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Faith Development Within the Campus-Based Youth Ministry Model of the English Oaks Adventist Church

Scott R. Ward

Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

FAITH DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CAMPUS-BASED
YOUTH MINISTRY MODEL OF THE ENGLISH
OAKS ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Scott R. Ward

Adviser: Allan Walshe

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: FATH DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CAMPUS-BASED YOUTH
MINISTRY MODEL OF THE ENGLISH OAKS ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: July 2014

Problem

Experts have stated that youth ministry for the past 25 years has revolved around a fun and games methodology which did not result in the youths continued participation in ministry activities. During this same time period under the fun and games ministry orientation, more than half of evangelical youth involved in youth ministries have left or are leaving the church once they graduate from high school, including those of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

Method

A faith development program was implemented that involved analyzing the spirituality of the youth leader and its impact on his ability to lead youths spiritually and also included teaching students a specific set of devotional habits that involved Bible reading, prayer as conversation, praise, thanksgiving, times of unplugging, and provided outreach opportunities. This project was implemented for one school year by the Lodi English Oaks Adventist Church campus ministries at Tokay High, Lodi Academy, and Lodi Adventist Elementary for seventh and eighth graders and was analyzed by conducting focus groups on each campus to determine the levels at which students engaged and benefited from the project.

Results

Key results of the study were that students prayed more regularly, and talking to God had become a greater part of their lives; they read their Bibles more regularly and listened to more Christian music and less secular music. Students encouraged their parents to have family worship, enjoyed listening to sermons more at church, and got more out of the sermons. Having campus-based ministry provided another way for students to connect with God and to bring more spirituality to their secular campus. By participating in on-campus ministry, students felt like their faith was no longer separate, but was now infused throughout the day. It also provided them a place to be separate and stand out at school rather than just being a part of the crowd. Students felt that being a part of this group at school was a witness and let others see their faith.

As the youth leader, the methods in this study, the journaling of my own progress, and teaching the students all of my spiritual devotional habits helped me to grow more spiritually than I had in many years. I also felt more genuine and transparent in my ministry by leading from a more personal level.

Conclusion

This study finds that more devotional time encourages more outreach, and conversely, more outreach encourages more devotional time. The study concludes that students experience spiritual growth under the mentorship of a youth leader who is growing spiritually as well. Youth leaders that monitor their own spiritual journey become more consistent in their devotional lives and tend to have more spiritual thoughts and experiences to share with the students they minister to.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

FAITH DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CAMPUS-BASED
YOUTH MINISTRY MODEL OF THE ENGLISH
OAKS ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
Scott R. Ward

July 2014

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Personal History.....	1
	Purpose	3
	Statement of the Problem....	4
	Justification for the Project.....	4
	Expectations of the Project.....	5
	Delimitations.....	5
	Definition of Terms	6
	Description of the Project Process.....	7
2.	THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	8
	Introduction	8
	Understanding God’s Relational Nature	8
	Using Scripture to Nurture our Relationship With God.....	12
	The Lord is my Shepherd.....	13
	I Shall not Want.....	14
	He Maketh me to lie Down in Green Pastures: He Leadeth me Beside the Still Waters. He Restoreth my Soul.	15
	He Leadeth me in the Paths of Righteousness for His Name’s Sake	16
	Yea, Though I Walk Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I Will Fear no Evil: for Thou art With me; Thy rod and Thy Staff They Comfort me.....	17
	Thou Preparest a Table Before me in the Presence of Mine Enemies; Thou Anointest my Head With oil.....	19
	My cup Runneth Over. Surely Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow me all the Days of my Life: and I Will Dwell in the House of the Lord for Ever	20
	Corporate Devotional Practices Found in the Book of Acts.....	21
	Fellowship in the Holy Spirit....	22
	Listening to the Word.....	23
	Talking to God in Prayer.....	24
	The Empowered Missionary’s Testimony to the World... ..	25
	Reviving Primitive Godliness.....	26
	Relationship Theology and the Postmodern Shift.....	30
	Living Like Jesus in our World Today.....	33

Conclusion	33
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	35
Introduction	35
The Condition of Christianity and Youth Ministry in America Today	35
Importance of the Leader’s Spirituality Within the Student/Mentor Relationship.....	39
Discovering Devotional Practices Leaders can Still use Today.	44
Biblical Spirituality Literature Useful in Youth Ministry.	49
Conclusion	53
4. METHODOLOGY NARRATIVE OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	54
Introduction	54
Development of Methodology.....	54
Importance of Leaders Modeling the Devotional Practices Being Taught	60
Narrative of Project Implementation.....	62
Incorporating Devotional Practices Into Campus Club Meeting.....	62
Encouraging Devotional Practices and Outreach Activities at Home.....	65
Promoting Outreach Activity Involvement at School and at Church.....	65
Conclusion	66
5. OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION.....	67
Results and Insights From Devotional Practice Modeling.....	67
The Structure and Setup for the Research	69
Results and Insights From Devotional Practice Teaching.....	72
Results and Insights From Promoting and Engaging Outreach Activities	75
Student Suggestions for Overall Improvements.....	78
Focus Group Conclusions.....	78
Additional Outcomes and Effects.....	79
Summary List of Findings	81
Recommendations	82
The Impact of the Research on me	83
REFERENCE LIST	84
VITA	88

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

When I was a student at Andrews University pursuing a Masters of Arts (MA) in Youth Ministry, I attended a colloquium on public campus ministry hosted by Ron Pickell. During the course, God made it very clear to me that my mission and calling was to minister to students attending public schools. I personally had attended public schools in third, ninth, 10th and the first quarter of 11th grade, and then after three years at an Adventist college, I graduated from a public university with a bachelor of fine arts degree. So, when Pickell described the need for public campus ministry I immediately felt inspired to go into this mission field.

When I spoke with Pickell and told him how I felt, he told me that there were no openings within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination to actually work in this field as a public university chaplain as he did—he was the only one. I left that conversation feeling frustrated and determined to find a way to reach out to public school students.

When I arrived at my first church assignment after graduating with my MA, in Fresno, California, where I was to serve as youth and young adult pastor, I immediately connected with a young adult group that was formed of students who were members of several area Adventist churches. They were already in the process of starting a campus ministry at Fresno City College, and I gladly joined in to help and became the sponsor for

the club.

Over the course of the next six years, we developed a ministry to the Fresno City College students that consisted of Bible studies, fellowship, and outreach that revolved around selling veggie burgers at the campus club rush events. During this time, I was also involved in a pastor group that was partnering with a local public high school in Fresno, California that was reaching out to the faith community for help. We had monthly discussions with the school principal, and I was approved to start a lunch-time Bible study. However, the student from my church who attended this high school transferred out before we were able to get the group started.

When I accepted the call to serve as the youth pastor at the English Oaks Adventist Church in Lodi, California, I immediately got involved at Lodi Academy by volunteering to teach Art class. I had a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (BFA) and was looking for a way to interact with the youth from my church more than just on Sabbath. As I did this and was developing my campus-based youth ministry model, a girl whom I had met at a church event and who had recently graduated from the Lodi Adventist Elementary School invited me to come and start a Bible study at Tokay High School, where she would attend to take honor classes. She said that she invited me because she knew she would miss the Bible classes she had enjoyed at the Adventist school. I immediately responded to this request and registered with the school district to conduct weekly campus visits to meet with the students from my church. As I did this, I found other students with an Adventist background and some who had even attended my congregation regularly in the past. Several of those students started coming back to church.

After two years and through God's leading, I re-started the campus Christian club that had folded the year before at Tokay High School and began ministering to students of all denominations and to many unchurched youth as well through the club. As this was all taking place, Pickell had moved to my conference, we became better acquainted, and he recommended me to serve as the Public High School Ministries Coordinator for the North American Division (NAD). I started conducting training seminars for the NAD immediately. Approximately three years later, shortly after starting the DMin program and my research on spiritual growth in the students in my campus clubs, I was officially asked to serve in the NAD coordinator position.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create a faith development program for use within the Campus-based Youth Ministry model in Lodi, CA. The faith development program developed a spiritual foundation in youths that resulted in greater personal faith. This program included teaching students a specific set of devotional habits that involved Bible reading, prayer as conversation, praise, thanksgiving, times of unplugging, and provided outreach opportunities. This project was implemented for one school year by the Lodi English Oaks Adventist Church campus ministries at Tokay High, Lodi Academy, and Lodi Adventist Elementary for seventh and eighth graders. The project was then evaluated by my local context support group, my Doctor of Ministry program mentor, and my program adviser.

Statement of the Problem

Many experts have stated that youth ministry for the past 25 years has revolved around a “fun and games” methodology (King, 2006, p. 24; Oestreicher, 2008, p. 20).

Critiquing the fun and games methodology, recent studies and books in the field of youth ministry have shown that during this same time period more than half of evangelical youth involved in youth ministries are leaving the church once they graduate from high school (Kimball, 2007, p. 17; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007, p. 74). This is a problem in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination as well (Dudley, 2000, p. 60) and has been observed in youth ministry at the English Oaks Adventist Church in Lodi, CA.

Since the fun and games approach to youth ministry, according to these authors, has proven itself to be less effective than some other approaches for many youth pastors, a faith development model needs to be developed that will disciple and nurture youth in a way that results in a more active faith that is evidenced by greater participation in personal devotions and campus-based and church-based nurture and outreach activities. The goal is not to completely eliminate fun and games from youth ministry but to ensure that there is a balance with more overtly spiritually nurturing activities. The goal is to help youth develop their own personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Justification for the Project

Studies have shown that the so-called *fun and games* orientation in youth ministry has been less effective than many had hoped in developing an experience in youths that results in continued participation in ministry activities once they graduate from high school. If students can develop core devotional habits as youths they may be more likely to continue engaging in those habits as adults and also be more likely to continue involvement in church and outreach activities throughout their lives.

Expectations for the Project

It is hoped that this project will help to establish a vibrant Campus-based Youth Ministry model that teaches core devotional practices. These practices will help to lay a foundation in the lives of youth that will help them to develop a lifelong integrated faith. This project will strengthen my confidence in the fact that my ministry is effective in the area of spiritual growth with youth. This project will also potentially help to develop a church that will retain its youth.

Delimitations

The research was conducted on three campuses: Tokay High, Lodi Academy, and Lodi Adventist Elementary for seventh and eighth graders. This study recognizes that many Adventist youth are also homeschooled but this group was not included in the research because of the campus-based model being used. Also, research was conducted only with students that were motivated to attend such groups. Spiritual growth could only be measured in those who already had a desire to grow. There was no attempt to aggressively recruit uninterested students.

Limitations

Spiritual growth is subjective because it is not possible to measure it in an objective way with scientific instruments. Thus, the approach taken here was to help people to understand ways of communicating with God that made sense to them and would possibly help them to feel closer to Him; to experience more peace, joy, love, and other fruits of the Spirit; and to feel the satisfaction that can come with serving others. The focus groups measured the satisfaction that those in the groups did or did not experience with their spiritual development and outreach efforts.

Definition of Terms

This study contains some terms that will be defined here to help the reader clearly understand how they are being used within the context of this project.

Campus-based Youth Ministry refers to youth ministry model where the majority of youth ministry activities take place on a school campus—either public or private.

Devotional Habits and Practices are activities such as prayer, reflection on scripture, praise, and thanksgiving that are intended to create greater devotion and commitment to Jesus as they are engaged.

A *Faith Development Program* is a program that uses an organized method of teaching and implementing devotional habits and practices to help individuals and groups to develop a stronger and more mature faith in God and Jesus.

Fun and Games Youth Ministry is a model of youth ministry that emphasizes entertainment and fun relational activities and does not contain significant Bible study or faith development elements. The concept is that merely having good memories from youth group will keep students involved in church after they graduate from high school.

Integrated Faith is when biblical teachings are learned and applied to life in a way that changes behavior to more closely follow biblical standards and develops feelings of being close to God and Jesus.

Outreach is when one looks outside of oneself and looks out for the well-being of others and assists them in helpful ways—either spiritual or humanitarian in nature.

Outreach Orientation is when one's life is consistently lived with others in mind rather than self and when engagement in activities that help others is a consistent part of one's life.

Public Campus refers to a government sponsored or operated educational institution (i.e., public school or city college) as opposed to a privately owned or operated educational institution (i.e., a church sponsored school).

Spiritual Growth occurs when a person exhibits a stronger commitment to Christ and Christian principles, especially regarding one's inner attitudes and desires. Also more of the fruits of the Spirit become evident in the person's personal Christian experience.

Youth Ministry in the context of this project is ministry specifically targeted to reach teens and help them grow in their Christian faith.

Description of the Project Process

Theological reflection of writers in Acts of the Apostles and Psalms focused on examples of devotional practices that have led to an outreach orientation. Biographies and journals from the lives of great spiritual leaders such as John Woolman and Bill Bright were examined in an attempt to note the relationship between devotional practices and an outreach orientation. Current journal articles and literature in the area of biblical spirituality both within the context of youth ministry and without were reviewed as well. A specific program of devotional practices and outreach activities to be engaged in during club meetings and encouraged at home were introduced to the campus Christian clubs run by the English Oaks Adventist Church Youth Ministry Department in Lodi, California. At the end of the school year, focus groups were conducted to see if the devotional practices taught were embraced by the students and if they identified positive change in their lives as a result.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will be a theological reflection that will first focus on God's relational nature showing from scripture that He has more than mere requirements and exactions for His people here on planet earth. The main point is that Jesus desires to have a personal relationship with each of us. From there the study will look at how to use scripture to nurture this relationship with Jesus rather than merely using scripture to inform and correct ourselves and others through passages in Psalms and Acts of the Apostles. Finally, this chapter will look at comments by Ellen White (1898) on what a "revival of primitive Godliness" (p. 464) entails and why relationship theology is so important in ministering to the postmodern mindset and how this will help us to live like Jesus in our world today.

Understanding God's Relational Nature

In the beginning, God was lonely. Right? He had thousands of angels surrounding Him, and in addition to angels, the author of Colossians refers to creating other authorities (Col 1:15-16) implying that God had created other kinds of beings. Job 2:1 also talks about the "Sons of God" coming to present themselves before God and Satan being among them. Yet, in Gen 1:26 God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us" (NLT). So, even though there were other creatures, none of them bore

God's image specifically and it seems that there was still more that God wanted in His life—creatures more like Himself. Ezekiel 1 provides a description of four angelic beings created to serve in God's presence.

