1990

Group Ministry for New Converts in Puerto Rico

Miguel Angel Gonzalez

Andrews University

This research is a product of the graduate program in Doctor of Ministry DMin at Andrews University. Find out more about the program.

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/173

This Project Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Project Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.
Thank you for your interest in the

Andrews University Digital Library

of Dissertations and Theses.

Please honor the copyright of this document by not duplicating or distributing additional copies in any form without the author’s express written permission. Thanks for your cooperation.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
ABSTRACT

GROUP MINISTRY FOR NEW CONVERTS
IN PUERTO RICO

by

Miguel A. Gonzalez

Faculty Adviser: Benjamin D. Schoun, D. Min.
Title: GROUP MINISTRY FOR NEW CONVERTS IN PUERTO RICO

Name of researcher: Miguel A Gonzalez

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Benjamin D. Schoun, D. Min.

Date completed: June, 1990.

Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Puerto Rico is in need of programs to strengthen newly baptized converts.

Method

Much literature related to disciple-building and small groups was researched in order to lay a spiritual foundation and find ways to meet the needs of new believers.

Results/Conclusions

This study concludes that disciple-building is as much a rich biblical issue as any other subject of the sacred Book. However, this subject remains almost a virgin field from the
standpoint of pragmatics. Although the problem is recognized both inside the Seventh-day Adventist Church and in other Christian bodies, very few plans have been developed to strengthen and retain new believers in the fold. In other words, much more time, money, and energy should be invested to keep these new believers in the church.

This study establishes that the New Testament bears witness to the facts of (1) the relevance of disciple-building and (2) the involvement of Christ and the apostles in this particular ministry. It is not daring to say that the New Testament was and is a canon for disciple-building.

After studying a large portion of the literature dealing with the field of small groups, it seems that, properly used, the strategy could be a means to offer new members both a support group and a small fellowship community to facilitate their integration into the larger church fellowship. Practical ideas as well as a curriculum is suggested in order to nurture new believers in the church through small group-ministry.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

GROUP MINISTRY FOR NEW CONVERTS
IN PUERTO RICO

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

by
Miguel A. Gonzalez
August 1989
GROUP MINISTRY FOR NEW CONVERTS
IN PUERTO RICO

A project report
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Miguel A. Gonzalez

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE

Benjamin D. Schoun
Advised, Benjamin D. Schoun

Douglas R. Kilcher

Attilio R. Dupertuis

Dean,
SDA Theological Seminary

11 April 1990
Date approved
DEDICATED TO

My wife Carmelina and my mother Maria Isabel.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................. viii
ABBREVIATIONS ........................................................................ ix
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................ 1

Statement of the Project ................................................................. 1
Justification of the Study ............................................................... 1
  SDA Church in General ............................................................ 1
  SDA Church in Puerto Rico ......................................................... 2
Limitations of the Study ............................................................... 3
Definition of Terms ....................................................................... 4
What Is a New Convert? .............................................................. 5
Views Regarding Early Life of New Converts ......................... 5
Misconceptions Concerning Disciple-Building ....................... 7
Commission of Soul Preservation ............................................... 9
Criteria for New Converts Curricula ......................................... 11
Disciple-Building Inside and Outside the SDA Church ........... 13
  Inside the SDA Church ............................................................ 13
  Paul Yonggi Cho and Small Groups .......................................... 16
The Strategy of Growth Cells .................................................... 17
Material from Other Christian Writers ..................................... 18
Small Groups in Puerto Rico ..................................................... 18
General Overview of the Study .................................................. 19

PART ONE
DISCIPLE-BUILDING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPTS
   OF DISCIPLE-BUILDING ....................................................... 21

   Disciple-Building in Discipling ............................................. 21
   The Breadth of Disciple-Building ......................................... 25
   The Ministries of Disciple-Building ..................................... 26
     Nurture by Healing ........................................................... 26
     Nurture by Preaching ....................................................... 27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurture by Teaching</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture by Exhorting</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture by Koinonia</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Focus of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auzano: A Growth Law</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Gradual Upbuilding</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appeals for Disciple-Building</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Terms</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement, a New Believers' Need</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parakaleo, Caring with the Spirit</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Duty of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining oikodomeo</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converts' Spiritual Furtherance</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Depth of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition and Use of bebainno</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooted, Built up: Established</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mission of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterizo: Spiritually Stable and Strong</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterizo, an Apostolic Activity</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, the Real Disciple Builder</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability in the Light of Bebainno and Sterizo</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Correlation of Concepts</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation by Basic Needs of New Converts</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation by the Purpose of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation by the Goals of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Correlations</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. DISCIPLE-BUILDING IN THE MINISTRY
   OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES                                      62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christ, the Disciple Builder</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety in Disciple-Building</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building up the Twelve</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building up Individuals</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building up the Lambs</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul, the Disciple-Builder</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul's Upbuilding Experience</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciple-Building Zeal</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline Methods of Disciple-Building</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter, the Disciple-Builder</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveler Disciple-Builder</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building up Cornelius' Family</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building up by Writing</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John, the Disciple Builder</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy in Disciple-Building</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Upbuilding Admonition</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Disciple-Building</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ and Discipleship</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Apostles and Discipleship</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**III. SMALL GROUPS VALUES FOR DISCIPLE-BUILDING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Small Groups</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Groups Benefits for Disciple-Building</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth by Fellowship</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth by Relationships</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth by Sharing Communication</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth by Togetherness</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth by Cohesion</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth by Caring Listening</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Groups Dangers</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Dangers</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Dangers</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART TWO**

**MANUAL OF DISCIPLE-BUILDING**

**THROUGH GROUP MINISTRY**

**IV. LEADERSHIP AND CURRICULUM OF GROWTH CELLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth Cells Focus</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Cells Leadership</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Challenge for Leaders</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Qualifications</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Tasks</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Dangers</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Cells Membership</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Cells Size</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Cell Duration</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Cells First Meeting</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Acquainted</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introducing the Plan ........................................................ 128
Group Norms ........................................................................ 129
Study Exercises ................................................................. 130
Prayer Time ......................................................................... 131
Growth Cells Curriculum .................................................... 131
Curriculum Needs ............................................................... 131
Curriculum Goals ............................................................... 135
Curriculum Subjects ........................................................... 138
Curriculum Material ............................................................ 169
Summary .............................................................................. 170

V. GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES ................................. 172

Group Discussion Styles ..................................................... 172
  Paternalistic Group Discussion ......................................... 172
  Permissive Group Discussion .......................................... 173
  Participative Group Discussion ....................................... 175
Group Environment ............................................................ 176
Group-Building Process ...................................................... 176
Group Climate ..................................................................... 178
Group Feelings .................................................................... 180
Group Planning .................................................................... 182
Group Discussion Guidance ................................................ 187
  Plan a Good Start ............................................................ 188
  Follow Group Dynamics .................................................. 188
  Raise Interesting Questions ............................................. 194
  Meet Group Conflicts ...................................................... 197
  Exploit Group Silence ..................................................... 198
  Keep Interest Alive .......................................................... 199
  Make Close Enthusiastic .................................................. 200
Group Discussion Outlines .................................................. 201
Summary .............................................................................. 219

VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION .... 221

Summary .............................................................................. 221
Conclusions ........................................................................ 221
Recommendations ............................................................... 222

APPENDICES ......................................................................... 225

A. Information Concerning New Converts .......................... 226
B. Source Material .............................................................. 231
D. Group Exercises ............................................................ 237

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................... 253
ABBREVIATIONS

SDA: Seventh-day Adventist
SDABC: Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since nothing is new under the sun, it is necessary to say that the material of this study is the product of many minds concerned with the problem of disciple-building in Christianity. However, I am deeply thankful to my teachers and orientators of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary for their advice which has enriched and balanced the content of this study. I express my gratitude particularly to both some past and present professors of the seminary. They are: Dr. Arnold Kurtz, Dr. C. Raymond Holmes, Dr. Clarence Gruesbeck, Dr. William H. Shea, Dr. Benjamin Schoun, Dr. Douglas R. Kilcher, Dr. Atilio R. Dupertuis, and Mrs. Joyce Jones for their patient reading.
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Project

The purpose of this project was to review New Testament\(^1\) principles concerning disciple-building, and to suggest the strategy of group ministry to help new converts grow in Puerto Rico.

Justification of the Study

SDA Church in General\(^2\)

The loss of members has been a concern of the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for many years. The articles frequently appearing in the Ministry and in the Adventist Review regarding this problem attest to this fact.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Hereafter abbreviated as NT.

\(^2\)SDA stands for Seventh-day Adventist.

\(^3\)A collection of articles from these periodicals is available in Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan" (D. Min. project, Andrews University Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 189-96. See also references to the Ministry in the bibliography of this study.
The SDA Church in Puerto Rico

The SDA Church is losing many members in Puerto Rico. Information from the Antillian Union demonstrates the need for developing strategies to reduce backsliding among the SDA membership in this island. (See table 1.)

TABLE 1
MEMBERSHIP LOSS IN PUERTO RICO FROM 1977 TO 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Baptism</th>
<th>Apostasy</th>
<th>Loss 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>2,213</td>
<td>1,636</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2,491</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2,839</td>
<td>1,647</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1,982</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>2,538</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>2,223</td>
<td>1,216</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1,979</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>2,158</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22,952</td>
<td>12,689</td>
<td>Average 55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The column on apostasy in table 1 reveals an average loss equal to 50 percent of the persons baptized every year in Puerto Rico.

1 The percentage loss has been figured in relation to the number baptized.
Rico between 1977 and 1987. This percentage of total membership loss does not refer exclusively to new converts. It does indicate that many church members are being disfellowshipped every year but does not determine whether these people are new converts or are apostasies among long-term members. Finding the specific status of these persons would require subsequent investigation. It is assumed here that these people are a mixture of both new and old church members. However, it clearly reveals a need for the development of programs geared toward the retention of converts.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited in four ways:

1. It is designed to work ideally with newly baptized converts. Persons who have been in the church for a long period and are cold in the faith should be gathered in a separate group because the problems and needs of cold Christians may be different than the problems and needs of babes in the faith.

2. This study is focused on the nurture, upbuilding, and equipping of new converts after baptism. Though the material can be adapted to older church members, the subjects suggested for consideration in small group meetings may be too simple for them. Furthermore, this study does not enter into the areas of public evangelism related to new convert's attraction and conversion.

3. This study suggests the "study group" as a model to establish new believers in the faith. Nevertheless, it is felt that
elements from other group models may be useful too. Some of these elements are: (1) sharing (from sharing groups); (2) informality in a social meeting (from laissez faire groups); (3) emotional support and affirmation (from sensitivity groups); (4) a sense of mutual counseling (from encounter groups); (5) engaging in some tasks (from tasks groups).

4. Study and research was limited to material dealing with the follow up of newly baptized converts. Therefore, studies dealing with public evangelism are not mentioned unless they touch the subject.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined according to their use in the context of this study:

Discipling. The total task of evangelizing, establishing, and training converts in the life and work of the church.

Disciple-building. The task of providing new converts with spiritual support, training, and fellowship in the church.

Growth Cell. A small group of newly baptized converts who meet for: (1) reflecting and interacting on biblical subjects related to the growth of the Christian life\(^1\) and, (2) sharing personal experiences related to their conversion and Christ-like growth.

\(^1\)These subjects can be both biblical and Christian character building.
What Is a New Convert?

In general, a new convert is a person who is just beginning to walk in the Christian life.\(^1\) On the other hand, some church members with several years in the church have a Christian experience that has never advanced beyond the ABCs of their baptismal year. And then, there are members who have been baptized twice or thrice, and members who, for some reason, have been accepted by "profession of faith" into church membership. Could they be classified as new members? Each case may need to be studied separately. Although all these persons do not fit the common definition of new converts, they may need to be integrated into some program of growth, like newly baptized members.

Views Regarding Early Life of New Converts

Few people in the church realize that the first period of the Christian life may be a critical time for new believers. However, the loss of the first love by many of these converts may be both an indication of the existence of such a critical period and an indication that their love for Christ needs to be nurtured. Some SDA church leaders, like Mark Finley, say that this crisis takes place within the first two years of church membership. Finley notes that "just as the early stages of a baby's life are critical, so are the first two years of a converts' life."

