be non-vocal.
2. Minimize distractions. Turn off portable devices from small groups.
3. Close eyes and listen. Do not mention the topic in the discussion.
4. Do not engage in a quiet manner to be disruptive.
5. Let people talk naturally. For all of those people who share or do things they don’t feel comfortable doing.

Name

Email Address

Price

Name

Email Address

Price

Name

Email Address

Price

Name

Email Address

Price

Name

Email Address

Price

Dialogue 1: “Jesus’ Life: A Place Where We”

Promises

All of us have been told to make our goals and our intentions to each member of the small group so the future actions made in accord with our team’s needs, a plan for each one of us of what we can do today.

Believe groups for each other.

Afternoon Session: Sharing your Reflections

In your small group, share your reflections and your prayer. “Self-awareness” means being aware to the “self” in small group. A “I think” is a vehicle to share your experience, since it is not obligatory.

About 15 minutes before the end of this discussion session, do the following activity.

Depict a graphic you have created by the members of your group. Pass this graphic in or to each member of the group so the future activities made in accord with our team’s needs, a plan for each one of us of what we can do today.

Believe groups for each other.
1. A religious experience—conversion, an answer to prayer, a moral encounter, a retreat, a
   spiritual experience, a small group
2. A national event: a war, a revolution, a national legislation, a world war, a shift in
cultural perception
3. A story about birth, death, marriage, or another significant event in the
   protagonist's life
4. A musical composition: a piece of music, expressing a new social culture, or discipline.
5. A visual experience: a journey, a painting, a photograph, or a graphic novel

List below some key events or turning points that have had an impact on your spiritual life:


2. Select one of the above key events or turning points that was significant. Write about it. Reflect on the
describe the situation. What did you learn? How did your perspective change? What did you perceive God to
be in this turning point and what did you do as a result of that perception?


3. What do you think God was saying through this event?


Morning Session: God's Presence in My Life and Purpose


1. Reading the Word
   RT 1:27-2:11 (1 Chronicles 29:14-19)
   RT 3:3-4 (1 Chronicles 29:14-19)
   RT 4a:1-11 (1 Chronicles 29:14-19)
   RT 5a:1-11 (1 Chronicles 29:14-19)

   What is the main point of these passages? (Note this next paragraph)


3. Praying the Word
   Use a devotional format to consider the implications of the passage for your life:
   RT 3:3-4

   Daily Bread
   As we conclude today, look closely at your present experience, reflect on your future, and
   consider what your response should be.

   - What new insights or challenges did you gain from this session?
   - What questions do you have about God's role in your life?
   - What actions can you take to deepen your relationship with God?

   Reflections
   RT 1:27-2:11

   What significant events or turning points have shaped your spiritual journey?

   - What role did God play in these events?
   - How has your perspective of God changed over time?

   Personal Testimony
   RT 3:3-4

   What do you believe is God's purpose for your life and how can you discern it?

   - What challenges or opportunities do you face in pursuing your purpose?
   - How can you use your gifts and talents to serve others and glorify God?
- A religious experience: conversion, an answer to prayer, a mystical encounter, a retreat, a
  devotional experience, a small group
- A personal event: a loss, a relationship, a significant life change
- A social event: a party, a graduation, a wedding, a death in a family or friend

List below the large events or turning points that have had an impact on your spiritual life:

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

2. Select one of the above large events or turning points that was significant. Write down. Then
describe the situation. What did you feel? How did you perceive God’s role to be in this
turning point and what did you learn about God?

Turbine event or turning point: ____________________________

Describe the situation: __________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

What did you learn: ____________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

What did you perceive God’s role to be in this turning point: _______________________
_________________________________________________________________________

How does this event resonate with the Bible or say about God: _______________________
_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Afternoon Session: Applied Response

Here is an offer to the book of God and the events by Jesus in John 15:1-17, the “abide”
means to live the future knowing you will be asked to set and then make commitments to make
changes in your life. Create a response to God. This response can take any of these forms:

- write a prayer
- write a poem
- write a prayer to one of the shepherd (God, the Father, Christ, Holy Spirit)
- write a song
- share a picture (valedictory, etc.)
- some expression of your own choosing

This page and the following page, as you can position, you can be used for your creation.
Morning Session - Small Group Sharing
There are two discussions to take place:

1. During both your time you will discuss these points:
   a. What are the spiritual growth areas in your life that you want to work on?
   b. How do these growth areas relate to your role as a leader?