From the center of the cloud came four living beings that looked human, except that each had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight, and their feet had hooves like those of a calf and shone like burnished bronze. Under each of their four wings I could see human hands. So each of the four beings had four faces and four wings. The wings of each living being touched the wings of the beings beside it. Each one moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. Each had a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back. Each had two pairs of outstretched wings—one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body. They went in whatever direction the spirit chose, and they moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. (Eze 1:5-12)

As amazingly complex and intricate as these angels were, based on Ezekiel's depiction, God desired man. Regardless of the power or forms that angels can take on in the earthly and heavenly realms, God chose to make man in His image.

So, being created in God's image was something new and revolutionary. White (1898) comments on what it means to be made in God's image: "Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character" (p. 45). Since God's character is one of love—when we act in loving ways we are acting consistently with His character that is also revealed by God's law. The law is summed up in scripture as "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind. And, love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27 NLT). This law is intentionally stated in relational terms of how people are to interact with each other and with God—stating that love is the highest goal. This is what it means to have God's character—to be loving and

kind to all creatures, people and God. To be loving and kind is a very personal act. It cannot be cold, indifferent or aloof—it is warm and intimate.

We do not know what the characters of God's other creatures are like but because of these scriptures we do know how He created to us to be. We also know that the creation of humans was so special and unique that it is very likely what helped spark the jealousy that caused Lucifer to rebel in heaven and eventually be cast down to earth. After being cast down from heaven, Satan was allowed to present his alternative lifestyle to Adam and Eve as soon as creation was complete. Thus, Satan sets the example of how not to be loving, and God through Jesus, sets the example of how to be loving. Thus, we have the beginning of the Great Controversy with good pitted against evil. Our spiritual relationship stems from our choice of whom to follow, listen to, and spend time with—Jesus or Satan.

We find evidence of God's close personal relationship with people in Gen 3:8 where we read, "Toward evening they heard the LORD God walking about in the garden" This is direct proof that God Himself came regularly to walk and talk with the people He had created—they recognized the sound of Him coming. There is no indication in scripture that humans were an experiment, or pets, or merely created to be subjects. In fact John 15:15 says, "I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me." The gospels show a clear record that Jesus came to earth to be with, laugh with, love and care for His children that He had created so many years before. He longed to walk with His people again and try to convince them to choose to live with Him for eternity. He healed, taught, and mentored them tirelessly up until His dying breath on the cross. Even

with death at the door, He thought not of Himself but of His people. While hanging on the cross, Jesus forgave the soldiers gambling for His possessions, asked John to care for His mother, and promised the repentant thief next to Him eternal life. A few hours before He was nailed to the cross, He lovingly gave a look of forgiveness to Peter after his prophesied denial. This one act of forgiveness forever changed Peter's life. These are just a fraction of the myriad personal interactions between God and His people recorded throughout scripture. God's recorded history with His people is a very personal and relational one. God not only wanted to come and be with us and know us, but He wanted us to know Him as well.

God revealed Himself personally to all humankind—not just those present when He had opportunity to walk and talk with people here on planet earth. God gave us His written Word to give evidence of His time on earth. His Word also details many of His other interactions with people through divine providence and miracles. He communicated all of this in a way we as humans could understand. God did not drop a book from the sky with interesting tales of His life in heaven with angels to help us learn more about Him. Instead, He miraculously spoke to prophets who were dedicated to Him and were engaged in committed relationships with Him, and He spoke to them in terms they could understand and relate to. He used practical illustrations from everyday occurrences that everyone was familiar with so that we could know Him in the best and most personal way possible.

The obvious lesson here is that God created us to be relational beings—it is our nature and it is God's nature. We were made in His image and we relate best to each other when we are reflecting His character of love. God speaks to us and interacts with us

through our everyday relational patterns and rhythms. The even more obvious lesson to recognize here is that if God has chosen a personal, relational methodology for reaching out to us, why are we not reaching out to other people in the world around us in the same way? Somehow we became comfortable with an idea of outreach consisting of mailing fliers (along with all the other junk mail) to strangers inviting them to listen to a visiting preacher for a few weeks while we look on with interest. Our predecessors relied heavily on this method during the more information driven modern era because it was new and exciting, and it worked. However, in the new more relational postmodern era people's tolerances have changed concerning unsolicited mail and impersonal outreach, and a new approach is needed.

Using Scripture to Nurture our Relationship With God

The only way to be like Jesus and develop a personal approach to others is to first develop our own personal relationship with Him. One of the greatest examples of someone with a close personal relationship with Jesus is found in Ps 23 and was written by David who was known as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14). Psalm 23 is one of the best loved and most familiar psalms in the Bible, and yet many people have turned it into a vain repetition, which Jesus warned against in Matt 6:7. It is a vain repetition to most of us because we can repeat it—often times in unison with others—but we fail to understand it. We will never truly understand scripture until we learn to internalize it relationally. We must do more than memorize scripture—we must learn to live it. The best approach to more fully embracing this passage of scripture and more clearly understanding its relational impact is to first understand the meaning of the passage in

David's life and then make application to our own—phrase by phrase. Since so many people have been memorizing this passage for so many years it is most often repeated from the King James Version—so that is what will be utilized here—because it is the most familiar.

The Lord is my Shepherd

At first hearing, I suppose this is to many people a very poetic introduction with all its imagery of the good shepherd watching his sheep. It's very idyllic and many are happy with the comfort of the familiarity of it. However, this phrase is far more than soothing—it is the very foundation of the Christian life. For David it was true—the Lord was his shepherd. There is overwhelming evidence of this throughout the Old Testament as David is seen defeating Goliath, removing enemy nations from the Promised Land, and more, all with God's blessing and power. David followed the Lord faithfully. He learned to follow His Lord as a young shepherd on the hillside tending his sheep writing and singing hymns to Him. Spending his time writing songs and praises to God is evidence that God was on David's mind and heart constantly. Who of us does this today? What are our minds preoccupied with? How often do we think of our Savior throughout the day? The scriptures not only contain dozens of psalms written by David about his affection for his Lord but it also contains record of his accomplishments with the power that this relationship with God brought to his life. As a teen he was braver than all the warriors in Israel and the only one so filled with the Spirit that he faced the greatest giant of the day without thinking twice (1 Sam 17). He went on to show incredible restraint in dealing with the vengeful King Saul because he dared not touch the "Lord's anointed" (1 Sam 24). He followed the Lord and did not run ahead in his own power, as King Saul did,

because of the close relationship he had with his Lord. The relationship is what caused David to be Spirit *filled* and Spirit *led*—the two come together and are evidenced by the psalms and the resulting historical accounts of his exploits. This is why David was known as a man after God’s own heart.

This is why I pray the 23rd Psalm several times per week during my devotional time. Every day I must ask myself if I am allowing the Lord to be my Shepherd. It is a choice. We do not have to follow God. We are often like the sheep that intentionally or unintentionally strays. We all know the stories of the lost sheep. The sheep make a choice, and we must as well.

Sclater (1955) in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, helps us to understand this Psalm further by pointing out that the “Lord” in this passage is Jesus. Sclater quotes John 10:14 where Jesus claims to be the good shepherd as his evidence (p. 124). It is foundational in my relationship with Jesus to understand that He is my Shepherd and to ask myself each morning if I am committed to making Him *my* Shepherd for the day. Every day the choice is new. As I pray about this I think through the choices I have been making and I ask myself where my choices are taking me—to the shepherd or away from Him. My goal is to pray, “Dear Lord, be my shepherd today. Guide my actions and choices and help me to follow *you* and *your* ways.” “The Lord is my shepherd” is not a given—it’s a choice!

I Shall not Want

This is the promise that comes with the choice. When David first chose to follow the Lord, he still remained a poor shepherd boy for many years. Then he became a fugitive hunted like an animal for even longer. As one intimately committed to God, he

definitely did not have everything his heart could desire—but he never “wanted” for the basic necessities of life. Sclater agrees with this by stating, “The writer was clearly referring to his material needs—food, drink, rest, shelter, etc. (p. 125).”

Through it all David remained faithful to his Lord and eventually became king. Scripture promises that if we are faithful through the difficulties of our own lives, as David was in his, we will reign with Christ in heaven (Rev 20:6), just as David reigned as Christ’s anointed king on earth. “I shall not want” is a promise for now and eternity when Jesus is our choice.

He Maketh me to lie Down in Green Pastures
He Leadeth me Beside the Still Waters
He Restoreth my Soul

Part of choosing Jesus as your shepherd is choosing to spend time with Him, listening for His voice, and observing His ways in nature. Obviously we hear His voice in scripture—that is why we memorize and dwell on the 23rd Psalm—but we can also personally hear the *still small voice* that the prophet Elijah heard so many years ago. Sclater points out that, “In our modern life we seem to lose the power to relax; so God, most merciful, compels us (p 125). Therefore, the call is to come apart to rest and renew ourselves by spending time with Jesus.

The best way to hear Jesus’ voice is to unplug the technology, disengage other people and commitments, and escape to nature. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps 19:1 NKJV). This is the concept of Sabbath. Sabbath is time away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and commitments. We take a literal Sabbath every week to spend time with God, friends, and family at church, but we also need to take personal Sabbath breaks with God every day

and at other regularly scheduled times as well. The concept of Sabbath is what personal devotional time is about, and engaging devotional practices is a key part of making the most of this time together with God. Every morning I take time in a quiet place with God. Sometimes out in nature and sometimes in my office where I have paintings and photographs of nature scenes. I also love going to the prayer chapel at my church where there is a painting of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane. Using nature and reproductions of nature to remind us of God's love and care for us is critically important in reminding us of our creator and His plans for our lives and His desire to live with us forever. I also enjoy spending a half day of prayer monthly in a local Japanese garden where I can listen to the rushing water, see the variety of beautiful plants, trees and fish in the Koi pond while I breathe in the refreshing fragrance of a well-watered garden in full bloom. It is truly nourishing to the soul to sit in this environment contemplating scripture, crying out to God and listening for His voice. These times of refreshing are the central part of a devotional life that helps us to continually dwell in His presence and be filled with His peace and they lead to a truly restored soul that is filled with His Spirit.

He Leadeth me in the Paths of Righteousness
for His Name's Sake

Jonah was sent to Nineveh to tell the people there about God because they did not know their right hand from their left. When we do not know God, we do not know His will, and we do not have any clue of which path to follow. This Psalm builds on itself. When we choose God and make Him number one in our lives by spending time with Him regularly, He not only provides for us physically, but He gives purpose to our lives as well. Sclater further clarifies this clause by stating that, "The journey is not haphazard.

The paths lead somewhere: straight paths lead straight somewhere. In this case Sclater indicates that the straight path leads the sheep straight home to the fold (p.125-126).

These paths of righteousness are the missions God sends us on because of the desire He gives us to reach out to others both physically and spiritually. Every day, as I pray this part of the 23rd Psalm, I ask God where He wants me to go and what He wants me to do to bring as many with me to His home as possible. As a pastor I have many missions I am engaged in at any one time and I ask God if I'm focusing on His mission rather than my mission and pray for guidance on what to do more of and what to turn away from. I ask for God's blessing on all my activity praying that my activity will be a part of His activity in the world. To be working in our own power instead of God's is the surest way to burn out and fail. Jesus wants us to be like the 70 disciples He sent out with His power to preach, heal, and cast out demons. "Christ in you," is the hope of glory—for us and for the world around us (Col 1:27).

Yea, Though I Walk Through the Valley of
the Shadow of Death, I Will Fear no Evil
for Thou art With me; Thy rod and
Thy Staff They Comfort me

This is a promise that hard times will come our way just as surely as they came David's way. Not that God wills it, but because He knows the nature of the Devil and his evil desire to destroy us—often by the hand of others who are strangers to the voice of God. The Great Controversy is very real. So, the question is not if we will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but when and how often. We need to learn to expect and even anticipate trials as they come; not in a welcoming anticipation but in a preparatory anticipation that reminds us to always be connected to God and filled with His Spirit so that we can be victorious in the battle against evil. Just as surely as trials

will come, they will also send us down one path or another in the Great Controversy. If we are unprepared to meet them, trials can fill us with bitterness towards God and others. But when we are engaged in an active and committed relationship with Jesus, God can use the trials to help us grow in our dependence on Him and His word, which leads to greater peace and joy. Yes, more trouble can bring more joy. As James said,

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (Jas 1:2-4)

It is a comfort to know that God is always with us in times of trouble protecting and defending us. This brings us to the rod and the staff. God has two tools to use as He walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death. The rod is for the enemies. The rod symbolizes God's protective care that does not allow us to endure any more than we can handle (1 Cor 10:13). God uses this rod far more than any of us realize. It will not be until we get to heaven that we hear all the stories of the countless times God has protected us so well we did not even know we were in trouble.

The staff, on the other hand, is for God to use on us. The staff has a hook on the end and is what God uses to pull the straying sheep back on the path. This takes shape in God's disciplining activity in our lives. Sometimes we have to endure hard lessons before we change our ways. However, just as a loving parent hates to discipline their child, yet they know that without discipline, the child's sinful nature will take over their entire lives—so, God is willing to use tough love to teach us lessons just as He did when He had to kick Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden helping them learn about the consequences of sin.

As I pray through this portion of the psalm I keep all these things in mind and ask God to guide and protect me through the trials I am in the midst of and the ones I see coming. I also try and remember to thank Him for the ones He has seen me through remembering what a great and loving personal God He is. Sclater appropriately reminds us that, “The refreshing beside still waters comes before the severest part of the journey. The reserves of energy are first secured.” Sclater states that even from the days of our youth we should be spending time with God preparing for the road ahead and the trials that will surely come (p. 127).”