\(^1\)From the viewpoint of this study new converts begin to practice the SDA Christian style of life.
life. These early years set a lifelong pattern for spiritual growth and development."¹

Not all SDA church leaders think the first period of the Christian experience of new converts is necessarily critical. For instance, G. Burnside points to the fact that "the majority of apostates leave the church after ten years' membership."² Illustrating this statement with some facts about marriage, he says:

Contrary to popular opinion, the first year of married life is not the worst. Only 10 per cent of failures aired in court occurred during that period. Most dangerous period proved to be that from the sixth to the ninth year of married life. This is also true with those 'married to Christ'. The majority of apostates leave the church after ten years' membership.³

While Finley's conclusions point to the need of developing methods for integrating new converts into the church, Burnside's findings do not necessarily mean the opposite. In other words, Burnside's conclusion that the majority of apostates are people who have been in the church for more than ten years should not taken as an assumption that they were well established after

¹Mark Finley, "Caring for the Newborn," The Ministry, August 1983, p. 8.

²Burnside quotes this statement from an article written by E. E. Cleveland ("Shut That Door!") published in The Ministry in August 1961, pp. 17-18. Cleveland does not quote the source of his conclusion.

³G. Burnside, "Can We Reduce Our Apostasies?," The Ministry, February 1967, p. 18.
baptism. Strong programs for the integration of new converts cannot guarantee people will not drift out after a number of years. Such programs can only help reduce church defection and heighten the sense of duty of religious movements towards newcomers. Referring to SDAs, Ellen G. White\(^1\) says, "It is a poor policy to leave a few here and there, unfed and uncared for, for devouring wolves, or to become targets for the enemy to open fire upon."\(^2\)

This study supports the view that the early years of the Christian life of converts may "set a lifelong pattern for spiritual growth and development."\(^3\) Therefore, more purposeful programs for the assimilation of new converts ought to be devised.

**Misconceptions Concerning Disciple-Building**

In their work on discipleship, Billie Hanks and William A. Shell point to several misconceptions regarding disciple-building, some of which are worth mentioning in this study. First, they point to the misconception that an emphasis on disciple-building

\(^1\)Ellen G. White (1827-1915) was one of the pioneers of the SDA church. Her views have exerted a great influence on the formation of Adventist thought and practice.


\(^3\)Finley, p. 8.
may neglect evangelism. Commenting on this, they say that "our ministries are not either/or, but both/and." The fact is that evangelism and disciple-building "are interdependent." Holding new members takes the same thought and care as winning them. Another writer goes so far as to suggest that "every organization of the church should be an avenue for building believers or its place in the church is useless."

A second misconception about disciple-building is "that you have to be a finished product to help others become disciples." Disciple builders "only have to be one step ahead of others to help them down the entire length of the road of life. Even Paul did not claim to be completely mature when he trained Timothy and others" (Phil 3:13-14).

A third misconception concerning disciple-building is "that you must see immediate, measurable results."


2 Ibid.

3 John Fowler, "Caring for New Converts," The Ministry, April 1979, p. 5.

4 Ibid.


6 Hanks and Shell, p. 172. All scriptural quotations in this work are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

7 Hanks and Shell, p. 173.
It took Jesus three years to train twelve people . . . and really only three in great depth . . . . Why are we in such a hurry? In our society of "instantness" we want instant disciples. There is no such thing in all the history of the church.¹

Another misconception on disciple-building is "that it will always succeed. Obviously it won't. There will always be leaks."² Not even Christ expected the preservation of one hundred percent of the souls. In the parable of the net, not all the fish were kept (Matt 13: 47-48). Christ also remarked that not all who called him "Lord" would enter the kingdom of God (Matt 7:21). Moreover, he did not restrain those who wanted to depart from him (John 6:66-67). People are always free to change masters.³

Commission of Soul Preservation

The fact that there will always be losses in soul-winning does not justify any laxity on the part of anyone regarding the responsibility of protecting converts from church defection. "To convert but not to confirm the souls of men is to leave them a likely prey to vicious error."⁴ Therefore, it is the duty of the church to protect, nurture, and build up new believers to help

¹Hanks and Shell, p. 173.
²Ibid.
them avoid drifting away from Christ's fold. The NT is both an account of the spreading of the gospel and an account of the efforts of the leaders of the early Church to preserve the fruit of that gospel (Acts 20:29-31).

According to Matt 28:19-20 and John 21:15-17, the great commission of Christ to his disciples was a command for both soul reaping and soul keeping. The command in John 21:15-17 about disciple-building ought to be emphasized equally with Matt 28:19-20 on disciple-winning.¹ H. L. Rudy says, "Establishing converts goes hand in hand with receiving converts."² These gospel tasks are two sides of the same coin.³

Evangelism is the process of winning men, enabling them to enter the kingdom of God. Disciple-building is the process of teaching the new citizen how to obey the laws of the King and how to win and train others to do the same.⁴

¹The balance between disciple-winning and disciple-building could be illustrated with the eyes or with a pair of eyeglasses. One eye or one eyeglass does not focus correctly. Both are needed to properly focus on objects. No one should say that one eye is more important than the other. Disciple-winning precedes disciple-building but the first without the second is useless. Therefore, disciple-building completes disciple-winning. Every church that is baptizing even one soul should set up a disciple-building program for that person.

²H. L. Rudy, "Receiving and Holding Converts," The Ministry, October 1963, p. 29.

³Schaller, p. 128.

Criteria for New Converts Curricula

The beginning of the Christian life is the golden time to build up the faith of new converts for it is the time when they are most receptive to instruction.\(^1\) It is called the time to put content into conversion--teaching them "the distinctive ideas, attitudes, actions, and discipline of the movement."\(^2\) Referring to the instruction that new converts ought to receive, Rudy says:

Our converts have the right to demand a program of Christian education adjusted to their special needs. This education pertains to doctrine, church organization, missionary (home and overseas) information, essential qualities in Christian character, the success of Christian lives of noble church leaders, and many other areas touching the work and experience of men and women of the church.

Instead of finding the church following a consistent program of positive education of her members, the newcomers in the faith too often are confused and left to grope for themselves. This usually results in discouragement and separation from the church.\(^3\)

Rudy's suggestions concerning the curriculum for new believers are useful because he emphasizes other practical areas of the Christian and the church life besides doctrines.