2. Take time to reflect on your life and consider the following points:
   a. What do you see as your role as a spiritual leader?
   b. How do you see your role as a spiritual leader evolving over time?

3. In your group discussion, share your reflections on these questions:
   a. What are some of the challenges you face in your spiritual leadership role?
   b. How do you address these challenges?

4. As a group, discuss how you can support each other in your spiritual leadership journey.

5. Each group will be paired with another group to share insights and experiences.

Notes:

Afternoon Session - Reflection on the Text

God's Presence in Our Past and Our Future

John 15:16

If you do not love me, you will remain dead in your sin and continue to sin until death.

John 15:17

But if you love me, you will remain alive and continue to live in me.

What does this mean for you and your spiritual growth?

John 14:15

If you love me, you will obey my commands.

What is a commandment that you need to obey in order to grow spiritually?

John 14:16

I will send the Advocate to help you.

What is the Advocate in the Bible and how can it help you grow spiritually?

John 14:26

The Advocate will guide you into all truth.

What does this mean for your spiritual growth?

John 16:13

Believe in the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom I will send to you from the Father.

What does belief in the Holy Spirit mean for your spiritual growth?

Afternoon Session - God's Presence Is My Present & Future

God's Presence in Our Past and Our Future

John 15:16

If you do not love me, you will remain dead in your sin and continue to sin until death.

John 15:17

But if you love me, you will remain alive and continue to live in me.

What does this mean for you and your spiritual growth?

John 14:15

If you love me, you will obey my commands.

What is a commandment that you need to obey in order to grow spiritually?

John 14:16

I will send the Advocate to help you.

What is the Advocate in the Bible and how can it help you grow spiritually?

John 16:13

Believe in the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom I will send to you from the Father.

What does belief in the Holy Spirit mean for your spiritual growth?

Reflections on John 15:1-17 and Timothy 4:1-6 are continued on the next page.
Afternoon Session - The Prayer & Promise Walk

Welcome to walk towards signs into a particular order and beautifully walk together. Seek out those signs that have the most people by them. As you read each sign behind, a message on its meaning. Think of someone you are meeting in the area. Please contribute your own response to the text and add it to the discussion. Dedicate your prayer to any celebration.

Below are two blank lines for space. Fill the space of each text. Do writing down the text, you will know whether you have edited each text or not.

Text Psalm 118:5
My response

Text Psalm 118:14
My response

Text 1 John 5:4
My response

Text John 15:11
My response

Text James 5:16
My response
# Formed for His Purpose

A Young Adult Spiritual Retreat

## Retreat Schedule - October 13, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:15</td>
<td>Breakfast in the Tent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 - 10:45</td>
<td>Intro and Instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Morning Session: “God’s Presence in My Past & Present”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:45 - 11:30</td>
<td>The Life Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 - 12:30</td>
<td>Small Group Share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**12:30p – 1:30p**

Lunch in the Lassiter Home

**Afternoon Session: “God’s Presence in My Present & Future”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2:05</td>
<td>Prayer &amp; Promise Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:05 - 2:40</td>
<td>Meditation/Reflection on the Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:40 - 3:15</td>
<td>Joyful Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15 - 4:00</td>
<td>Group Sharing Your Reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wrap Up & Debrief in the Tent
Dear valued Young Adult,

I would like to invite you to an upcoming event that I believe will change your life and your spiritual walk with God. Please join me on Sabbath, October 13th, from 10am-4pm, in casual attire, for an Outdoor Spiritual Retreat entitled “Formed for His Purpose.” During this retreat, we will explore topics such as:

- Pinpointing God’s presence in your past and present
- Reviewing “hinge moments” in your life
- Meditating on God’s Word and applying it to your specific situation
- Prayer and promise walk
- Small group discussions

The retreat will be held at the Lassiter Homestead located on 309 Lassiter Homestead Rd., Durham. Breakfast will be served at 9:30am and lunch at 12:30 pm. You will not be disappointed that you came!

Following the retreat, I will also host a 5-week Young Adult Sabbath School experience beginning Oct. 20th-Nov. 17th. Each week we will learn about a different aspect of what I call "Wholistic Formational Discipleship":

1. Spiritual Disciplines
2. Corporate Worship
3. Intergenerational Interaction
4. Spiritual Pedagogy
5. Service

We will meet in the choir room at Immanuel Temple on Sabbath mornings, from 9:45am-10:45am. Breakfast will be served at 9:30am.