Thou Preparest a Table Before me in
the Presence of Mine Enemies: Thou
Anointest my Head With oil

When we are worn out and tired. When we feel like our prayers are not getting past the ceiling. When trials have us so beaten down that we wonder if we ever really did have a connection with God—we must remember that God has not forgotten about us. Enemies can be very distracting and disheartening but Jesus always loves us. This phrase of the psalm is so amazing! It is a promise that eventually—one day—God will lift us up and prepare a banquet just for us right in the face of those who hate us and plot against us. This is also an assurance that if we have enemies we are not alone. Jesus Himself had so many enemies that they eventually overcame Him and won the battle against Him—or so it seemed for a while. David was hunted down like a wild animal for years and he was mistreated and disrespected by his own wife and children at times—yet he was exalted to the position of king of Israel. Jesus was mocked, beaten and killed—yet He reigns as King of the universe even now. Trials and enemies may pursue and persecute us now but we have the promise that those who choose Jesus as their shepherd will be anointed

princes and princesses of His kingdom and will reign with Him forever and ever amen.
(Rev 20:6) Sclater even further elaborates on the symbol of the anointing oil by informing us that, “In the ancient Near East it (the anointing oil) was a means of refreshment to weary travelers” because the oils used were “healing oils (p. 128).” So, the promise is that Jesus will heal us and elevate us to His Kingdom of peace and happiness for all eternity when we make Him our shepherd and follow Him faithfully in this life!

My cup Runneth Over. Surely Goodness and
Mercy Shall Follow me all the days of my
Life and I Will Dwell in the House of the
LORD for ever

Keeping this in mind on a daily basis will help us to be constantly aware of our true identity and help us to act like princes and princesses of God’s kingdom in all situations. This mindset will help us to approach life with an attitude that will help us to see that our cups are indeed full and running over with blessings our entire lives here on earth and will also continue to run over throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity if we continue daily choosing to make the Lord our Shepherd and King.

If we are to be connected with Christ personally, we must stop merely using scripture to prove doctrine or read about other people’s relationships with Jesus. We must start using scripture as a guide for nurturing our own intimate connection with our Lord. We have seen here how scripture calls out to us from the 23rd Psalm inviting us to dwell on who the Lord is, to contemplate His loving deeds in the lives of Bible heroes and in our lives as well. The invitation is to choose and follow the Lord our God and make choices in accordance with His will, as revealed in scripture, throughout our days as David did. Some days will be good and others will contain mistakes, but just like David, we can always recommit and start again. The invitation is to bask in the knowledge and

experience that God will provide and protect us and to remember to rest in nature to hear His voice and experience His leading. This scripture calls us to remember that we are children of the King of the universe and that He is calling for us to join Him for an eternity of joyful communion, love and peace. This is what a devotional scriptural relationship with Jesus can bring to our lives.

Corporate Devotional Practices Found in the Book of Acts

After looking at David's personal devotional relationship with God, it is important to look at the corporate devotional practices in the book of Acts. By corporate devotional practices, I am referring to the way the early apostles taught new believers to nurture their devotion to Christ as a group.

As we begin to explore the corporate devotional practices of the early church, it is important to keep in mind the context of the book of Acts. Jesus had just ascended to heaven promising that it was better for Him to go away so that the Holy Spirit could come in a power, and especially in a presence, that He could not. The Holy Spirit could be omnipresent—an attribute Jesus had given up to take on human form and live with His beloved children on earth. This was important for many reasons, but especially because Christ's church was about to experience explosive growth and spread to the ends of the earth. Jesus' mission on earth was to reveal His character to people by engaging in intimate relationships with twelve disciples to prepare them to lead out in this new missionary endeavor that corporate Israel had failed to accomplish because of a lack of relational intimacy with God. So, what we see happening in Acts is the Holy Spirit being poured out in a powerful way to amplify and multiply the types of relationships the

apostles had experienced with Jesus, which naturally resulted in the taking of the gospel to the whole world as it was known at that time—just as Jesus had commanded that it would (Matt 24:19-20).

We see this happening in Paul’s ministry as he traveled from place to place, following Jesus’ example and stopping sometimes for years in one city to make disciples and establish churches. This is only one example of what all the disciples were doing in following Jesus lead. John in his first epistle addresses: “my little children”— obviously addressing his disciples in an endearing way. The legends of the disciple’s many exploits for God go as far away as India where there is a group of people with the last name Thomas. They are known as followers of the apostle Thomas, suggesting that he got over his doubt and followed Jesus’ command to go to all the world making disciples as well. We all have it memorized—but how many of us put it into action? How many people are each of us discipling today? To most people this command is just one more doctrine— just one more vain repetition.

We will now look at some of the specific corporate devotional practices that led to the explosive growth we see in the book of Acts. The obvious foundation was a passionate personal connection with Jesus, like David had. These are some of the practices that were built on that foundation that helped them to fulfill the gospel commission so impressively during their time on earth.

Fellowship in the Holy Spirit

Jesus’ followers waited together for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised (Acts 2:1-2). This is where we find the power to go forth as missionaries. Acts 1:4-5 mirrors the gospel commission found in Luke 24:46-49. This is often the reason

why there is no power in many discipling efforts today—because we go in our own power instead of in the power of the Spirit. All four aspects of the commission must be put together as found in the four gospels to see the full picture of the power of the commissioning. Matthew says to go make disciples and baptize them (Matt 28:19). Mark says that in addition to making disciples, God’s true people will also be able to perform miraculous signs such as casting out demons and healing the sick (Mark 16:17-18). Luke says that this is all possible only through the Holy Spirit’s power (Luke 24:49). And Jesus’ personal commissioning of Peter shows that the foundation of the entire commission for all of us is an intimate loving relationship with Jesus Christ Himself (John 21:15-19). Once the Holy Spirit was poured out in power at Pentecost, the apostles and their disciples continued to fellowship together as they preached and taught. The new believers were brought into the fellowship of the community and were used powerfully by the Holy Spirit to reach out and make their own disciples and change their own little pieces of the world as well (Acts 2:42-47).

Listening to the Word

The first part of the passage quoted above on the fellowship the early church had mentions being devoted to the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42). What was this teaching? By looking at the examples of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 and Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7, we see that the teachings of the early apostles were studies of the Old Testament prophecies that told about the coming of the Messiah and that Jesus was that Messiah and that He should be accepted rather than rejected as the Jews had always rejected prophets in the past. We can assume that these teachings came from the study Jesus Himself gave to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and the teachings for the 40 days after His resurrection

before He ascended back to heaven. These are the same teachings that were eventually written down and now appear as the New Testament of our Bible today. Learning and sharing these truths was the foundation of the early church. Their relationships with Jesus were established first, then they were strengthened as the teachings were written down and organized into doctrines as the church became more organized. Our faith is still based on these foundational truths established as scripture so long ago. In them we must first find Jesus in a personal devotional way and then we study further to learn the details of His character and the truth of His ways.

Talking to God in Prayer

The book of Acts is absolutely saturated with prayer (Acts 2:42; 3:1; 4:23-24, 31; 6:4; 8:22; 10:9; 12:12; 13:3; 16:13,16—just to name a few). It is amazing how many special prayer times were organized by the early church. Whole services were dedicated to prayer alone. It also seems as though prayers were offered before, during and after all their activities. Acts is a great example of praying without ceasing (1Thess 5:17)! This is definitely part of the reason the Holy Spirit was poured out on them so powerfully—the response of the Spirit was in answer to their earnest desire to be filled and used by the Spirit of the Living God. “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14).

This is true for us today as well. Scripture clearly indicates here that true revival will not return until we learn to constantly think of, talk with and corporately call out to our living God. We can reasonably imagine that the apostle’s prayers in the book of Acts

took on a decidedly conversational tone as they were merely continuing the conversations that had begun with Jesus face-to-face only weeks earlier.

The Empowered Missionary's Testimony to the World

This is the natural result, or fruit, of being intimately connected to Jesus through prayer and Bible study and being filled with the Spirit. This is what it looks like when individuals are intimately connected to Christ as we have discussed in this chapter and is evident throughout the book of Acts. This is who God has called us to be. This includes the corporate spiritual practice of sharing a personal testimony. Sharing one's testimony can be done one-on-one in a personal way with individuals, or corporately in the forms of preaching or teaching. Please note: the missionary does not have to be perfect before starting to share. In fact, the act of sharing can give us much to talk to Jesus about in prayer and much to search the scriptures for as well.

Jesus sent out the 70 disciples sharing and helping while they were still relatively clueless about Him and His mission. Yet, through His power and grace amazing things happened. They preached and healed in incredible ways. The mission is what helped them to grow and mature, and it is critical for our growth in Christ as well. This may be the main reason for the impotence of Christianity in America today. People rarely go and share. This is about the person or people who came to us and helped lead us to Christ and about us being the people that lead others to Christ through our testimonies of what Jesus has done for us. This cycle of spiritual growth begins and ends with the passionate disciple engaging the living God and becoming a missionary in their world—it begins and ends with the Spirit working in and through you.

These are some of the most foundational corporate devotional practices found in the book of Acts. There are many more to be found such as fasting (Acts 13:2-3), serving (Acts 6:2-3), singing (16:25), observing set devotional routines (3:1, 10:9), and so on. These corporate devotional practices were set and observed by the early church members, many of whom had up until recently been practicing these very habits with Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus left us this example to follow so that we might know the way to intimate communion with Him and the Father and in answer to His own High Priestly prayer in John 17 (especially vss. 17-21) that we may all become one in Him through the Spirit.

Reviving Primitive Godliness

One of the more religious sounding distractions to a personal relationship with Jesus are the groups and individuals within the Adventist church that have attempted to use the writings of Ellen G. White to promote a rule focused approach to their religion that seeks to use quotes from White to answer any question that may come up in a believer's life. This approach seems to come from a desire to be absolutely right about all things at all times and seems to attempt to do away with grey areas and having to make difficult decisions. While the desire to live correctly is admirable it tends to lead to a legalistic focus on one's actions and away from a relationship with Jesus as has been discussed thus far in this study. We all know relationships are difficult to navigate and have inherent risks but when love is at the core we can make it through the ups and downs and the grey areas to establish loving relationships that are nourishing to the soul—both with God and fellow humans.

While it seems that many groups and individuals that quote White's writings extensively are on the law-centered end of the spectrum this chapter will show how

White's writings regarding what she calls "primitive godliness" reveal that she clearly understood and had a personal relationship with Jesus such as is being discussed here. Primitive godliness is our focus because it is the quality that White says will give God's people the ability to make it through the end of the world and be ready to live in heaven with Jesus, which is our ultimate goal as Christians. Here is White's (1898) central passage on this topic:

Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming. The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world. (p. 464)

Here we see the contrast is set between primitive godliness and a counterfeit that will bring great religious interest. This seems to be speaking of the difference between true spirituality and mere religious behavior. As we continue to examine statements on primitive godliness we read that, "It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people" (White, 1898, pp. 476-478). So, what is the law's rightful position and what is the way it was used inappropriately?

Christ is the author of all truth. Every brilliant conception, every thought of wisdom, every capacity and talent of men, is the gift of Christ. He borrowed no new ideas from humanity, for He originated all. But when He came to earth He found the bright gems of truth, which He had entrusted to man all buried up in superstition and tradition. Truths of most vital importance were placed in the framework of error, to serve the

purpose of the arch deceiver. . . . But Christ swept away erroneous theories of every grade. No one save the world's Redeemer had power to present the truth in its primitive purity, divested of the error that Satan had accumulated to hide its heavenly beauty. (White, 1964, p. 207.2)

So, here White is saying that “truth in its primitive purity” is biblical truth that is free of man-made traditions and superstitions. She is saying that we need to get away from developed theology that includes man-made ideas like it did in Jesus’ day and get back to the basics of what Jesus and His nature are truly like. In the passage below White makes it even clearer that a focus on and elaboration of the law lead to pride and arrogance whereas a focus on the simplicity of the intent of the law—its true heart that Jesus describes as love for God and one’s neighbor—leads to the primitive purity that He desires for us.

John saw that the Jews who made high pretensions to piety, were exalting and glorifying themselves. Portions of the law were printed and bound upon their foreheads, and about their wrists. God had commanded the children of Israel to have a ribbon of blue in the border of their garments, upon which was embroidered words of the law, which expressed in short the ten commandments, to remind them of their duty to love God supremely, and to love their neighbor as themselves. The farther they departed from their primitive purity, and simplicity in their words and example, and the more their works were directly contrary to the law of God, the more particular were they to make broad their phylacteries, and add to the words that God had specified that they should have in the ribbon of blue. In their outward appearance, they were expressing exalted devotion and sanctity, while their works were in the widest contrast. (White, 1873, para. 17)

We have found in these statements the same theme we have found in scripture itself—that God does, “not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Ps 51:16-17 NLT). Micah 6:8 declares that, “The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

We can conclude that those who use White's writings to promote a law/rule oriented spirituality are falling into the very same trap she warns about in the passages above. In fact one of the most powerful statements White makes in all of her work is powerfully devotional in nature:

It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Savior. (White, 1976, p. 77)

Nowhere else in all of White's writings does she say to dwell on any one thing so much—an hour per day. It is interesting to note that in the history of Adventism there has been a great focus on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and “proving” Adventism to be correct. White was supportive of this theme but actually wrote comparatively little on it herself. In fact White wrote more books on the life and teachings of Jesus than on any other topic: *Steps to Christ*, *Desire of Ages*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Confrontation*, and *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* are the main ones. Christ alone was White's main focus and joy. Even in the *Great Controversy*, as quoted above, she clearly had an emphasis on “primitive godliness” centered in Jesus.

At end of part one, we noted that evangelism should be a personal interaction with others. Next we noted that scripture is intended to nurture our relationship with God rather than merely provide information and lists of correct behaviors. Note here that White's main emphasis is not prophecy or doctrine but an intimate life-changing connection with our Maker. It is time that the Adventist main emphasis lines up with that of scripture and White and shifts away from a primarily prophetic and doctrinal truth to a

more balanced approach that first emphasizes the gospel truth while the other truths fall in their places close behind. Paul himself said, “For Christ didn’t send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speeches and high-sounding ideas, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power” (1 Cor 1:17).