---


\(^3\)Rudy, p. 30.
Commenting on this need of nurturing new converts in every aspect of the Christian life, Louis Nielsen adds:

Generally the church takes great care in doctrinal instruction before a person is baptized, but is it possible that the meaning and importance of conversion sometimes is taken for granted and not explained to the baptismal candidates? If so, the result may be church members who adhere intellectually to a set of doctrines but have little experimental understanding of what it means to live a new life in Christ.¹

Thus, doctrinal instruction needs to be emphasized, but the task should not be limited to only that aspect of Christian nurture. The focus of what Rudy calls a "program of Christian education" should be on the special needs of new believers or "on areas where they feel they need to grow and develop."²

We all know that in the ordinary world not everyone can be nourished by the same food. Each person must have his own diet, so to speak, or at least he must find the food which is suited to him and his own peculiar needs. The same is also true for those who live in Christ. Each one has his own needs, each one his distinctive hungers. . . .³

¹Nielsen, p. 190.
Disciple-Building Inside and Outside the SDA Church

Inside the SDA Church

The guardianship plan. The SDA Church is uniquely equipped both with a holistic understanding of the nature of man and with plenty of resources to nurture its new members with a well-balanced program of religious instruction. In other words, the church has enough material to instruct new converts from every point of view of the Christian life. However, too little has been done to tailor those resources to meet the needs of new converts. So few are the programs to integrate new members into the church that one leader has ventured to say that,

The only specific program currently in use by Seventh-day Adventists for the care of new members is the guardianship plan.¹ This simple program assigns a specific church member to each new convert at the time of baptism. Particular duties of the guardian in promoting and maintaining the new member’s spiritual health are clearly outlined. Unfortunately, this plan has not been vigorously emphasized, with the result that little has been done with it beyond its introduction at the time of baptismal service.²

¹The guardianship plan is also called the "Adoption Plan for New Members" by other Christian churches. See Moore, p. 81.

²Fowler, p. 5. This quotation does not necessarily mean that there are not other programs but rather that they are not widely known. On the guardianship plan, see also Antonio Arteaga, "A Study of Evangelistic Approach for Catholics and the Non-Religious Based on E. G. White’s Writings" (Master of Divinity project Andrews University Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 149.
Caslow's new member ministry. A more recent program has been developed by Daniel E. Caslow. He calls it "the New Members Class." It is a one-year plan consisting of a series of Bible studies divided into four quarters called "The Profile Nurture Series." This plan is developed in five booklets—a Leadership Manual and four Profiles or guidelines with a curriculum to be covered approximately during one year. A brief review of this material is given below:

1. Profile/1—the new life in Christ. This portion of Caslow's material is intended to face new believers with the challenges of growth by dependance on Christ. Some of the key subjects of this profile are: "Beginning the New Life," "Christ Your Righteousness," "You Have a Helper," "Handling Your Unbelief," and "Christ Your Perfecter."


---


2Outside the Adventist Church this plan has been called the "New Believer's Class." See Hanks and Shell, p. 113.

3Caslow, p. 25.
3. **Profile/3**—helping new believers to find their personal spiritual gifts to witness for Christ. Some of the key subjects of this profile are: "The Call to Ministry," "The Ministering Gifts," "The Minister Gives," and "The Ministering Community."

4. **Profile/4**—studying with new believers the importance of church fellowship. Some of the main subjects are: "The Fellowship and the Christian," "Discipline Within the Fellowship," "The Church Fellowship and Prophecy," "Fellowship and Healthful Living," and "The Fellowship Triumphant."

Caslow's material is valuable because it is geared not only to nurture new converts but also to help them to find their way into the church fellowship and become active witnesses for Christ. However, his program may be much more successful if used with the strategy of small groups. Besides, the personal needs of new converts should be considered in a program of study. Therefore, the curricula for these persons may include other areas of personal and Christian life.

"Welcome to the family." This is a seven-session course designed by Home Study International in cooperation with Loma Linda University and the North American Division Church Ministries Department to introduce new Adventists to their church family. The seven subjects of this course are: (1) Terminology, (2) Lifestyle, (3) Sabbath, (4) Heritage, (5) Structure, (6) Education, and (7) Gifts.

---

1Caslow, p. 25.

If any other special program to build up new converts in the Adventist Church has been developed, I am unaware of it so far.¹

Paul Yonggi Cho and Small Groups

The plan of small groups both to strengthen and to equip new believers in the faith is being successfully practiced by Paul Yonggi Cho in Korea. He follows the plan of church growth based on the multiplication of home cell groups led by lay leaders. "Each lay leader directs a home cell of from 10 to 15 persons, leading them in weekly worship, Bible study, and evangelism."² According to Paul Cho, small groups bring security to people.³ Explaining the success of his method, he says, "Once a person comes into our church through the cell system, we are not likely to lose him. Someone is always watching out for him, caring for him, helping him."⁴ So successful has been Cho's home cells that he dares to say that "the only way a member should leave the church is either to transfer to a new church or to be buried in a

¹This assertion is based on the research done for the project. There may be some programs developed privately by ministers in the churches here and there to strengthen new converts, but I have not been able to obtain those plans. No other special program is being promoted by the General Conference of the SDA Church besides those discussed above.


⁴Ibid., p. 67.
casket."\(^1\) So revolutionary has been his church growth through home cells that his church is called "the miracle church."\(^2\) For him, koinonia is partnership with new converts, working together for them, getting involved in their personal needs and problems in a private sharing, looking for ways to help them. "When someone is out of job and has no income, other members of the group help to meet his needs."\(^3\) This is "love in action."\(^4\)

**The Strategy of Growth Cells**

Though different from the standpoint of the subjects for group discussion and the particular needs of new SDA members, the strategy of small groups is the one suggested in this study to retain new believers in the church. The growth cell is a follow-up group--"that nurturing of the new believer" through a "fellowship group."\(^5\) Nevertheless, the small group is not designed to take the place of the fellowship of the larger group--the church.\(^6\) It should serve only to facilitate the integration of new converts into the church.

\(^1\)Cho, p. 71.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 81.

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 86, 123.

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Hanks and Shell, p. 113.