I believe both the retreat and Sabbath school sessions will add to your life and spiritual experience; I hope you will consider committing yourself to the full six weeks.

If you choose to accept this invitation you must understand that you will be participating in research for my dissertation. There will be a short entry survey to fill out at the beginning and another one to complete when you have finished the program. Your participation will remain anonymous and your name will never be used in any writing whatsoever; you will be perfectly safe throughout the entire process. Your only requirements are:

1. Must have attended ITSDA at least once
2. Must be between 18-35 years old

Attached is a flyer for the event and a consent form for your consideration. Feel free to pass along this information to anyone you know who fits the above criteria. Please RSVP by replying to this email with "yes" or "no" to indicate your intentions. We are currently working on an alternate site if we experience inclement weather. Stay tuned for more details.

I hope this invitation finds you well. See you at the retreat!

God bless,

Pastor

________________________________________
Senior Pastor
Immanuel Temple SDA
Durham, NC
E-mail: pastornixon@mac.com
Phone: 919-597-0032
Address: Immanuel Temple SDA
2102 S. Alston Ave.
Durham, NC 27707
Formed for His Purpose

A Young Adult Spiritual Retreat and Sabbath School Experience

**Spiritual Retreat**
Date: October 13, 2012 from 10am - 4pm
(Breakfast @ 9:30a, Lunch @ 12:20p)
Location: Lassiter Homestead
309 Lassiter Homestead Rd.
Durham, NC 27713

**Sabbath School Experience**
Dates: Oct. 20- Nov. 17, 2012
Time: Saturdays from 9:45a-10:45a
(breakfast at 9:30a)
Location: ITSDA Choir Rm
2102 S. Alston Ave. Durham, NC 27707
APPENDIX C

WHOLISTIC FORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHP
LECTURE NOTES
Wholistic Formational Discipleship Lecture Notes

Intro to WFD

Q: What is Wholistic Formational Discipleship?

A: It is an organized program designed to address the whole person as it pertains to developing authentic Christian spirituality. WFD is a concept that finds its roots in wholism and seeks to move past the surface to achieve deep, genuine and lasting spirituality. It is based on what I call the “formation model” as opposed to the “information model.” That is to say WFD is intent on helping a person to be formed into the image of God, not just be informed about Him.

There are 5 prongs to this program that we will discover together over the next 5 Sabbaths:

1. Worship
2. Spiritual Disciplines
3. Intergenerational Interaction
4. Spiritual Pedagogy
5. Service

Individual/Corporate Worship

Worship is the foundational principle of God as the center of all spirituality. Jon Dybdahl - “a response to God’s presence and/or action” defines it. (Hunger p. 25). God is always the only audience and object of true worship. We must remember some things about worship if we are to keep God at its center:

- John 4:22-24 (worship not just about information)
- Matthew 22:37, 38
- Revelation 4:8
- Revelation 7:9, 10

Two Kinds – Individual and Corporate: both are essential parts of WFD and are necessary to form wholistic spirituality.

Individual – the time when you can cry out to God in praise, thanksgiving; a time when you can “be real” with God. Confession and repentance happen here and we spend time with God alone, just the two of us.

- Matthew 6:6

Corporate – the time when you can learn from others and interact with them. We
draw strength from one another during corporate worship and we grow together. God honors community and we are blessed to be a part of one. But there’s one more spiritual benefit from worship corporately. We can learn to appreciate each other’s point of view as it pertains to worship styles and acts of worship. We are not spectators in corporate worship but participants.

Ephesians 4:1-13 (benefits of the body)

Assignments – practice your “private praise” at home this week. Give to God some thing in worship you’ve never given Him before (song sung out loud, shout unto God with the voice of triumph…). Make a list of all the things God has done for you in 2012. Think deeply about each incident and praise him for each individual situation.

Get involved in and engage deliberately in a part of the corporate worship service that you normally just “go through the motions on.” Look to other congregants who you believe enjoy the thing you dislike and try to see why they think it’s so great. Try to appreciate their point of view and enjoy corporate worship for the sake of the body.