Relationship Theology and the Postmodern Shift

As noted earlier impersonal evangelism worked for a few decades during the height of the modern era when the scientific method ruled the day and anything that could be proven was embraced and believed. This is no longer the case in the postmodern era. In the modern era it is said that people would “believe then belong” but now the opposite is said to be true—people want to “belong then believe,” a phrase coined by Murray in chapter 1 of his book *Church After Christendom* (as cited in the len, 2011). Another cliché is people “don’t care what you know until they know how much you care.” Our choices are either cling to the evangelistic theologies and methodologies of the modern era and continue to lose our postmodern young people and watch our churches decline, or we can adjust our presentation of the gospel to match the mindset and needs of people today. Paul himself stated that he tried to become, “all things to all men, that I [he] might by all means save some” (1Cor 9:22).

Paul spoke to the Greeks differently than the Jews. During most of Paul’s missionary journeys when he would enter a new city he would go to the Jewish synagogue to teach the Jews the gospel of Jesus based on their understanding of the Old Testament (Acts 12:5). When He went to Athens he quoted the local poets and showed that he knew about and understood their religious traditions and culture before presenting Jesus as the “unknown God” that they had one of their temples dedicated to (Acts 17:23).

This being the case, we will be more successful spreading the gospel today by teaching people about the relationships between God and Bible characters as seen in scripture and by developing relationships between ourselves and others rather than by using methods of proof-texting and fact-finding.

Another area in critical need of updating is the Adventist educational system. The entire Bible curriculum used in Adventist academies is based on doctrinal instruction and solid “teaching.” Some attempts are made at journaling one’s thoughts on passages of scripture but the overall emphasis is on teachings. In every Christian school I’ve observed—Adventist and non-Adventist—the students say something is missing spiritually. According to my experience I have found that missing link to be instruction on and living examples of how to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Postmodern people, especially young people, want more than information about the Bible—they want to know the One who wrote the book.

There are of course still older generations of modern minded people still with us, and they need to be ministered to in more traditional ways, but the point is that there has been a major cultural shift in western society and it needs to be addressed before we lose all the up and coming generations. Overall, we need to make God’s relational nature the overarching theme of our teaching and present devotional practices as the way each student can connect with God, being sure to help each one find the practices that help them each connect the best. Then within that relational/devotional framework we must show how the teachings and doctrines of the Bible support and fit in to that structure to ensure that we have the best understanding of God and thereby the purest relationship possible.

Living Like Jesus in our World Today

Once we have developed a close personal relationship with Jesus and our fellow Christians, how do we allow it to impact the world around us—to help us reach non-Christians? The foundation for outreach ministry must be laid by using Jesus’ methodology of old to reach into the future of our world. Our creator knows our deepest, truest nature and when His approach “to us” is used “by us” to reach out to others—success in leading these others to Christ is certain. One of White’s (1905/2011) most often quoted passages states, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people (p. 143). The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me’” (p. 143). This is a pervasive theme in scripture and sure prescription for success in fulfilling the gospel commission to go into all the world making disciples—with the emphasis on making disciples rather than merely throwing information at people. The difference is immense and reveals the difference between a personal and impersonal approach to ministry. It’s the difference between genuinely loving others and acting out of mere legalistic obligation.

The New Testament shows us that Saul was a legalistic persecutor when he had only pharisaical “religion.” He persecuted and tortured people who believed differently than he did. However, once he met Christ personally on the Damascus road it radically changed the way he applied the scriptures that he had known all his life. Rather than torturing those with a different understanding of God—he reached out to them with a heart that ached for their conversion because he longed for them to have the same peace and love that he had found in his relationship with Christ. His newfound personal

relationship with Jesus changed the relationships he had with everyone around him. Paul's conversion made a practical difference in how he lived his life. This kind of intimate relationship with Christ will help us to develop this same kind of heart for others today as well and will ensure that we use scripture as a means to help people rather than condemn them.

Jesus went out to meet needs—no one ever came to His office because He did not have one. No one ever came to His church because He did not need one. He did run a small group for twelve people and often times thousands came to listen to Him teach them. Yet, the point is that we have to get out there *into all the world* to see what the needs are. Then when God reveals to us the needs of the world around us we are to show love to the people we see and develop relationships with them that can make an eternal difference in their lives. The gospel commission challenges us to go out and meet God's children wherever they are and let them know we love them by introducing them to the one who has transformed our own lives—Jesus Christ—the One and only.

Conclusion

It has been shown here that if we are to follow the overwhelming biblical theme of relational theology and accept White's prophecy regarding the revival of primitive godliness that will occur in the last days and also take into account our current cultural context we need to move our focus away from impersonal invitations to public meetings that focus on the provable prophecies and doctrines of the Bible and return to a focus on embracing God's relational nature, personal devotional activities and the sacrificial way of living in community that the early church of Acts focused on when 3,000 were converted in a day. Jesus was not hung up on doctrines when He lived here on earth—the

Pharisees were. Jesus was hung up on people—He loved them intimately, pursued them passionately, taught them relationally and asked them to give up all and follow Him.

What makes me Christian is the fact that I know Jesus personally. I feel His presence and sense His guiding. I respond to a call for a personal relationship with Jesus that not only guides my thinking but my acting and living as well. Doctrine is still meaningful and critically important to purify the relationship—one cannot have a healthy relationship based on misunderstandings and lies. However, the weakness in Adventism the last few decades is that the teachings have taken over and Jesus got left behind. It's time to bring Jesus back and place Him on the throne once again. When we do this our churches and our schools will once again come to life, just like the dry bones of Ezek 37. Christians are being called by the Lord, even reprimanded, to revive their connection with him. It is only by being passionately connected to Christ that Christians will have the power and passion to carry out its end time mission. This is a personal decision made by each individual and it must be made anew every day. And when this approach is then taken with ministry to teens, it will help them to build their own foundational relationship with Jesus that can then be purified and strengthened with pure doctrine as well.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will begin by assessing the condition of Christianity and youth ministry in America today to show the context within which Christians are living and ministering. This review will then examine literature regarding the role that the leader's personal spirituality plays in the student/mentor relationship. Here the study will consider sources on how spiritual growth in students is impacted by the spirituality of their leaders.

Next, the review will examine the biographies and writings of several great spiritual leaders of the past in an effort to determine what helped them to become the spiritual leaders they were in their time, so we can use it as inspiration for how today's youth leaders can become the spiritual leaders of this time. By looking at the past we may be able to better evaluate what is being taught now, and perhaps find ways to improve.

Finally, this review will consider sources for developing personal spirituality to see which approaches are currently proving helpful in leading youths and others to developing their own personal spirituality. Here this study will seek to determine if there are effective resources for finding ways of leading students to the paths that many adults have found helpful in nurturing their spirituality.

The Condition of Christianity and Youth Ministry in America Today

Assessing the current condition of Christianity in America is a challenging but important task. Kinnaman and Lyons (2007), president of the Barna Group and founder

of Q, state that Barna Group's research shows that there is no statistical difference between those claiming to be born again Christians and non-Christians in many lifestyle activity related issues. The research shows that there is no statistical difference between Christians and non-Christians in areas such as gambling, visiting pornographic websites, stealing, consulting mediums or psychics, physical fighting, getting drunk, etc. According to Kinnaman and Lyons, this reality is causing a jaded view amongst many young adults and many are leaving the church because of it. It is true that many youth and young adults of previous generations left the church at this age, but what is disturbing, according to Kinnaman and Lyons, is that the Barna Group's research shows that many of today's young people are far less likely to come back to church, even once they become parents, than in generations past—they seem to be leaving for good (p. 23).

In Dean's (2010) book, *Almost Christian*, her findings also show the effect of the parents faith upon that of their children by stating, "the religiosity of American teenagers must be read primarily as a reflection of their parents' religious devotion (or lack thereof) and, by extension, that of their congregations (p. 3)." Dean goes on to state, "Since the religious and spiritual choices of American teenagers echo, with astounding clarity, the religious and spiritual choices of the adults who love them, lackadaisical faith is not young people's issue, but ours (p. 4)."

Kimball (2007, p. 16) has found similar data, but from a more anecdotal approach. As he travels and teaches he discusses the issue of Christianity in America and has found that even in mega churches, where youth ministry is often considered the most effective, it is reported by youth leaders that the attendance rate of those under 30 is low even though often it is over-stated in reports by the top church administrators. In other

words, some churches are reporting that youth ministry is in much better condition than it actually is. One church youth ministry staff estimates that 75% of youth are leaving the church as soon as their parents stop making them attend (p. 17). Kimball goes on to quote McNeal as saying, “the rate of disconnection indicates a dilemma far more serious than mere youthful rebellion. . . . The farther you go down the generational food chain, the lower the percentage each succeeding generation reports going to church” (As cited in Kimball, 2007, pp. 3-5).

Part of this problem is that youth ministry has lost much of its effectiveness using the so-called fun and games model of the past 25 years. Oestreicher (2008), in the sidebar of his book, quotes a youth worker as saying,

Sadly youth ministry has become an entertainment venture for most churches. Youth pastors feel pressure to just get kids in the door—and if possible get them saved. Encouraging them to become like Jesus isn’t the goal; numbers are the goal. (p.17)

Oestreicher’s theme is to move on from youth ministry 2.0 (the fun and games model) and into a more effective future of personal devotions, outreach, and campus- and church-based nurturing. It is a model of postmodern Christianity that is still taking shape, but is largely undeveloped at this point.

Geiger and Borton (2009) also state that “holiness is much deeper than keeping kids out of trouble. It takes much more than a busy church calendar to influence students to live holy and pure lives” (p. 7). They go on to claim that one of the mistakes of the past is that many youth leaders have had the tendency to offer “programs and events with no understanding of how all they offer fits into a comprehensive plan or process for discipleship” (p. 15).

Mayo (2004) also finds current youth ministry to be ineffective. In discussing a new student that left one of her youth ministry events vowing to never come back because no one noticed him or even acted like they “gave a rip” about him she says, “we had blown it. Amidst our great music, inspiring message, and great drama that night, we had failed to focus on the one thing that matters most in today’s youth culture: an atmosphere of authentic friendship” (p. 13). Root expands upon this theme in his book. Root (2007) claims that relationships need to be developed with teens and used to lead them into the life of the congregation, and that they must “come into intimate and intense contact with other distinct persons in the congregation, and with the world through the congregation” (p. 111). Root believes that personal mentoring relationships with youths and being a part of a broader church community are the keys to successful discipleship rather than mere fun and games. Another part of the problem, however, is the low expectations of the parents, who are often a part of the board overseeing youth ministry in the local church. Glassford (2010) states that:

Youth ministry often takes place in a context where parents are overly concerned about their children’s success rather than about their spiritual development and thus are pleased when the youth ministry merely provides a wholesome, morally formative environment. (p. 192)

In responding to this dilemma, Glassford agrees with Root that relationships are key and are to be used for a spiritual end. He says, “relationships, however, are about more than relating; they ought to summon and challenge young people to faithfully follow Christ. They ought to function as leaven in the young person’s journey” (p. 191).

Literature in the area of youth ministry from spiritual leaders such as Oestreicher (2008), King (2006), Geiger and Borton (2009) , and Mayo (2004) agree with Glassford and Root in stating and/or implying that youth ministry needs to find a deeper spirituality

to convey to teens, and this has been my feeling for some time as well. Even so, I personally know of youth pastors who are not engaging the current literature and are still stuck in the old fun and games approach, trying to draw large numbers, often times because of pressure to do so from other pastors and parents, while offering little in the way of discipleship.

So, there are still a variety of models being used today and there are students being led in various directions, but the clear direction of youth ministries that are making a spiritual difference is towards a greater emphasis on personal spirituality and less emphasis on exciting programming to draw the larger numbers. In fact, King (2006) states that in his experience, “there is a new seriousness about young people, millennial people. They don’t want to be entertained. They want to be challenged. They want a faith that is challenging as opposed to a Christianity that is entertaining” (p. 54). King goes on to say that young people today are rejecting the fun and games model that consisted of “tightly orchestrated programs that are more show than ‘real.’” He states that, “younger evangelicals are ‘longing for an encounter with God’s presence’” (p. 63). The sobering part of King’s message is that the large numbers of teens who do want to develop genuine spirituality and intimacy with God are frequently turned off by church programming and politics, so they are going outside the church walls to find it (p. 11). It is truly a sad day when one of the least effective places to find God is at church.

Importance of the Leader’s Spirituality Within the Student/Mentor Relationship

This literature review will now look to see what current literature has to say about the personal spirituality of the youth leader/mentor. Without a spiritual leader there is

very little hope of changing the condition of youth ministry today and developing spiritual ministries that produce spiritual students. As Lambert (2004) states, “the church has done a very poor job of making disciples of most of the teenagers God has put in our care.” He then goes on to quote one of his students as saying that “the church not only does a very poor job of teaching (students), but an even worse job of bringing up effective teachers” (p. 15). So, we will now turn and look at youth ministry resources that are calling for a deeper spirituality in the lives of today’s youth leaders.

In a 2001 youth ministry textbook, Clark makes this observation in the last chapter:

Modern perceptions of youth workers include ideas that we are a fun-loving, wild, mildly irreverent (but appropriately so), passionate, energetic, and a hip bunch. And there is a great deal of truth to that. We are typically not hired because of our effervescent spirituality, and in fact the majority who read this will never be asked in an interview about their interior walk with Christ or what spiritual disciplines they use. (p. 377)

This low spiritual expectation has caused many youth ministers to feel no need to develop this part of themselves and their ministry. Glassford (2010) states, “Rarely do I hear youth workers describe their vision for youth ministry in concrete spiritual terms” (p. 192). This is the truth behind the problem we find with youth ministry today. Many of the churches that have a youth pastor have been hiring young, hip and cool youth leaders and laying out expectations of merely keeping kids “out of trouble.” Spiritual growth has often not been an expectation from the churches or for the individual youth workers themselves.

Folmsbee (2007) adds to this observation by stating “a new kind of youth ministry needs to purge from its core the laziness that in too many cases far outweighs the steadfastness” (p. 131). Folmsbee here is talking about youth workers who are unwilling to put in extra time and effort—they just want to hang out and have fun with kids. He

says that it is this laziness that shapes many of the ministries that come from these workers, rather than the steadfastness of a godly leader. Folmsbee emphasizes that in too many cases this far outweighs those with steadfast ministries. The obvious point here is that the “fun and games” model of ministry has become rampant and must come to an end before any more kids are lost to its ineffectiveness and deception. The deception is that it is called ministry and yet it does *not* lead kids to Christ.