The plan suggested here requires only two things: (1) Persons should get some knowledge and training on the elementary principles related to the art of leading small-group discussion;¹ and (2) they should learn to prepare a general and a week-by-week plan for group discussion.

Material from Other Christian Writers

Besides SDA material, it is well to pay attention to the possibility of using devotional and instructional material published by other Christian writers to enrich the life of new believers.² The criterion behind this recommendation is Paul's advice of testing everything and holding fast to what is good (1 Thess 5:21).

Small Groups in Puerto Rico

No particular characteristics of Puerto Rican society have been pinpointed in relationship to the strategy of small groups, except the fact that it is common for Puerto Rican people to meet in small companies in private and public places to chat about the happenings of everyday life and their personal worries.³

¹Becoming members of a small group might help persons interested in learning how to work with growth cells.

²See chapter 5 and appendix A.

³This fact does not necessarily mean that the strategy of small groups should be the best approach in assimilating new converts into the Adventist Church in that field. Being talkative is not the most important requirement for the formation of small groups. On the other hand, in societies where people are too shy, too silent, or not given to much sharing
General Overview of the Study

While the first section of this study touches the high aspects of soul preservation in the NT both theologically and practically in the ministry of Christ and his disciples, the second part is a manual to nurture and train new converts. That manual is divided in three portions dealing with (1) the leadership and steps to begin a growth cell, (2) the curriculum for new converts, and (3) guidelines to lead group discussion.

conversation, small groups could be a poor approach for integrating converts into the church.
PART ONE

DISCIPLE-BUILDING IN

THE NEW TESTAMENT
CHAPTER I

NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPTS OF DISCIPLE-BUILDING

The aim of this chapter is to establish some basic disciple-nurture principles on the basis of the NT terminology concerning this subject.

Disciple-Building in Discipling

What is a disciple, or what does it take to become one? The terms mathetes and mathetai\(^1\) are especially applied over and over in the gospels to the twelve apostles (Matt 8:23; 10:1; Luke 9:1). According to Luke 6:13, the apostles were chosen by Christ, most probably at the time of their ordination, from a larger group of his followers also called "disciples."\(^2\) This second

\(^1\)Mathetes—a word used almost exclusively in the gospels and the book of Acts, appearing "some 250" times in these books (G. Kittel; G. Friedrich; and R. E. Pitkin, eds., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Ermans Pub. House, 1967], 4:441). This work is hereafter abbreviated as TDNT.

\(^2\)Since other gospel references point to a private call of the apostles (Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:27-28; John 1:35-48), it seems evident that Luke refers to the public ordination of the twelve. From then on they were viewed by the rest of the disciples as special, appointed leaders. Luke also states that Christ appointed seventy others of his disciples to prepare the places were he was about to go (Luke 10:1).

21
use of the term in reference to a follower of Christ who was distinct from the apostles (Luke 6:13; 7:11; 19:37; John 6:60-67), became the way to designate the members of the early Christian Church before they were called "Christians" (Acts 2:2, 7; 9:26, 36, 38; 11:26). Therefore, anyone who followed Christ through the commitment of baptism was called "disciple" (John 4:1-2; Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; 18:11). Thus, the baptismal commitment is the way to divide into two distinct groups the throng, mentioned throughout the gospels, that followed the Lord. Among that throng were casual listeners and persons going through the process of conversion who had not yet been baptized.\(^1\) Luke says that Christ challenged them with a call that was really his charge for discipleship:

> Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife, and children and life, he cannot be my disciple. . . . So, therefore, whoever of you that does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple' (Luke14:25-33).

\(^1\)It is evident that among the throng that followed Christ were persons at very different stages of growth. Kenneth Van Wyk suggests at least five of these types of followers: (1) The inquirers--"those who came to be with him as he traveled in their countryside;" (2) the would be disciples--private individuals who sought further information about the Master; (3) occasional followers--persons who desired to learn Christ's teachings but had to attend their worldly cares; therefore, they did not followed him permanently; (4) permanent followers--those who continuously traveled with Christ so that they might be trained by him; and (5) chosen disciples--"to be trained for a special role in his ministry"  (Kenneth Van Wyk, "Stages of Discipleship," Theology, News and Notes, June 1984, pp. 10-16).
According to Christ's charge to people, a casual believer, an uncommitted person is not a disciple. To become disciples people would have to commit themselves to follow the lifestyle and teachings of Jesus (Matt 12:49-50; 16:24; Luke 14:25-33; John 8:31; 13:35; 15:8).

*Mathetes* always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as *mathetes*, and which in its particularity leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power. . . . The control of the *mathetai* by the man to whom they have committed themselves extends in the NT to the inner life. . . . In the NT we do not find any instances where *mathetes* is used without this implication of supremely personal union.¹

The same lesson of attachment to Christ through discipleship is involved in Mark 5:30 where he asked the crowd, "Who touched my garments?" He did not want a casual touch or a casual acquaintance; but a personal touch with his life and teachings. The question, "Who touched my garments?" is still valid. Those "garments" represent all that he is and teaches.

The second group of people mixed with the throng that followed Christ were those who had committed themselves to follow him and had begun their commitment by their willingness to be baptized (John 4:1-2). These are called "the multitude of the disciples" (Luke 19:37). These believers were being built up by Christ and his apostles. To these persons Christ said, "If you *continue* in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31). Thus, the discipling process begun in the early stages of their

¹Van Wyk, p. 11.
conversion was being continued, deepened, and completed. The continuous spiritual feeding, training, and equipping for ministry of new converts is illustrated twice in the miracles of feeding (Matt 14:19; 15:32-37; John 6:5-12). In the feeding process illustrated by the miracle, Christ "gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds" (Matt 14:19). In other words, the leaders received from their Master "bread" (John 6:48) to be imparted to their fellow church converts. According to John 6:12, the pieces of personal experience illustrated by the leftovers were to be redistributed, thus provoking a chain-reaction ministry which should not stop at any point.¹

In conclusion, the making of disciples or discipling (Matt 28:19) is a process which involves two main stages that can be subdivided still into other stages.² The first stage has to do with public and personal evangelism--making calls to people to surrender, to repent, to accept the charge of discipleship, and to be baptized. The second stage is disciple-building. This is discipling by deepening commitment, guiding people to practice the charges of discipleship and equipping them for service both in the church and witnessing to the faithless.