Weekly Fast: negativity – no gossiping, complaining, bickering, whining, focusing on negative things. Be cooperative & positive in all things

Instrumentation in Worship (Review)

Psalm 150 – Worship in the sanctuary is in view here.

must apply a hermeneutic in order to understand this text. Hermeneutics – the process of deriving meaning or “the science of interpreting texts.” 8 instruments are listed in the passage.

Literal hermeneutic – since drum isn’t listed it must be inappropriate for worship. Applying the LH across the board would mean the Bible is saying that the only way to praise the Lord appropriately is through the use of these 8 instruments. Also means we’re not praising God unless we dance. Piano isn’t listed either.

3 categories of instrument – wind, string and percussion (could say 4, brass, but some consider it a subset of wind). Wind – trumpet and pipe (organ); Strings – psaltery, harp and “stringed instruments”; Percussion – timbrel and 2 kinds of cymbals.

The Psalmist does not mean to prescribe which instruments we must use in worship, but instead is describing the things he sees in the worship context. These are instruments prominent in that time. Timbrel is a handheld drum. IT’s in the membranaphone category.

Psalmist’s message – “every instrument can be use to the glory of God.” Why not? The devil didn’t create music and he can’t have a monopoly on the good
instruments! No instrument is inherently evil of itself. It/they can be used for good or for evil.

Discomfort with Spiritual Things

Uncomfortable with “Spirit” from “spirit and truth” because it’s not as easily defined. Without realizing it we have become “truth experts” like the Pharisees and we don’t really know how to do “spirit.” The proof is in the thing we focus on when the conversation turns to spirit. We don’t like hearing things like “authentic worship” or “experience with God.” It makes us uncomfortable because we are taught that any emotional response or feeling in church is tantamount to emotionalism. But the two are very different things. We are emotive beings, God created us that way. And what we see described in Psalm 146-150 are examples of emotive responses to God, and that’s okay. When it crosses the line to emotionalism it becomes a problem.

Matthew 23: 4, 13, 24 – The Pharisees are intent on making worship/relationship with God more difficult that it needs to be. The Bible uses many instruments in reference to sanctuary worship and we cant’ just rule it out.

Practicing God’s Presence

Meditation – Satan loves the fact that many people enjoy false meditation. But he loves it even more when we decide to neglect it altogether because of its association with eastern religion.

– Ps. 119:14-16; Ps. 1:1, 2; Joshua 1:8: Hebrew – Chagah – to mutter, moan or ponder (by talking to yourself) or reading in an undertone. We meditate on God’s Word by quietly repeating it over and over in order that we might “hide it in our hearts.”

Hebrew – Siyach – to be concerned with or occupation with one’s thoughts or attention with something. This is closer to the meditation that we might be familiar with where we ponder, consider, think about, and reflect on.

Prayer – “…prayer is reaching out to share with God as Friend and Lord” (Dybdahl, Hunger p. 45).

This definition has 3 essentials: 1. Involves intention and choice. Reaching out – prayer is a decision that we can enter into or choose not to. God doesn’t force us to pray, we decide to. 2. Share – it implies both speaking and listening, both silence and words as well as action. Prayer as merely talking to God are only partial. Essentially, prayer includes the whole spectrum of actions that people perform as they communicate with each other. 3. Prayer reaches out to God through Jesus—recognizing Him as both Lord and friend. The Bible teaches us that we are friends with God and He with us, but He’s also King of Kings and
Christian Prayer has 4 elements: (Recite the Lord’s Prayer) 1. Address – We are speaking to God when we pray and this makes prayer Christian. We address God in prayer by calling Him “Father.” 2. Adore – in prayer we must recognize God for who He is and what He has done. Take time to adore Him in prayer. 3. Ask – For most of us this is the only part of prayer that we recognize as important. It is important because it is included in Christ’s model to His disciples, but it is not the whole prayer. 4. Advocate – We close our prayer by singling out our Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Texts on prayer – 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Phil 4:6, 7

Fasting – to voluntarily abstain from food or drink for a designated period of time in order that one might increase his/her spiritual connection with God.

Effective fasting not only takes something away but also replaces that action with an activity that deliberately seeks out the presence of God. i.e. prayer, Bible study, church going, etc.