In his discussion of youth ministry leadership styles, Hryniuk talks about traditional church-based ministry as having fallen into two ineffective extremes: entertainment and catechesis. The entertainment model Hryniuk discusses revolves around drawing students to church with food and games, and including only a short devotional in the programming. The opposite extreme, according to Hryniuk (2005), is the catechesis model that revolves primarily around teaching dogma, with little or no instruction on how to incorporate what is taught into the real world. What Hryniuk is calling for is, “a transformation from anxiety-driven to Spirit-led youth ministry” (p. 140). Those agreeing with this call away from “anxiety-driven” ministry to a more “Spirit-led” approach are numerous.

McNeal (2000) calls this “anxiety-driven” type of ministry, “mechanics based.” McNeal’s description of mechanics based ministry is a ministry that focuses on preparing talks, growing the group, raising money, and so forth. McNeal says that the result of this ministry style has been a de-emphasis, or neglect, of the spirituality of the leader and his/her intimate connection with God. I agree with McNeal that what Christian ministry needs are leaders who are spiritual and lead out of a heart that is connected to God. McNeal notes that “great spiritual leaders are great spiritual leaders because they enjoy

exceptional communion with God” (p. 150). This is the first and most important step in implementing a successful youth ministry that develops youth’s faith effectively; a leader/coach who enjoys deep communion with God through engagement in regular devotional practices.

Nuesch-Olver spent six years collecting 500 spiritual autobiographies written by freshmen in college. The essays she collected were written in regards to the student’s spiritual lives in high school. In assessing her research of these autobiographies, Nuesch-Olver (2005) states that “without a single exception, students told stories from their own lives that underscored the power of mentoring and accountability in their faith journey.” She goes on to say that “to a person, they used language that clearly illustrated their conviction that relationships were of higher importance in the shaping of their faith than programming” (p. 101). I agree with Nuesch-Olver that relationships with “Spirit-filled” youth leaders make an unforgettable impression during the formative high school years.

For many years, I read youth ministry books and attended youth specialties conventions and training events and felt totally out of place. I was never the life of the party entertainment guy that other youth leaders seemed to be. I was not the kid magnet that I thought I should be. Yet I knew that I was called by God to youth ministry. My ministry revolved around my relationship with God and my relationships with kids. The first youth ministry book that seemed to affirm my style of youth ministry was *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*, by Yaconelli. Rather than only including a chapter at the end of a youth ministry book on the leader’s spirituality, the theme of the entire work is focused on spiritual formation, both within the

leaders and the students. This is how Yaconelli (2006) states the problem with youth ministry in the introduction:

But the central problem in sharing the Christian faith with young people doesn't concern words; it's deeper than that. The real crisis facing those of us who seek to share faith with youth is this:

We don't know how to be with our kids.
We don't know how to be with ourselves.
We don't know how to be with God. (p. 19)

Concerning the first point, Yaconelli (2006), referring to extensive research by Cara Miller, says that "the single most important thing that can make a positive difference in the life of a young person is the presence of a caring adult" (p. 20).

Regarding the second point, Yaconelli states that "we cannot hope to touch the hearts of youth if we have lost our own spiritual rooting" because we are too busy and do not take time for pauses with God. And finally, in regards to the last point, Yaconelli states that "in the church we love to debate God, defend God, protect or promote God. We talk to God, praise God, and even serve God. The one thing for which we have little time or patience is actually spending time with God" (p. 21).

Robbins (2010) claims that "if we don't begin working from the inside out, we're in danger of functioning like the flame of an artificial fireplace," looking alive, but never having any warmth or energy (p. 31). I completely agree with Robbins and Yaconelli. What is in the heart will come out in the ministry. And if the heart is not with God the results will be not be good.

In far too many youth ministry books, the spirituality of the leader is either assumed or ignored. The call here is for deeper personal spirituality in youth ministry leaders so that they have something authentic and real to share in ministry. I agree with these authors.

Glassford (2010) quotes a conversation with a senior pastor who was asked why his church was “seeking a middle school youth director with an MDiv who is pursuing ordination.” The pastor responded, “our young people are in need of a leader who is theologically trained to assist them and their families in navigating life. They need a theologically trained minister more than any other group in the church” (p. 192). The tide seems to be turning—at least in some churches. People are starting to become aware of the critical need for youth leaders who are more deeply spiritual.

We will now turn to the journals and biographies of some of the greatest spiritual leaders in Christian history in an attempt to discover the devotional practices that helped to form their spirituality, making them effective leaders in God’s work.

Discovering Devotional Practices Leaders can Still use Today

One of the most inspiring Christians I have read about is Frank C. Laubach. His book, *Letters by a Modern Mystic* (2007), is a collection of letters written to his father while he was serving as a missionary in the Philippines. In his book Laubach talks about the fact that in 1930, after years of serving as a missionary, he still did not feel as close to God as he wanted to. Even though he was very successful in developing literacy programs that eventually were adopted around the world, he felt a void in his soul and eventually came to the conclusion that “submission is the first and last duty of man” (Laubach, 2007, p. 3). In his effort to submit to God Laubach tried to think of God more often and made it his goal to think of God “every fifteen minutes or every half hour” (p. 3). Laubach then states that this is “exactly what Jesus was doing all day every day. But it is not what His followers have been doing in very large numbers” (p. 4). Laubach eventually made his goal to have a thought of God for at least one second every minute.

This seems logical. In our attempt to be more spiritual leaders, the words of scripture can only guide us as we think of God and think of them continually throughout the day.

Laubach (2007) prescribes two practices to help those who want to be more connected to Christ in this way. The first is to “read and reread the life of Jesus recorded in the Gospels thoughtfully and prayerfully at least an hour a day” (p. 89). He suggests using different translations to keep it interesting and inspiring. Second, he says to

make Him our inseparable chum. We try to call Him to mind at least one second of each minute. We do not need to forget other things nor stop our work, but we invite Him to share everything we do or say or think. (p. 89)

Another spiritual leader from the past who agrees with Laubach is Brother Lawrence. These two Christian leaders’ teachings were so similar that two of Laubach’s books and *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence can be found bound together in a single volume published by The SeedSowers as volume one of their Spiritual Classics series. In Brother Lawrence’s section of the book he states, “I have found that we can establish ourselves in a sense of the presence of God by continually talking with Him” (Lawrence & Laubach, 1973, p. 42). In describing how this is done Lawrence states that:

In order to first form the habit of conversing with God continually and of referring all that we do to Him, we must first apply ourselves to Him with diligence. After a little such care we shall find His love inwardly excites us to His presence without any difficulty. (p. 46)

The goal, according to Lawrence, is to talk to God as if to a friend about anything and everything that happens all throughout your day.

Another Christian leader from years ago who agrees with Laubach and Lawrence is Ellen White. In 1842, at the age of 15, White wrote that she was “hungering and thirsting for full salvation, an entire conformity to the will of God. Day and night I was

struggling to obtain this priceless treasure, that all the riches of earth could not purchase” (White, 1882, p. 11). During a rich life of communion with God, preaching, teaching and writing, she eventually recommended this practice to all Christians:

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. (White, 1898, p. 83)

The common theme we are finding thus far is a deep desire for and commitment to a moment-by-moment relationship with Jesus Christ. White also points out that many people do not take enough time with Christ and this is the root of the lack of spiritual power in many church leaders. She says:

In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. “Be still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10.

Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God.... With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ’s loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel.... With their burdens they return to their work. These workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength. They must give themselves time to think, to pray, to wait upon God for a renewal of physical, mental, and spiritual power. (White, 1952, pp. 260-1)

This is truly a problem in our fast-paced society—too little time with God. At some point each day, White is saying, we need to slow down the pace and spend time with God until we receive the strength and blessing He knows we need.

Hammar skjold is different from the spiritual leaders we have looked at so far in that he was not a missionary, pastor, or Christian teacher. He was Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1953-1961. President John F. Kennedy called him the greatest statesman of his century. Yet even as a statesman, his personal journal reveals that his

focus was continually on God as well. In a radio program that Hammarskjold wrote, he said that he:

found in the writings of those great medieval mystics for whom “self-surrender” had been the way to self-realization, and who in “singleness of mind” and “inwardness” had found strength to say yes to every demand which the needs of their neighbors made them face, and to say yes also to every fate life had in store for them.
(Hammarskjold, 2006, p. viii)

We see here Hammarskjold’s commitment to serving others that was rooted in his pursuit of God that was inspired by the Christian mystics of old. Hammarskjold’s commitment to service was recognized around the world and he was eventually awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts. In his journal, Hammarskjold made clear where his life was founded. He said “it is not sufficient to place yourself daily under God. What really matters is to be *only* under God” (p. 110). Hammarskjold believed that anything less than full surrender to God leaves the door of the heart open to daydreaming and distraction. His life was closely focused and guarded for God.

Woolman was a preacher and noted abolitionist who lived from 1720-1772 and had similar convictions. In his journal there is a particularly succinct summation of his spirituality and its effect on his life:

(I was) early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator and learn to exercise true justice and goodness, not only toward all men but also toward the brute creatures; that as the mind was moved on an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible being, on the same principle it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world; that as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal and sensitive creatures, to say we love God as unseen and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him, was a contradiction in itself. (Woolman, 1989, p. 28)

For Woolman, as a Quaker, the inward life typically consisted of large amounts of time spent in silence and meditation on God’s word that had an obvious impact on his

actions in the world around him. He made it a point to be kind and loving to every living creature he came in contact with. The point here is that true personal spirituality leads to definite actions in the life. The two are unmistakably intertwined as already noted in the lives of others.

The conclusion is that youth workers and other Christian leaders, whose lives are not full of Christ-like sacrifice and dedication to Him, may be seriously lacking in the area of connectedness to Christ and personal devotions. This would almost certainly not be deliberate, but possibly happens through mere ignorance or lack of desire. Thus far we find in this section the importance of placing an emphasis on personal spirituality for all workers for Christ. If personal spirituality is not evident, the individual should not be entrusted with caring for the spirituality of others.

One final example of a godly worker for Christ is Bill Bright (1921-2003), founder of Campus Crusade for Christ International. In his authorized biography it is stated that Bright

began the morning and ended the evening with a prayer group, and in the course of a typical day joined one or two other groups, praying with students from all over the world. On weekends he went out with fellow students to witness and to minister in various churches. (Richardson, 2001, p. 31)

Bright and all these other examples clearly show that spiritual leaders will have abundant evidence of their spirituality for all the world to see, and a deep abiding passion for time with Jesus Christ. These historical examples show that it is possible for church leaders and youth ministers to be led by the Spirit in powerful ways. Willet believes that the church has a “desperate need for deep, mature followers of Christ.” He goes on to say that his article on stages of spiritual development is “an invitation to think about the

believer's journey of faith in a distinctively different way, as a path to deepening spiritual maturity that has been largely left unexamined" (Willet, 2010, p. 88).

This study will now turn to reviewing biblical spirituality in an effort to identify resources that can be helpful for youth ministers and other Christian leaders in developing this path to a deeper spiritual maturity and more intimate communion with God.

Biblical Spirituality Literature Useful in Youth Ministry

The Holy Spirit started a revival in my life when I read Jones' book, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (2005). Jones states that "a common theme in modern Christianity has been that head knowledge is how one becomes more adept at following Christ: The more you know, the better you'll do. But in fact, that hasn't proven to be true" (Jones, p. 31). In the forward of his book, Jones talks about how, during the Protestant Reformation, when they were breaking away from the mother church, the reformers rejected many of the good things that had nurtured their spirituality. Jones spends the majority of the rest of his book reexamining ancient spiritual practices that had proven useful in developing spirituality in previous generations.

King (2006) devotes nearly 75 pages of his book to a similar review of ancient practice and Dybdahl (2008) too has written an analogous review of spiritual practices from an Adventist perspective. These works are all reminiscent of, yet more recent and more easily read than Foster's classic, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (1978/88), and also of Willard's classic, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding how God Changes Lives* (1990). Galli, in his 2008 interview of Foster states that "thirty-one years ago, not many evangelicals thought much of the 'spiritual

disciplines,’ and when they did, they thought of them negatively—as one more form of works righteousness” (Galli, 2008, p. 41). This statement implies that spiritual disciplines are more common now than when Foster first wrote and is possibly an indicator that spiritual disciplines are better understood and accepted today. Here are some of the disciplines reviewed by the authors listed above: fasting, sacred reading of scripture, contemplation/Christian meditation, Sabbath, solitude/silence, and many more.

This literature review does not have the space to describe each of these disciplines here, but according to the authors discussed here, these practices form the core of a deeper spirituality that is being pursued today by a much larger portion of the Christian population than in the recent past.

Many books can be found detailing each of these disciplines. Ruth Haley Barton has written an excellent book on solitude and silence (Barton, 2004). There are scores of books on prayer including, *The Path of Celtic Prayer: An Ancient Way to Everyday Joy* (2007), by Calvin Miller. *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (2002), by David G. Brenner, discusses the ancient practice of spiritual direction/friendship. Interestingly, there are many books on Sabbath-keeping by non-Adventists such as Baab (*Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest*, 2005) and Heschel (*The Sabbath*, 1951).

Another interesting note on Sabbath-keeping is that evangelical authors Jones (2005, p. 198) and King (2006, p. 163) both promote Sabbath-keeping in their books discussed earlier in this review. Bass clearly makes the point that Sabbath keeping is not a legalistic requirement to fulfill the law, but rather Sabbath observance is “an element in

forming and nurturing the faith of Christian persons and communities” (Bass, 2005, p. 26).

I agree that the Sabbath is a key time to set aside for God and personal change practices that are a little different than my weekday routine. I personally look forward to this time to set work and household chores aside and spend time with God and fellow Christians at church and spending time with my family in the afternoons. I also consider my daily devotional times to be mini-Sabbaths kept throughout the week.