If new believers are divided into small groups, as Christ did in the feeding of the 5,000 (Luke 9:14), disciple-building can


²See Van Wyk's 5-part subdivision in n. 1, p. 22.
be much more effective. The other NT terms connected with *mathetes*, as discussed below, show the close interdependence which exists between disciple-winning and disciple-nurturing and equipping (Acts 14:21-22).

**The Breadth of Disciple-Building**

The NT does not contain many passages referring exclusively to the care of newly baptized converts over against older members. In other words, there is no such thing as a crucial separation of two groups of converts in the church. In the NT, the church is viewed as a unity and it is nurtured as such (Acts 18:23; 2 Cor 1:1). However, this does not mean that new converts in the early Church were left unattended. Indeed, this study demonstrates that both Christ and the apostles took time to strengthen new converts.1

The writers of the NT used rich Greek terms to describe their work among the Christian churches of their time (Col 1:23; 2:6-7). This study considers only some of the most common terms portraying such work without diminishing those left undiscussed. The terminology considered in this study is applied

---

1It may sound contradictory to say that the NT does not contain very many passages concerning new converts in particular and, then, demonstrate that they were attended with a score of references. But one thing is to say that new converts are not explicitly pinpointed in a particular way and another is to present evidence indicating their presence and the fact that they were ministered to even when they were not identified as "new converts."
particularly as it concerns new believers, but is not limited to them. Such terminology was especially adequate for the early Church because the entire movement was a young missionary movement (Acts 17:19). Thus, when going from place to place establishing converts, the apostles worked with the church as a whole and not with any one particular group of converts. Therefore, they applied their terminology to the entire Apostolic Church.

The Ministries of Disciple-Building

Like Christ, the apostolic leaders devoted much of their time to the tasks of healing, preaching, teaching, and exhorting (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 21:11). These tasks they carried on simultaneously wherever they went. The Greek terms considered here are closely related to these general ways of converting and establishing church members.

Nurture by Healing

Healing was "the pioneer work of the gospel, the door through which the truth found entrance to many homes." It was a "means of overcoming prejudice and gaining access to

1Note that in Acts 17:19, the Greeks referred to the gospel as a "new teaching."

minds."¹ "Each work of healing"² was an occasion for inclining
the hearts of men to receive the gospel.³

Nurture by Preaching

Preaching was used as a means of bringing new converts
into the church and of nurturing the entire membership--new
and old (Acts 14:21-23).⁴ It may be said that evangelistic
preaching brought people to the knowledge of Christ, while
"building" preaching gave them further instruction in the

Nurture by Teaching

Teaching was a means of continuous doctrinal education
and training (Matt 28:20).⁵ It dealt with further instruction to

¹E. G. White, Evangelism, p. 515.

²Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View,

³Therapeuo and sozo are the most common terms in the
NT in reference to healing. Therapeuo occurs 58 times and
means "to care for the sick," "cure," "heal"; sozo occurs 107 times
and means "to save." See W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of the
NT Words, 4 vols. (London: Oliphants, 1939), 2:203, hereafter
abbreviated as EDNTW; H. Bachmann and W. A. Slaby, Computer-
Konkordanz Zum Novum Testamentum Graece (Berlin: Walter

⁴Euangelizo/kerusso are the NT terms in reference to
preaching. Euangelizo means "to give good," "glad" (or tidings),
and occurs 54 times in the NT. See EDNTW, 3:201; Bachmann
and Slaby, pp. 721-22, 1033-34.

⁵Didasko is the most common NT Greek term in reference
to teaching. It is rendered "to give instruction" and occurs 97
deepen the general messages presented from the pulpit. This was done through letters (Luke 1:3-4), in the synagogues, and by informal conversation at home (Acts 5:42). "I did not shrink," said Paul, "from . . . teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). "Probably in small classes by day and by flickering lights at night, in homes, in the markets, or by the wayside, these apostles confirmed the young disciples in the Christian truth."\(^1\)

**Nurture by Exhorting**

The last general means of establishing converts was by exhortation.\(^2\) This was a way of motivating people to remain faithful (Acts 2:40; 11:23; 14:22; 1 Thess 4:1). Like teaching and preaching, it was also used both publicly and privately—in conversation and in writing. Paul says: "Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" (Heb 3:13). Exhortation was also a way to correct the church in general (Gal 1:6; Heb 12:5; 13:22) and individuals in particular from doing wrong (Phil 4:2).


\(^2\) *Parakaleo* occurs 109 times in the NT. It is used in varied ways meaning exhortation, encouragement, requesting, imploring, comforting, and cheering up. See: *TDNT*, 5:775, 793-99; Bachmann and Slaby, pp. 1455-58.
Nurture by Koinonia

Another way to strengthen the spiritual foundation of converts in the Early Church was by continuous fellowship. The NT term for this activity is koinonia which means "that which is held in common. It is used about equally in the NT to express spiritual sharing, and sharing in a concrete, material way."¹ Koinonia also implies fellowship or sharing with someone or in something. The term is "most common in Paul, for whom it has a direct religious context. He uses koinonia for the religious fellowship (participation) of the believers in Christ, Christian blessings, and for the material fellowship of believers (Phil 1:7; 1 Cor 10:6; 2 Cor 8:23; Rom 12:13; 15:27).²

The fellowship lifestyle of early Christians, which serves to us as an example or a pattern for small groups for new converts, is well captured by Luke in Acts 2:41-47. There it is recorded that new Christian members "continued steadfastly (proskartruntes) in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship." Luke mentions five bonding facts among converts: (1) The breaking of the loaf (Lord's Supper), (2) praying together, (3) having all things in common, (4) caring for the physical needs of church members, and (5) eating together at


homes. Some, if not all, of these elements could still be practiced today in small group fellowship both for old and new Christians.

The Focus of Disciple-Building

Auzano: A Growth Law

Auzano is a NT Greek term for the concepts of growth, progress, increase, and advancement (2 Thess 1:3; 2 Pet 3:18).\(^1\) The term applies to "that which lives, naturally or spiritually."\(^2\) It was used in reference to numerical increase of people (Acts 7:17), of faith (2 Cor 10:15), of spiritual increase of believers individually (Eph 4:14; Col 1:6), of the Church, (Col 2:19), and of churches (Eph 2:21).\(^3\) It was also used to promote and nourish growth.\(^4\) Auzano appears twenty-two times in the NT in its different forms and points to both the natural and the spiritual laws of growth.\(^5\) Since anything which stops growing inevitably

---


\(^2\) *EDNTW*, 2:181.