Mark 9:29; Matt 4:1, 2; 2 Cor. 11:27, 28 Matt 6:16-18

“The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. With the voice of singing He welcomed the morning light. With songs of thanksgiving He cheered His hours of labor, and brought heaven’s gladness to the toil-worn and disheartened.” --Ministry of Healing p. 52. (1905)

How Christian spiritual disciplines are different in motivation from eastern religions

Assignment: Utilize your prayer journal in your private devotion this week. List the things God has done for you in 2012 and then respond to Him authentically in your worship. Sing a new song to Him, do something artistic, shout or speak out loud to him. Also, practice the two kinds of meditation: scriptural repetition aloud and silent contemplation.

Weekly Fast: 1 hour phone fast. Must choose a significant hour each day to shut your phone off. Replace that time with prayer and study of God’s Word.

Intergenerational Interaction

Much has been made over the years about generation wars in the church. There is a clash between the young and the old, particularly young adults and senior citizens. By and large the two groups have opposing tastes, worship styles and views on church standards. The contention seems to be strongest between these two groups when young adults begin to become engaged in church life, particularly in the area of leadership. The "changing of the guard" sometimes
threatens the status quo and causes discomfort all around.

It is my belief that in order to have wholistic spirituality one must engage in intergenerational interaction. We need to have strong relationships with people of other generations, particularly elderly people and younger as well. It all begins with respect and honor.

Bible Texts:

It begins early with honor of our parents

Exodus 20:12 – If you get this right honoring elders becomes much easier.

Matthew 15:4 – Jesus thought a lot of honor…

Ephesians 6:1 – Children obey your parents

*Honor Defined – to esteem, exalt or pay tribute to somebody or something. “To have or show great respect and admiration for someone or something.”

Older Generation has something to teach “this generation”:

Psalm 71:18 – “…til I declare your power to the next generation…”

Psalm 145:4 – “one generation to another”

We are meant to respect the “gray haired”

Leviticus 19:32 – respect the gray haired

1 Peter 5:5 – “submit to elders…be humble.”

There should be generational harmony

1 Timothy 5:1, 2 – “don’t rebuke old man.”

Joel 2:28, 29 – in the last days God’s power will be manifest in a multigenerational way.

Share results of study - EFFECTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL INTERACTION ON AGING.

Assignment: start significant relationship with someone older and younger. Must be a senior citizen and someone under the age of 14.

Weekly Fast: from food for 12 hours on Monday and fast from negativity all week.
Becoming a Student of the Word

There are many factors in becoming a true student of God’s Word that are important to consider. There is the important aspect of following the spiritual guidance of someone godly as well as the personal Bible study habits employed in order to achieve significant Bible assimilation (hiding God’s Word in your heart).

Spiritual Pedagogy – finding a godly teacher following the spiritual guidance of that godly leader. (Pedagogy: the art or science of teaching; Pedagogue: an educator or instructor).

1 Cor. 11:1 – “Follow me as I follow Christ.” The job of the spiritual guide is to lead to the Ultimate Guide. You must not blindly follow any human being, but always examine their guidance against God’s Word. They are okay to follow as long as they are following Christ. In fact, Christ puts them in our lives for us to follow them to Jesus.

1 Cor. 4:15, 16 – “Imitate me.” Here’s another layer. In the previous verse Paul tells them to follow him, but here he says, “Imitate me.” Just like babies imitate their parents in order to learn what and what not to do, we need the same thing. Paul uses the same imagery here by referring to himself as their father. He was their spiritual father because he’s responsible for their understanding of the gospel. Just like children need to imitate their parents until they get mature enough to “live on their own” so it is with babes in Christ. We “imitate” until we can do it on our own.

Phil 3:17-19 – “Follow my example…” The example of a godly guide can help us to remain heavenly minded.

1 Thess. 1:6, 7 – “…followers of us and of the Lord…so that you became examples…” When we follow godly guides we eventually become examples ourselves.

Biblical Pupils – we must become true students of the Word. 2 Tim. 2:15

5 Aspects of True Study

1. Study with a Holy Purpose (2 Tim. 2:15) – must transcend “intellectual curiosity & philosophical knowledge.” It must have in mind being pleasing to and approved by God. This study must be about a desire to know God & His will for our lives. The Bible, if treated like a textbook, will have no power and will not hold your interest. But when a commitment is made to God through the study of His Word it becomes “…living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

2. Study must include repetition (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 35:28) – No one can truly
study something without going over it again and again. Good teachers always repeat themselves.

3. Study must have concentration, attention and focused listening (1 Sam 3:10, Prov. 18:13) – study cannot take place with the mind in neutral or involved in simultaneous multitasking. TV watching and study do not happen together.