Other authors looking back to ancient spiritual practices in an attempt to find a better future include Steiner and Folmsbee. Steiner discusses the need to move beyond merely forming relational communities and emphasizes the need to begin forming “spiritual communities” instead (Steiner, 2009, p. 13). Steiner conducted a study of the book of Acts to look at how people in the first century engaged in corporate spiritual practices as part of their community building and life-sharing experience. In his book Steiner looks at adoration, community, truth, and service. He first looks at the ancient practices of each of these elements and then to possible applications for youth ministry today (p. 13).

Folmsbee discusses how the mission of the church is the heart of what draws us into relationship with God. Folmsbee states that “the origin of mission has its source in the heart of God, not our church bulletins, websites, or mission statements, which are often based on one verse or proposition” (Folmsbee, 2010, p. 42). Folmsbee’s mission-oriented narrative approach is reminiscent of the Adventist theme of *The Great Controversy* in that it points out that we are part of a mission joining with God in His work here on earth. A key point that Folmsbee makes here is that we cannot merely talk

about God and His mission—we must live it on a daily basis. He says that students will not be inspired to follow Christ unless they see the mission in action. Folmsbee states, “Christianity and believers’ claims will be received when we’re living examples of the things we claim. In other words, when the ‘data’ of our lives and the ‘data’ of our claims match, our students will be receptive” (p. 39). Folmsbee here presents a holistic Christianity that is lived out through one’s entire being and shared in community with others. This approach is obviously biblical and also appealing to the youth of today.

An example of people actually living in spiritual community today is found in Claiborne’s book (2006). Claiborne has given all the royalties of this best-selling book to The Simple Way community that he is a member of demonstrating their common goal of renouncing materialism and striving to reach out and help the poor and needy around them on a daily basis. His book is a moving and challenging documentation of his pathway to a deeper spirituality that must be more than espoused—it must be lived.

Another author who seeks to live his spirituality in a very intentional way is Hohnberger, who documents his family’s commitment to a fuller life of communion with God and living every moment for Him (2001). These are examples of what appears to be a deeper desire and commitment to a more Christ-like lifestyle than we have seen in recent history.

More authors could be quoted who describe the resurgence of interest in personal spirituality, devotional practices, and commitment to living a lifestyle that honors God. But I believe the point has been effectively made that this is a major movement in Christianity today that is being embraced by thousands of Christians across the country. I agree with and believe that the heart of this movement resonates with the heart of God

and has potential for making Christianity the life-changing movement that it once was. I agree with the authors quoted above that these teachings have the ability to put vitality back into the lives of church leaders and members, and youths—the youths that have been entrusted to us by God to raise up to know and serve Him, and live with Him for all eternity—because they have done this for me.

Conclusion

It is evident from the condition of Christianity today and specifically the condition of youth ministry that we cannot pursue the same course and make the same mistakes as our recent forerunners and as some contemporaries still do. Youth leaders need to take time to study the lives of great spiritual leaders and learn from them and others how to have an intimate relationship with Jesus through improved devotional practices. There are numerous authors writing in the area of spirituality, and although we must be careful not to fall into dangerous paths that lead to new age or apostate practices, youth leaders can clearly find a solid Biblical path towards deeper personal spirituality and also learn ways to share that deeper path with students. This needs to become the new heart and soul of youth ministry as many of the authors in this review have challenged us to do.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

NARRATIVE OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This narrative of the project methodology and implementation will discuss why a campus-based approach to youth ministry is important in helping students learn to live their faith, what a campus-based lunch-time meeting looks like and what the typical content of our lunch-time meetings consists of. I will also show why it is important for the leaders to model what they are trying to teach to the students in order for them to have a practical example of what to do and how to live.

Development of Methodology

The Campus-based Youth Ministry Approach

I developed a campus-based approach to youth ministry several years ago in an effort to meet with students in the middle of their daily activities rather than only meeting with them during church and Sabbath school on the weekends. My goal in this approach was to help students take their faith from a theory discussed at church to a practice that they could live out and benefit from in their daily lives thereby helping them to develop an integrated faith rather than a compartmentalized religion. I also believed that meeting students on campus during the week was better than mid-week youth group meetings at church or in a home because of the fact that I would be meeting students in the actual

place where they spend most of their waking hours during the week and are faced with many decisions that will impact their future lives. Recent Valugenesis reports (Valugenesis 3 Update, 2012) indicate that students attending Adventist Academies attribute a great deal of their spiritual growth to the Christian environment at their school and one of the biggest factors in creating that environment is considered to be the nurturing/mentoring relationships they have with the Christian faculty and staff on campus. This public high school campus-based youth ministry model is an attempt to provide at some level a similar opportunity for the Adventist youth attending public high schools that do not have the benefit of so many Christian faculty and staff to mentor them.

In using this approach, I meet with students every week during lunch at their high schools for small group Christian fellowships. Some schools have teacher-led Christian clubs but I felt it was important for me to meet with students on campus regularly for several reasons. First, where I live in California, the public high schools have 2,000 - 2,500 students per campus so they divide the students up into two lunch periods to avoid overcrowding in the cafeteria and on campus. Most teacher-led Christian clubs meet before or after school because most teachers are free for only one of the two lunch periods per day. I, on the other hand, am free both lunch periods and can thus give all students the opportunity to participate. Second, lunch-time is a better time for students who do not want to get up extra early to make it to a club that meets before school starts; and clubs that meet after school are also limited by the fact that many students are busy with sports practices and other after school activities. In addition, meeting at lunch-time provides the natural social setting that typically comes with sharing a meal together.

By meeting with students in this way, I am personally attempting to connect with them in the middle of their lives and thereby develop deeper relationships with them. I am also helping them to connect with God at the same time by making Him the main focus. Just as Jesus came from heaven to earth to live life with His people, as discussed in the first section of my theology chapter, I wanted to live life with my students in their world in an attempt to have the greatest spiritual impact in their lives.

Previous to this project, my ministry approach was based on the more traditional youth group structure consisting of Bible studies at church Wednesday evenings, Sabbath School on Sabbath mornings, monthly Friday night vespers, and occasional campouts and annual mission trips. When I used the more traditional ministry structure, I relied on students coming to me at the church facility—entering into my ministry context to be ministered to. While reviewing literature on this more traditional approach, I found that relying on students coming to a church in an information-driven setting was one of the reasons that an over-emphasis on a fun and games methodology had naturally developed within evangelical youth ministry in North America. My review of literature also shows that entertaining elements were introduced into many youth group meetings over the years in an attempt to draw more kids into this traditional ministry context, and over time the spiritually nurturing elements were diminished as larger numbers of youth seemed to be drawn by the fun elements rather than the spiritual ones. Evidence of the ineffectiveness of this approach is also detailed in the first section of my literature review in Chapter 3 of this project.

Thus, my goal in developing campus-based youth ministry was to meet students in the middle of the world in which they live and help them to be spiritually connected

there rather than attempting to lure them into a church setting that was easy to compartmentalize out of their daily lives. The philosophy is that a more integrated approach to ministry can help students to de-compartmentalize their faith and find the practical aspects of spirituality that can help them to deal with the stresses of daily life, thereby helping them live happier, more successful lives. This philosophy also suggests that a successfully integrated faith leads to an outreach orientation that assumes students successfully living out their faith will naturally want to share that faith with fellow students—especially with friends who are struggling with stressful situations.

The biblical model for teaching devotional practices being used here is found in the book of Acts as discussed in the Theology chapter. In the book of Acts, group meetings consisted of: eating, fellowshiping, sharing biblical teachings, and praying together, and the results were signs and wonders and spontaneous witnessing (Acts 2:40-42). Most meetings do not contain every one of these elements each time because of time constraints. Most weeks, students go and get their lunch first and then come to the meeting area. By the time all students are present we typically have 20 minutes for our meeting time.

Eating together at mealtime is a common form of fellowship. Meal times provide the format for a great variety of meetings, from business luncheons to family gatherings, and it forms the foundation for great campus-based Christian fellowship meetings as well. It gives everyone something to do while they attend the club meetings and helps ease what can sometimes be an awkward silence. Additionally, it also gives the adult sponsor the opportunity to make friends by occasionally providing food, such as pizza, for all the students to share.

As the students come in and sit down to eat most of our campus club meetings start with a time of fellowshiping to help everyone warm up and get to know each other better. This warm up time can take on several forms. At the beginning of the year and frequently throughout, we begin this time by *checking in*. This check-in time consists of going around our group (typically seated in a circle on the floor or in chairs—whichever is available) asking everyone how their week is going. Here we learn about many family issues and also personal issues regarding anything from grades to friends. This is one of the great benefits of meeting on campus—the things students tend to talk about during our check-ins are more directly related to what is going on in their lives that day whereas many of these issues may not be on the top of the students' minds or as easy to talk about at church on Sabbath.

Other fellowship activities may be ice-breaker style games intended to help students have a little fun together so that they feel more comfortable engaging in serious Biblical conversations later during the meeting. The icebreakers usually have a goal more than just fun. The games are typically designed to help us learn more about each other, remember each other's names or get discussion going on more serious topics.

Biblical teachings are an indispensable element of the club meetings just as they were in the book of Acts. Peter's sermons as recorded in Acts are filled with quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures and we always include scripture in one form or another in our club meetings as well. The specifics of how scripture is used will be detailed in the Project Implementation portion of this chapter.

Prayer is another constant in the campus club meetings. We often have an opening prayer and always have a closing prayer. These times are used to invite the Holy Spirit

into our discussions or to bless us in our outreach activity for the day. Sometimes the check-in time may also include prayer requests, and other times, when we do not have a specific check-in time, the prayer request time will come at the end of the meeting and help provide a fellowship aspect at that time instead. The prayer times are always welcomed by the students. If we are running late and try to close in prayer without requests, we are typically interrupted by some students with urgent requests that cannot wait till the next week.

The final aspects of group meetings discussed in Acts two are the signs and wonders and spontaneous outreach. Signs and wonders obviously cannot be planned, and spontaneous outreach sometimes does occur. Instances of these will be mentioned later in the narrative, but for now I will conclude this portion by discussing planned outreaches. It is interesting to note that students began asking to do outreach from the very beginnings of my campus club several years ago. It seems that if a student is willing to join a campus Christian club they are also frequently interested in sharing their faith with others as well.

The most popular outreach conducted in place of a club meeting has been the Pizza and Prayer event. The concept is that high school students are always hungry, some students don't have lunch. Meeting this need offers an opportunity to make friends and open up kids' hearts to be able to share some personal prayer requests. Typically, on a week where this outreach is offered, the students will come to our meeting area as soon as lunchtime begins and eat some of the pizza that I have provided for lunch. I wait until approximately 15 minutes into the lunch period so that the students who have money for lunch will have had opportunity to get it. This waiting period also serves a secondary purpose: I do not upset the cafeteria staff by making them think I am taking away their

business. I am also more likely to attract students who do not have a lunch that day and are particularly hungry.

Next, the gathered individuals are split up into groups of two—students only—adult sponsors are not allowed to go out and talk with students who have not chosen to join the club. Adult sponsors go out with the students into the lunch area to supervise and answer questions the students may have and to help with difficult situations that may arise. In the teams of two, one student holds the boxes of pizza (usually two), and the other has a pad of paper and a pen or pencil for taking the prayer requests. The students say something like, “the Christian club is giving away free pizza today, would you like a slice?” Then they say, “we are also taking prayer requests—do you have anything you would like us to pray for?” The students typically do not pray right there on the spot—rather, they make a list of the requests that the group prays over, and the list is then emailed to our church-based prayer team.

Other outreaches may include various forms of community service projects, both on and off campus, and other more people-centered humanitarian outreaches such as adopting a needy family to give Christmas presents to or give notes or gifts to teachers that may be going through a difficult time. The variety of outreach ideas is huge—just challenge the students to use their imaginations.

Importance of Leaders Modeling the Devotional Practices Being Taught

The literature review for this study found that students will understand how to live out their spirituality most effectively when they see the example being set by the spiritual leaders they interact with regularly. Evidence was found showing that leaders having a

weak connection with God will be ineffective in attempting to teach or demonstrate to students how to connect with God; whereas leaders that were found to have a deep and intimate devotional connection with God more successfully inspired students to develop their own spirituality.

By researching and emphasizing this aspect of spirituality, I feel that as a leader, I am able to maintain a greater awareness of my own need for a devotional relationship with Jesus. In attempting to implement this finding, I kept a personal journal of my own spirituality with regular journal entries regarding my own devotional life, including what activities I was engaging in devotionally as well as how I felt about my personal devotional life and how connected to God I perceived myself to be. In doing this I was able to maintain a greater awareness of my need to live devotionally. Thereby, I was more faithful to my own devotional convictions. In this process, I also kept track of ministry ideas that came during my devotional times as well as questions that arose and how specific devotional practices impacted my spirituality. My goal was to model what I was teaching to my students while living in community with them.

It is important to note the fact that I came on campus to meet with students and help them learn to live their faith in the real world. However, by modeling my personal devotional practices, *I was inspired* to get out of my own comfort zone and reach out to the students I knew *and* their friends. Students are very intuitive about knowing what is real and what is not. If they sense that the leader is trying to get them to do something that they themselves will not do, it will not work.

Since I structured my devotional curriculum based on my personal spiritual journey I was very intentional about choosing my direction and I put in extra time

studying not only the content I was experiencing and teaching but the biblical foundation for the progression I was pursuing as well as outlined in chapter 2. Using this structure also means that I taught the same devotional lesson in each of my clubs every week. My junior high club that meets at Lodi Adventist Elementary School meets on Mondays. Tokay High School meets on Tuesdays, and Lodi Academy meets on Wednesdays. All groups meet during their school's lunch time or times depending on the school. This means that I was able to reflect on and improve my teaching after each club meeting. I kept careful notes each week noting what worked well and what did not with my Monday group so that it could be improved for Tuesday's group and then refined once more for the Wednesday group's meeting. This will gave me opportunity to study deeply into my teachings and how they impacted students of different ages and school environments.

Narrative of Project Implementation

Incorporating Devotional Practices into Campus Club Meetings

Throughout the year devotional times consisted of both student and adult sponsored talks. The students frequently read from devotional books and/or the Bible and shared testimonies. The student-led devotions were not planned into the curriculum. My curriculum was presented on the weeks that I did the teaching—approximately twice per month.