\(^3\) Ibid., 2:181.


dies, Christians were exhorted to secure their spiritual growth by nourishing from their Saviour (Col 2:7).\(^1\)

**Continuous, Gradual Upbuilding**

Christ illustrated the need for continuous spiritual growth in many ways. In the parable of the sower, for example, he illustrated the failure of growth of those seeds fallen in growth-limiting places.

By means of parabolic language, Christ also taught that growth is a gradual process. "The earth," he said, "produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:28). Here he teaches the need of caring for converts at different stages of growth. The stage illustrated by the blade represents the tender state of new converts. As this stage is the most frail period in the life of the plant, so it is with the life of babes in Christ. As the whole future of the plant rests on the care it receives at its birth, the spiritual future of new converts hangs on the care they receive at the beginning of their Christian career. As the plant grows towards stability and maturity, inward and above the ground, converts are expected to grow in little steps toward a higher spiritual experience (Eph 4:15; 1 Thess 1:3; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18). "They must be surrounded by the influences most favorable to spiritual growth."\(^2\)

---

\(^1\)Trees are a common biblical way to illustrate spiritual growth (Ps 1; Matt 7:19; 13:31-32).

Gradual growth was referred to by Christ once more in the parable of the mustard seed (Matt 13:31-32). He pointed out how a small positive beginning may end in great spiritual growth. The small spiritual beginning of a new convert is like a mustard seed, but the convert may develop into a strong spiritual tree in Christ.

The gradual growth of new believers is also compared in the NT with the growth of children (John 3:3; 1 Cor 3:1; 1 Pet 2:2). Before being able to feed themselves, babes need to be fed and trained to do so. "We do not leave a young baby unattended with a 'if he's any good he'll survive.' He will not survive unless for a long time he is cared for and fed correctly."1 "Love, protection, food, and training are vital spiritual needs that correspond to the physical needs of a baby."2 If these needs are provided to young children in Christ, they may be less prone to spiritual declension.

In summary, then, auzano refers to gradual but continual increase and advancement of the spiritual values. As in nature, there is no place for stagnation for it means death.

The Appeals for Disciple-Building

Diversity of Terms

The appeal for holding fast and standing firm is very common in the NT. It is expressed with varied Greek

1 Burnside, p. 19.

2 Hanks and Shell, p. 113.
term inology: steko, kateko, epecho, krato. The apostles used these terms to urge Christians to a "steadfast adherence to their faith"¹ (Phil 2:16; Phil 4:1; 2 Thess 2:15; Heb 10:23; Rev 3:11). Sometimes they are expressed in the form of a continuous action (Phil 2:16). Thus, not for a single moment should Christians stop holding fast to their faith. Four of these terms are briefly considered below.

1. Steko. This term is rendered "to stand fast in," "to stand forth;"² "to stand firm in faith and duty."³ It is a peculiar verb of Paul who uses it seven out of the ten times it occurs in the NT.⁴ He prefers to use this term especially in the imperative form, steke. ⁵ It seems that this imperative was peculiarly

¹EDNTW, 2:223.
²TDNT, 7:637.
⁴Bachmann and Slaby, p. 1723.
⁵Paul's "development of steko is part of the use and meaning of the very common word histemi," a term which appears 154 times in the NT (TDNT, 7:638; Bachman and Slaby, pp. 938-42). Therefore, to grasp the rich meaning of steko, it is necessary to review the the meanings of histemi. Histemi is generally used for "setting," "setting up," and "to cause to come"- -both persons or objects (Matt 4:5; 18:2; TDNT, 7:646). It is "also used in the NT to denote that which lasts and is stable, not subject to decay" (ibid., 7:652). (God's foundation, for example, "stands firm" (essten)--2 Tim 2:19). Histemi is used for standing in contrast to sitting down, or being still in opposition to movement (ibid., 7:638). "To make stand fast, to establish, and to confirm" are additional shades of meaning of this verb (Rom 3:31; 10:3; Heb 10:9). Furthermore, histemi is also rendered "to
strong because it has been found that it pointed to the determination of a soldier who did "not budge one inch from his post."\(^1\) Paul uses *stekete* to urge converts to stand firm in Christ rather than being like movable objects which one day are set in one place and another day are changed into another. Converts are called to stand firm, not budging one inch from their spiritual post. *Steko* is linked by Paul with the theological ideas of "standing in faith" and "standing in the Lord."\(^2\) Just as the foundation of God is immovable (2 Tim 2:19), converts are challenged to stand firm in their faith (Col 1:23).

The choice of *Kurios* shows that the one who stands in Him is determined by Him and receives from Him the standing which is given to him as faith by God's saving work in Jesus Christ; he now has to listen to the Lord and follow him. *Stekete en Kurio* might thus be translated: 'Stand in obedience to the Lord.'\(^3\)

2. *Kateko*. The term *kateko* derives from *ekein* (to be in place, to hold fast),\(^4\) but it is a more emphatic form of that verb.\(^5\) *Kateko* was "used in various ways as a technical nautical term for rendered "to continue, to endure, to persist" (Matt 12:25; Luke 11:18; 2 Tim 2:19; Robinson, p. 358).


\(^2\)TDNT, 7:637.

\(^3\)Ibid., 7:637-38.

\(^4\)Robinson, p. 314.

\(^5\)TDNT, 2:829.
term for "to make for," "to steer towards," "to land at."\(^1\) It was applied, juridically, to the concept of occupying or to hold in possession.\(^2\) When the exhortative sense ("let us draw near," Heb 10:23)\(^3\) is added to these concepts, it gets richer in spiritual meaning. Thus, to converts recalling the juridical meaning of this term when listening to or reading Paul's letters, it may have meant taking hold of the eternal possession Christ obtained for them through his blood. And to converts recalling the nautical meaning, it may have meant to keep steering towards the eternal land.