4. Study includes comprehension (Ps. 119:130, 1 Cor. 14:15) – When we do not understand something, we must not skip it, but seek to grasp it. Things that are initially mysterious but after in-depth study become clearer are often the most meaningful part of study. We should welcome mysteries as aids to growth rather than bothersome obstacles.

5. Study involves reflection and reliving (James 1:25) – this requires time and commitment. Reflection moves beyond impulse and hurry to places where real listening can occur. Reliving and applying will move us beyond mere understanding to practical application.

Assignment: During the sermon, be studious with the Word. Listen attentively. Take copious notes. Write down all texts and look them up and reread them at home. Be sure to practice repetition and comprehension skills at home. Practice focused listening.

Weekly fast: No entertainment media until Thursday. No T.V., secular radio, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. No infotainment either.

Service

Service is the bedrock of the Christian church because it is at the heart of Christ’s mission to our world. Christ's words were clear in Mark 10:42-45 (NKJV):

“But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Christ lays out a new way of thinking for His disciples and for us. A life of service has a new focus that is diametrically opposed to the one the world seeks to enjoy. In the world it’s all about “ruling” and “lording over people” and “exercising authority.” But the Christian life and walk is focused on lifting, supporting and holding people up for Christ's sake.

There are 3 distinct categories of service that can be seen in the Bible. All three
are important in the Christian life for a well-rounded, wholistic spirituality.

1. Acts of service to God – 1 Corinthians 10:31 “all to the glory of God”; Romans 12:1 “reasonable service.” This word “service” in Greek is the same for “worship.” So when service is directed towards God it’s really an act of worship. This is where we get the phrase “praise of the life.” You can worship God by the way you live and love. Every act that we attempt should be done for God’s glory. That’s service to God.

2. Acts of service towards others within the family of God – 1 Thessalonians 5:11 “encourage, comfort, edify”; Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10 “fall…pick up one another.” God has given us a community of believers so that we might perform acts of service towards one another. Showing compassion, love and care are critical functions within the body of Christ. All these are acts of service that God has designed for our mutual edification. We must not neglect these as a part of the formula for true spirituality.

3. Acts of service for the needy – James 1:27 “pure religion…orphans and widows…”; Isaiah 41:17 – “poor and needy…I will not forsake them.”; Luke 4:18 – Jesus had a ministry to the poor; Matthew 19:21 – “sell what you have and give it to the poor”

Mission: “Church work in community. A campaign of religious work, often including community aid at home or abroad, carried out by a church. (Encarta English Dictionary in Word for Mac).

Acts of service toward the poor and needy are important aspects of God’s idea of the function of His church in the world. He Himself was focused greatly on this group in His mission to this world and as His representatives we should be concerned with them as well.

Assignment – Must volunteer for some form of community service this week. Conveniently enough, we have our soup kitchen tomorrow at 12pm here in our fellowship hall. On Wednesday we have our Community service food pantry at 10am. Feel free to volunteer and participate in any way possible. The food pantry prepares the food bags on Monday and Tuesday.
APPENDIX D

INTERGENERATIONAL INTERACTION
Record: 1

Title: Effects of Intergenerational Interaction on Aging

Authors: Hernandez, Carmen Requena1 c.requena@unileon.es
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Source: Educational Gerontology; Apr2008, Vol. 34 Issue 4, p292-305, 14p, 2 Charts, 12 Graphs

Document Type: Article

Subject Terms: *INTERGENERATIONAL relations
*AGING
*ADULT education
*OLDER people
*SOCIAL sciences
*STEREOTYPES (Social psychology)
SOCIAL aspects
NAICS Industry Codes541720 Research and Development in the Social Sciences and Humanities

Abstract: The world population pyramid has changed shape. However, this does not mean that societies have changed their negative concept of old age. Our study proposes an intergenerational service-learning program with 170 university students and 101 slightly depressed elderly people. The results show that the elderly people who interacted improved in well-being. Those interacting with the young people tended to lower their stereotyped perception of themselves, while the others tended to augment it. The young people tended to moderate their stereotypes of the elderly with or without interaction. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

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ISSN: 03601277
DOI: 10.1080/03601270701683908
Accession Number: 31390120
Database: Academic Search Complete
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"Harry Potter Generation" – 4th Quarter