The first topic I taught was called multi-sensory devotions. Here the focus was on the Old Testament Sanctuary and all of the sights, sounds and smells found as parts of worship there and why God may have included them. These included:

1. The smell of the burnt offering and incense and how such smells can be incorporated into one's devotional time by using a scented candle etc.

2. The taste of the showbread as it relates to communion bread and other tastes that can be incorporated into devotional times today such as that of herbal tea or grape juice.

3. The use of visuals such as the candelabra and the fact that we are the light of the world.

4. The sound of the temple choir as it relates to listening to Christian music during devotions.

5. The sense of touch and the different textures in the temple, from smooth gold furniture to the textures of the different fabrics and skins in the portable temple walls to the textures of communion bread and wine in your mouth.

This discussion of the sanctuary symbols from the Old Testament sanctuary led into discussions of how we can appropriately use multi-sensory elements in our devotional lives today to enhance our connection with God.

The second topic I chose to teach on was the power of God as demonstrated in Psalm 18. In this phase of teaching my goal was to present the power of God in an attempt to counter a weak and impotent/irrelevant view of God that many students have. I also taught on Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4 showing that angels look much different than we have been taught and how otherworldly and powerful heavenly things are. God must be relevant and real in order to appeal to high school students and He must be seen as One who has the power to help them in their lives. In these discussions the topic of miracles came up regularly as well.

The third topic I chose to teach on was reading Scripture devotionally. Students need to have a devotional foundation in Scripture before correct doctrine will be of much

interest to them and learning to read/understand for themselves is essential in order for them to do more than participate in the weekly group and move on to developing a life-changing experience in their private devotional times. During this portion of my teaching time I chose to focus on David's passionate devotion for God as seen in Psalm 63 and using Psalm 23 as an outline for the devotional life and then I chose to work through the Ten Commandments with them through Jesus' positive lens of loving God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.

In addition to the three main topics that I taught on as listed above, most lessons involved developing the habits of

1. Talking to God conversationally about everything that happens in your life
2. Reaching out to others showing Christian love and helping in practical ways
3. How to structure one's devotional life from daily devotions to attending annual spiritual retreats and mission trips in addition to the weekly club meetings and church services.

Some of the outreach projects that were implemented included:

1. Pizza and Prayer: Public high school students going two by two with free pizza and note pads to give pizza to hungry students and record prayer requests out on campus during lunch-time.
2. Inviting younger students to attend the club meeting: Adventist elementary school 8th graders inviting 6th graders to the lunchtime group to learn about what we do.
3. City-wide Youth Rally: Students from all my campus clubs joining together and inviting all other Christian youth groups in town to a large youth rally.

4. Academy chapel talks and testimonies in church: Academy students sharing 5-15 minute talks during chapel at school or during a sermon at church.

5. Choosing five people to pray for: Everyone choosing five people they know to pray for and asking those people for requests if possible.

Encouraging Devotional Practices and Outreach Activities at Home

At the end of the club meetings the students were always encouraged to attend church on the weekends, continue reading their Bibles at home, get involved in outreach and to talk to God continually. Then each week during the warm up/check-in time student testimonies or comments regarding any of these themes/activities were always emphasized and highlighted as an encouragement to the others. The theme became “living your faith in the real world” and started with me showing up in their world at school and helping them get started by following my example.

Throughout the club meetings I brought out that when one is connected to Jesus devotionally a desire for outreach is the natural result as clearly evidenced in the book of Acts and in the end they will experience peace, fulfillment and satisfaction.

Promoting Outreach Activity Involvement at School and at Church

As was noted earlier, from the very first days of my campus ministry students that were interested in attending the weekly club meetings also seemed to have a natural desire to engage in outreach activities. The public high school students wanted to reach out to others specifically “on campus” as did my academy group and some of the junior high students. I always made it a point to discuss outreach activities in all the groups and encourage students to get involved in some way. As we discussed outreach in the various

groups it seemed that they were hesitant to do this on their own time—they wanted structured outreaches to be provided by the club during club time. It was difficult to get students together outside of club time. As this dynamic developed we tried to adjust for this because the original intent was to challenge students to go and get involved outside of the club meetings since we only had approximately 20 minutes to meet each week.

Conclusion

In this project implementation, I feel that I was successful in achieving my goals. The principals of all the schools I was targeting agreed that I could conduct research on their campuses and the parents signed forms allowing their children to participate as well. The fact that we met during lunch-time seemed helpful as well with the exception of frequently having to wait a few minutes for some students to warm up their food.

I feel that it was quite evident that I myself believed in and was experiencing what I was teaching. This was probably most evident when I was able to speak passionately about the sanctuary symbols I used in teaching about the devotional life and how important multi-sensory elements were in biblical times and still are today.

My time in community with these students was definitely beneficial in helping them to develop their own personal spirituality as will be shown in the results of the focus groups in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

This chapter will, first, report on how my own spiritual journey impacted my ability to lead the campus-based lunch-time clubs run by the Lodi English Oaks Adventist Church youth department. Next, this chapter will report on the research on spiritual growth in students attending the clubs, how the clubs were structured and set-up, and what the outcomes of the research on each campus were. The results of promoting an outreach orientation in the students will then be examined. Finally, there will be an evaluation and observations made from what has been learned from the overall campus ministry approach. Additionally, outcomes and outgrowths of the project will be elaborated on and then the chapter will conclude with an overall evaluation of the project.

Results and Insights From Devotional Practice Modeling

The first insight gained is that I noticed a direct correlation between my own personal spiritual experience and my ability to share with others—if I was personally feeling disconnected spiritually, it was harder for me to share with the students. As *whole* beings, we are each affected by our life circumstances that include: health problems, relationships with others, struggles with sin and other issues that can be distracting to our spirituality. During these times when I was struggling with an issue, it was important for me to be honest about where I was spiritually and let the students know that we are all human and have ups and downs in every area of life—spirituality is no different. I would

not get into the specifics of the struggles—just that life is not always easy and that as humans, we need to re-commit to Jesus every day and invite Him to journey with us through whatever comes our way. The students seemed to appreciate my honesty and openness about my own spiritual journey.

I also noticed during this research that it was important for me to be intentional about monitoring and maintaining my personal devotional time. Engaging the symbols of the sanctuary was the new emphasis for me during this research. Experiencing this new emphasis and having something to be excited about was very important for me and discovering the impact of God’s multi-sensory approach to His people during the sanctuary services of the Old Testament was an important discovery in reaching teens more effectively. I found that when I used the candelabra and incense during our club meetings, the students were much more focused and involved. I did, however, have to find a balance in how often I used the symbols. If I brought them every week their effectiveness would tend to decrease.

I also did notice a few students misunderstanding the sanctuary symbols they saw in my small group room at the academy. One or two students not participating in the group glanced in and were uncomfortable with the symbols because they are not typically seen in the Adventist churches they had been to. From my overall experience, it seems that the average Adventist teen is exposed more to cognitive rather than sensory or emotional spiritual experiences. It seems that this is an area where Adventists need to find more balance in what we experience ourselves and share with our youth. As I continued to contemplate and apply what I was experiencing in my own devotional times to my ministry, it became apparent to me that I needed to move beyond helping the

young people I minister to merely understand doctrine and place more emphasis on helping them to develop their own personal relationships with Jesus.

In light of the research I did regarding the current state of youth ministry in North America, I have tended to distance myself from anything that would be seen as merely fun and games. However, we need to strike a balance and still include some fun events in ministry with teens. Discipleship needs to include every area of life—not just the overtly spiritual aspects. This was noticed as part of the importance of campus-based youth ministry and the devotional life merging together—spirituality needs to intersect and impact the everyday lives of the students—physical, social, and religious both at home and school and wherever students live their lives.

Another interesting side note is that I often felt guilty for spending 45 minutes to an hour in devotional time each morning and then checking in with Jesus at noon for a few minutes in the middle of my work-day as well as time in the evenings. I think this is because in our society in general and even specifically at pastor's meetings, it is the workaholics that are celebrated and long lists of accomplishments that are applauded rather than those who spend long periods of time in devotions.

Now, within the context of the insights from my own spiritual journey, I will look at focus group questions 1-5 and 8 as related to the devotional life and will detail and summarize those findings here.

The Structure and Set-up for the Research

The outcomes reported on here are based on informal student feedback during the weekly club meetings and on the findings of the focus groups conducted with each club on each campus near the end of the school year. The informal weekly feedback and the

formal focus group feedback will be reported on together because they revealed the same findings—the focus group findings merely emphasized what was discovered in our weekly evaluations. The weekly teachings and findings were recorded each week for each group and are available for review along with notes from the focus groups and a journal of my own spiritual growth during this same time period as well as the notes from the focus group’s objective observer.

The first step was to obtain permission from the principal of each campus where the focus groups were being conducted: Tokay High School, Lodi Adventist Elementary School, and Lodi Academy. All principals signed an agreement that the research could be conducted on their respective campuses. Then, just before the focus groups were conducted, signed permission to participate in the groups was obtained from each of the students involved and his/her parent(s) or guardian if they were under the age of 18. An objective observer was also present to observe how I moderated the groups, to take notes, and to provide feedback in the follow-up discussions we had after each group. These observations were both written and verbal and have been incorporated into this chapter as well.

The focus groups were conducted in the regular weekly group meeting places so that the students would feel comfortable and willing to share. Students without permission to participate in the focus group were allowed to be present and watch silently in a further attempt to help those participating to feel comfortable and like it was a typical club meeting. Twenty-three active participants participated in the focus groups according to the following breakdown: Lodi Adventist Elementary, 4; Tokay High first lunch, 4; Tokay High second lunch, 10; and Lodi Academy, 5. There were other students present

as well who seemed very much in agreement with the discussion and comments of the other students, and these themes were also in general agreement with the themes and attitudes expressed by students throughout the year.

The objective observer was an experienced youth worker who was introduced informally and was given a few moments to warm up to the students as well before proceeding so as to make them feel comfortable with his presence. The focus group questions asked or discussed were as follows:

1. Why do you attend the campus Christian club?
2. How has the Christian club helped you to learn more about God?
3. How has the Christian club helped your personal relationship with God to grow?
4. How has the campus Christian club helped your prayer Life?
 - a. Do you talk to God more often now?
 - b. Do you talk to God about more personal things now?
5. How has the Christian club helped your devotional life?
 - a. Do you read your Bible more now?
 - b. Is the Bible more meaningful to you now?
6. Does your time talking to God and reading the Bible make it easier for you to reach out and help other people spiritually or in humanitarian ways? Examples?
7. Do you think your school is a better place because of the Christian club? Why?
8. How does your time talking to God and reading the Bible affect the way you feel about church?

9. What should your leader do differently in the future in how he teaches about having a strong relationship with God; about how to pray, read the Bible, etc.?

10. What could your leader do to help you get more involved in Christian outreach and community service?

11. Is there anything that I did not ask about which is important about this project?

Results and Insights From Devotional Practice Teachings

The Adventist Elementary school group started out with a great deal of passion to start a lunch-time Bible study group because their teacher had decided that anyone who had already been baptized could no longer attend baptismal classes as they had in the past. Thus, there was a great deal of energy and desire to learn more in a campus-based group setting with an understanding that our group would focus on the devotional life. This was especially important to this group because they felt that Bible class at their school was mostly focused on the rote memorization of facts rather than on nurturing a personal relationship with Jesus. This was, therefore, the first time an on-campus lunch-time group had been established on this at this school. The group felt excited to be a part of something new.

Within this context the group was eager to hear about each other's devotional lives and to learn from each other and from what I was teaching. Hearing from each other inspired individuals within the group to pursue their own devotional lives more faithfully and thus a very positive group dynamic was present. Those in the group said that meeting in the middle of the week served as a reminder to spend time in devotions daily

—strengthening their individual relationships with Jesus. The students in the focus group stated that one of the overall effects of our group was that they prayed more regularly now and that talking to God had become a greater part of their lives. Focus group members also said that they were reading their Bibles more regularly and that they listened to more Christian music and less secular music at the end. The students also stated that they were encouraging their parents to have family worship with them more and they enjoyed listening to sermons more at church and got more out of the sermons.

The Tokay High School First Lunch group had been meeting for several years and conducting research on this campus helped to re-energize the group and bring more focus to the teachings in the group meetings.

The students here felt that their group provided another way to connect with God and to bring more spirituality to their secular campus. It also provided them a place to be separate and stand out at school rather than just being a part of the crowd. They said that being a part of this group at school was a witness and “let others see their faith.” This was important to them because they felt that it was not considered acceptable to talk about their faith in other places on campus. The students stated that the teachings helped them to set aside time for God and helped them understand better how to serve Him. The students also said that they now thought of God throughout the day rather than just once per day during their devotions. They said that they felt like their faith was no longer separate, but that it was infused throughout the day now. Some students also said that they now prayed more for others than just for themselves—indicating a greater outreach orientation. It was also stated by some students that they were no longer afraid to share their faith in social settings and that the club’s group dynamic empowered them to help

others find themselves spiritually. Some of the students stated that our group helped them desire to go to church more and that they are more regular now. Others stated that they did not have opportunity to go to church and that our group was their church.

The Tokay High School Second Lunch group had also been meeting for several years, and conducting research on campus helped to re-energize this group and bring more focus to the teachings in the group meetings at this lunch as well.

The students in this group said that the group gave them the important opportunity to connect with and learn from Christians other than the ones a part of their own church or denomination and to support each other. They enjoyed the fact that our group was encouraging and helped them to know they were not the only ones struggling to live their faith at school. They enjoyed meeting other Christians and getting advice from each other. The students also stated that they enjoyed learning more about the Bible and the devotional life and how they could connect with God at any time throughout the day. They said it helped them to think about God more often and that being a part of the club helped them to feel accountable to fellow students who believe in God. They said that the club dynamics and teachings helped them to be bold for God and that they were better people because of it. The students stated that the teachings on the multi-sensory elements of the sanctuary was helpful to them and it helped them to remember they could pray on campus anywhere anytime. They also stated that the teachings on this helped them to dig in to scripture to try and understand more—especially the teachings on the sanctuary that were new to them. Overall the students felt that they were now taking more time with God. Students felt that our campus club shows how church should be. They said that

church based youth groups are often *cliquey* and mostly social. The students seemed to appreciate the sense of mission that we have in the club.

The Lodi Academy group was newer than the Tokay High group. After a few years running my club at Tokay, the Academy kids asked for a group like Tokay's on their campus. When I asked them why, they said that Bible class and chapel are more information driven and they wanted the devotional aspects of what I do in my other campus clubs. In our focus groups the students said that the school tries to provide a spiritual atmosphere, but this group did that the best. They said the group was comfortable, and it was a good venue for talking about God and getting closer to Him and worship Him. They also liked the fact that what was said in the group stayed in the group. The students enjoyed talking about other religions on points of view and they appreciated the teachings on the sanctuary's multi-sensory aspects. Several students said that the group has helped them to develop a good devotional life because they did not have one before. They said they think of God more and appreciate Him in nature more, and they are more motivated to spend more time in devotions at home. Some students said they are happier now and are talking to God more everywhere they go. Some said that before they only prayed when they needed help, but now they talk to God about other things and are more positive and thankful in their prayers. Students also said they are more involved in church now and were using the skills I taught on how to share with others by giving worship talks and testimonies at church.

Results and Insights From Promoting and Engaging Outreach Activities

Focus group questions 6, 7, and 10 related to outreach and will be detailed and summarized here.

Lodi Adventist Elementary students felt that it was hard to talk about overtly religious topics with people they did not know. They were more open to humanitarian forms of service. There were a couple of girls; however, that had formed a group called the God Girls during the course of the year. They went door-to-door taking prayer requests on Sabbath afternoon. This was not adult driven at all—they came up with the concept and carried it out on their own with their parent’s knowledge and approval.

This group stated that they were not making a large impact on their own campus with overt spirituality. They felt that other students knew about the group, but that was the extent of it—it was not a large draw on the Christian campus. This was the only area that students felt the group could improve—they said their devotional lives were doing well, but they wanted more outreach opportunities.

Tokay High School First Lunch group said that students on campus definitely knew who they were and what the group was about, but they felt that people were not that open-minded. They felt that the all-school assemblies and the passing out of the LifeBooks made an impact on campus and created an even greater awareness for our group and its mission. Because of these two major campus outreach programs [all-school assembly with “Life Choices” (the Rachel Scott story from Columbine High) and passing out free LifeBooks from the Gideons (gospel of John with commentary)] the group felt that their outreach component was very strong and that they were doing well in this area. The students said that they would like to do more small outreach projects in addition to the large assembly. The students also stated that they would prefer to have fewer student-led devotions and for me to do more teaching in the group.

One student of Tokay High School Second Lunch group felt that he had become a kinder person due to his involvement in the group. Others verified that they had seen personal spiritual growth in his life as well. This group stated that school was so busy that it was hard to connect with God outside of school. They said that having a convenient opportunity on-campus was very helpful for them and that being given the opportunity to give devotional talks helped them to grow spiritually as well.

Some students felt that they had a greater outreach orientation because of their involvement with the group. One of the students who was on the swim team said that because of her involvement with the group she was now finding it easier to witness to other students at swim meets. She felt that she was now more open about her relationship with God. Overall, the students stated that our group was having a positive impact on campus and that it was a better place because of our group's outreach efforts.

Lodi Academy group felt that for some it was easier to talk about God with others because of our group, and one girl, in particular, said that her involvement in the group had a very significant positive impact on her relationship with her mother. Talking about how much it helped brought her to tears. The group members felt that they and their peers were not learning a lot about God in Bible class and that having this group on campus helped. They said it was especially helpful for those that were searching for something more than an academic class could offer. The feeling was that most students on the campus were Laodicean in nature—feeling satisfied with what they knew—but were not really living out Christian principles in their lives. The students from the group that went on the Peru mission trip with me over spring break felt that the groups was doing a great job, and the others that did not go on the mission trip felt that the group was “good as is.”

Student Suggestions for Overall Improvements

Focus group questions 9 and 11 were on the topic of what could have been done better and will be summarized for all groups here.

All groups started out by saying that their groups were great and that we were doing a good job. The overall tone was that the students were very engaged and excited about who we were as individual groups and as a part of an overall campus-based ministry with clubs on multiple campuses and they were also proud to be a part of what we had accomplished. It seems to me that the fact that this year's groups were a part of a research project helped me to be more focused than usual, and I believe the students were more serious and focused because of this dynamic as well. This was definitely the most successful year my ministry has experienced in Lodi. The only critique—that the students considered to be minor but significant—was that the students wanted to be involved in even more outreach.

Focus Group Conclusions

Overall, for all groups, it seems that there is a strong positive connection between the devotional life and outreach. Students who were more deeply connected devotionally had a stronger desire for outreach, and students who were more involved in outreach felt a greater desire for devotions. Thus, a strong desire for either devotions or outreach led to more desire for and involvement in the other. The finding here is that Christian churches must offer both devotional and outreach opportunities in significant ways for students to experience the greater spiritual growth. This happens more effectively with a leader who is engaged devotionally in a significant way personally and has a desire for outreach as well. It cannot be forced or put on—it must come from the heart.

I believe that the focus group responses also indicate that meeting students on campus was a significant part of the student's spiritual growth as well. Most of the activities engaged for this research project could not have happened or been as effective in an off campus setting. Meeting students in the middle of their world, where they live their lives, showing them how to apply their faith, was significant in the overall success of this project. This finding was also confirmed by a short written survey given to each student participating in the focus groups who asked about church involvement. The major finding of this survey was that more than 75% of the students surveyed attended church regularly but attended mid-week youth group either occasionally or never. Some indicated that they could not attend mid-week youth group because of sports program conflicts, and others did not indicate why. This shows the appreciation that these students had for the mid-week, lunch-time campus clubs where they were faithful attendees.

Additional Outcomes and Effects

As I studied the devotional life personally and taught on the subject in my campus clubs, I also wrote my studies up chapter by chapter in book form. This helped me to organize my thoughts and make a well-rounded curriculum. When I was finished writing the manuscript I sent it to the Review and Herald and it was accepted for publication under the title *Authentic: Where True Life-changing Christianity Begins* (Ward, 2012). In the fall of 2013, Pacific Union College purchased 400 copies to give to all the incoming freshmen. I was told that it was appreciated by many, especially the last section on how to structure your personal devotional life.

In the winter of 2011, it was the Pacific Union Conference's turn to select Mission Investment Offering Projects for the North American Division. I submitted a

proposal for a Public High School Student Discipleship Resource Center and my project was selected by the Union and approved by the Division. This led to the creation of www.livingiths.org. I also applied for Pacific Union Special Evangelism funds to help create the resource center and was approved by their board for additional funding. More funding was applied for and received from the Northern California Conference Evangelism Fund, and from individual members of the Lodi English Oaks Church where I serve as youth pastor. Thus, this project was funded by entities from the Division, Union, local Conference, and local church. The resource center has four main sections. One gives outlines of at-risk behaviors for youth leaders that may encounter students struggling with issues such as depression, cutting, and sexuality. Another section gives basic information on how to develop and maintain a devotional life. Another contains short video testimonies to use as teaching tools. The final section lists outreach ideas for youth leaders reaching out to students as well as ideas for students reaching out to other students.

In February of 2010, I was unofficially asked to serve as the North American Division Public High School Campus Ministries Coordinator by the NAD Youth and Young Adult Department associate director, Manny Cruz (<http://www.adventistyouthministries.org/about/meet-our-team>). This new position was officially announced at the NAD *Just Claim It 3* prayer conference in February of 2012, and the Living it Resource Center was introduced at the same time.

In August 2012, the Northern California Conference (Lorenz) published a story about my campus ministry in the Pacific Union Recorder entitled "*Living it!*" *Website Focuses on Public High School Ministry*.

I wrote an article entitled “That Mission Field Down the Street” (Ward, April 2013) on the importance of reaching out to students on public high school campuses that was published as the *Adventist Review* cover story.

In 2013, the Pacific Union Church Support Services director, Rich Dubose filmed and released a video of my testimony in regards to starting public high school ministry (<https://vimeo.com/71469633>).

In August of 2013, I was asked to write an article on how pastors can reach out to public high school students (Ward, December 2013), and it was featured in *Best Practices for Adventist Ministry* e-published by the NAD Ministerial Department.

Over the course of the past four years, I have been invited to speak and present at various conventions and retreats across the NAD on the topics of public campus ministry and on the devotional life. These are the two topics that have combined to make up the heart of my DMin Project. My success in promoting these two topics across the division has been in many ways enhanced by the focused research and study that is at the core of the DMin process.

Summary List of Findings

The findings listed here are summarized from the notes taken during the focus groups and also noted during the weekly meetings throughout the course of the school year. The findings listed here were mentioned by students in at least 3 of the 4 groups and were noted by both myself and the objective observer

1. It is important for spiritual leaders to maintain a strong devotional life that enables the leader to lead from his or her personal practice and experience.

2. It is important for spiritual leaders to be transparent regarding their personal spiritual journey thereby helping students to understand that ups and downs in one's spiritual life is normal and do not disqualify one from a leadership position.

3. It is important to be intentional about organizing one's personal devotional times by planning and evaluating devotional experiences and times regularly (daily, monthly and annual experiences and events).

4. It is important to have a balance of cognitive and emotional elements in one's devotional life including a variety of elements such as: Conversational prayer, scripture reading, reflection, journaling, Christian music, and symbols such as those found in the Old Testament sanctuary.

5. It is important to have a balance of doctrinal and devotional passages of scripture in the scriptural portion of one's devotional time.

6. It is important to have both fun and spiritual events in a well-balanced youth ministry.

7. It is important to encourage students to engage in both spiritual and outreach events understanding that engaging in one will help lead to engagement in the other.

8. It is important to encourage students to engage in devotional times and outreach activities both at home and at school and in all other places students spend their time as well.

Recommendations

1. Develop ways to give pastors and youth leaders more support for their devotional lives. Model, encourage, value, and provide more resources for devotional practices.

2. Encourage a regular analysis of each church's youth ministry. Especially look for balance between the more fun-oriented human-to-human relationship building experiences and the discipleship activities that promote personal spirituality and relationship with Jesus. Both are important.

3. Provide regular opportunities for youth to engage in outreach activities.

4. Work to create a culture of accountability and community in youth ministry relationships where leaders and youth "check-in" with each other and encourage each other to maintain an active devotional life and commitment to reaching out to the world around them on a daily basis.

The Impact of the Research on me

As a result of my engagement in this research project and the Doctor of Ministry Program overall I have become:

1. Well-read and knowledgeable in the literature relevant to my fields of ministry.
2. A better and more frequently published author in my fields of ministry.
3. A more effective leader in the fields of youth ministry and personal spirituality.
4. More effective in developing and implementing new ideas in my fields of ministry.
5. A sought after speaker/presenter at conventions, rallies, and retreats.
6. More confident in my spiritual gifts and abilities and the Holy Spirit's desire to use them to benefit others.

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Education

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University Berrien Springs, MI Doctor of Ministry in Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality	2010-2014
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University Berrien Springs, MI Master of Arts in Youth Ministry	1996-1997
University of Nebraska Lincoln, NE Bachelor of Fine Arts	1986-1989

Ordination

Ordained to the Gospel Ministry, Central California Conference
2000

Experience

<i>Living it:</i> High School Outreach, Executive Director Discipleship Resource Center (www.livingiths.org)	2012-Present
Pacific Union Conference, Public High School Campus Ministries Coordinator	2012-Present
North American Division, Public High School Campus Ministries Coordinator	2010-Present
Lodi Academy, Art Teacher Lodi, CA	2003-Present

English Oaks Adventist Church, Youth Pastor Lodi, CA	2003-Present
English Oaks Adventist Church, Interim Senior Pastor Lodi, CA	2013- 2014
Fresno Adventist Academy, Bible Teacher Fresno, CA	2002-2003
Fresno Central Adventist Church, Youth Pastor Fresno, CA	1997-2003
Family Enrichment Resources, Student Literature Evangelist District Leader Ohio District	1990-1996

Publications

- Ward, S. R. (2013). *A Quick Start Guide: Public High School Ministry*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource.
- Ward, S. R. (2013). *The Pathfinder Bible Experience Application Guide: 2 Samuel*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource.
- Ward, S. R. (2013, December) Talking with Teens. *Best Practices for Ministry*.
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Ministry Features

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Ward, S. R. (2012, August) 'Living it' website focuses on public high school ministry. *Pacific Union Recorder*.

NAD Church Resource Center (Producer). (2010) *The Pastors DVD*. Volume 17. United States: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Seminars/Speaking

Topics:

Public High School Ministry
The Devotional Life as Fuel for Evangelism
Teen Prayer Conferences

Presentations for:

Potomac Conference Youth Department

Seattle Youth Rally

North American Division Just Claim It 1
Dallas, TX

Northern California Conference Ministries Training

180 Symposium: Reach Your Campus, Reach Your World

North American Division Just Claim It 2
Columbus, OH

Southern New England Conference Teen Retreat

NAD Youth and Young Adult Department Think Tank

Southeastern California Youth Department

West Coast Youth Congress

North American Division Just Claim It 3
Greensboro, NC

Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress

Arkansas/Louisiana Conference Teen Prayer Conference

Centerville Adventist Church
Centerville, OH

Florida Conference Youth Department

Hawaii Conference Youth Department

North American Division Just Claim It 4
Miami, FL

Grants Received

North American Division, Mission Investment Offering Project
2012

Living It Discipleship Resource Center

Pacific Union Conference *Special Evangelism Fund*

2012

Living It Discipleship Resource Center

Northern California Conference *Evangelism Fund*

2012

Living It Discipleship Resource Center

Pacific Union Conference *Special Evangelism Fund*

2010

“City-wide Youth Rally” Lodi, CA

Pacific Union Conference *Special Evangelism Fund*

2008

“Just Add Pizza” Public High School Ministry Starter Kits

Short Term Mission Trips Led

Belize (45 participants)

2014

Greece (40 participants)

2013

Peru (23 participants)

2011

Philippines (60 participants)

2009

Belize (50 participants)

2007

Venezuela (50 participants)

2000