The term kateko is also used in the NT in reference to one man holding another (Luke 4:42; Phlm 13); "holding fast spiritual values, instructions received, or a course of attitude begun (in the good sense)"\(^4\) (Luke 8:15; 1 Cor 11:2; 15: 1 Thess 5:21; Heb 3:6,14). This thought is well captured in Paul's words: "If to this day you have kept (in memory) and still keep (in your heart) the word which I once declared to you as good news"\(^5\) (1 Tim 5:21; Heb 10:23). Paul uses kateko thirteen times of the eighteen times it occurs in the NT.\(^6\) Therefore, it seems clear that he

\(^{1}\)TDNT, 2:829.
\(^{2}\)Ibid.
\(^{3}\)Rienecker, 2:357.
\(^{4}\)TDNT, 2:829.
\(^{5}\)Ibid., 2:529
\(^{6}\)Bachmann and Slaby, p. 1019.
treasured this particular term to encourage Christian converts to remain faithful.

3. Epecho. The Greek word epecho is translated "holding forth." It "may also bear the sense of "holding fast," which meaning seems preferable. "To give heed to" is another rendering which has been given for this term. The word is not very common in the NT--it occurs only five times and only in the writings of Paul and Luke. As should be expected with both this term and the other Greek terms discussed in this study, different contexts give words different nuances. It is Paul who, using epecho twice, gives it an exhortative meaning encouraging people to remain loyal to spiritual values. He exhorted the Philippians to keep holding fast (epechontes) the word of life so that he might be proud of them (Phil 2:16). The sense here is continuing in the message he communicated to them. 1 Timothy 4:16 is singular because of its double charge with two different words: "Take heed (epecho) to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that (epimene), for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." Moreover, this text establishes the ultimate reason why all converts should hold fast to their faith--for the sake of their salvation and the salvation of others.

4. Krateo/kratos. The term krateo is particularly worth noticing. It is rendered "to take hold of," "to seize," "to cling to

1SDABC, 7:160.

2Ibid.

3Rienecker, 2:282.
tenaciously."

Being the verbal form of kratos (strength, might), krateo was probably a military term meaning "to have power, be powerful; to be chief, be master of, to rule." These words refer, first, to strength in the natural sense, or toughness. "A common expression is katakratos, 'powerfully,' 'impressively,' 'forcefully,' especially with military verbs."

The NT nuances of krateo and kratos are many. In the literal sense, krateo is used for arresting or apprehending (Matt 14:3; 21:46); it is used for grasping or seizing forcibly, and also without the use of force (Matt 9:25; Mark 1:31; Luke 8:54). It is used to hold someone fast by the hand so that he cannot escape (Acts 3:11). In the spiritual sense krateo is used to encourage converts to remain closely united to the gospel and to Christ (Col 2:18-19; 2 Thess 2:14; Heb 4:14). In the book of Revelation, for

---

1 SDABC, 7:425.
2 TDNT, 3:905-12.
4 TDNT, 3:905.
5 Krateo/kratos are mentioned 59 times in the NT--47 times for the first term and 12 times the second (Bachmann & Slaby, pp. 1060-62).
7 Ibid.
example, *krateo* is used to challenge Christians to take hold of their faith in order to be strong and prevail in their spiritual warfare (Rev 2:25; 3:11). New believers need to be instructed concerning this contest that Christ's followers have with the powers of darkness (Eph 6).

**The Spirit of Disciple-Building**

**Encouragement: A New Believer's Need**

The beginning of the Christian life has been described as the time of the first love (Rev 2:4). Yet, it may be a period of discouragement. It is certainly good to look at the beginning of the spiritual life positively, but it is also necessary to look at it realistically. Spiritually speaking, the Christian life is not an eternal honeymoon of faith. As was indicated in the discussion of the term *krateo* above, the life of the Christian is a life of continuous spiritual warfare (Matt 11:12; Eph 6:11-16; 1 Tim 6:12).

Just as Christ had a special season of temptation right after his baptism (Matt 4:1-11), new converts also may face a time of trial at the period when they are starting to adjust their lives to the standards of the Word of God. It is at this point in their experience that they need the caring ministry of encouragement. In relation to this Ellen White says: "If all had a sense of the conflict which each soul must wage with satanic agencies that are seeking to ensnare, entice, and deceive, there
would be much more diligent labor for those who are young in
the faith."¹

**Parakaleo. Caring with the Spirit**

The ministry of encouragement is disclosed in the NT by
the Greek term *parakaleo*,² which may be translated as "to call," "to beseech," "to exhort," "to counsel," "to encourage," and to "comfort."³ The term *Parakletos*, in reference to the Holy Spirit, is a nominal form of this verb. From the standpoint of exhortation, this term is common in military contexts to exhort and encourage soldiers who are about to go into battle.⁴ Spiritually speaking, it could be said that the Holy Spirit is the Encourager of converts in their battle of faith (Eph 6:11-16; 1 Pet 5:8-9). The letters to the Thessalonians and part of the epistles


²*Parakaleo*/parakalein are very common NT terms that occurs 109 times. See Bachmann and Slaby, pp. 1455-58. "The meaning 'to comfort,' 'consolation,' which is rare in both the Greek world and Hellenistic Judaism, . . . is influenced by the Old Testament, and especially by Isaiah and the Psalms" (TDNT, 5:799). Sometimes Paul uses *parakaleo* alongside *sterizo* (2 Thess 2:17; 3:2), a term discussed below in this chapter.

³TDNT, 5:796.

⁴Rienecker, 1:297; TDNT, 5:775.
of Peter fall into the category of this ministry (1 Thess 2:11-12; 2 Thess 2:1-2; 1 Pet 4:12-13).¹

Even Christ felt the need of encouragement and sought it from his disciples.² On the basis of his example, it seems that this caring work may well be mainly a lay ministry. In other words, the caring concern of the Spirit conveyed by parakaleō illustrates the quality of disciple-builders needed in disciple-nurture today. If mature church members were willing to become at least encouragers of their fellow younger brothers and sisters in the faith, perhaps many of them would also be preserved from becoming backsliders. Paul's cry in this sense is: "Encourage one another and build one another . . . all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:25).

The Duty of Disciple-Building

Defining "oikodomeo"

The Greek word oikodomeo is a compound verb derived from oikos (house) and demo (to build). It means, literally, "I


²E. G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 369.

³Oikos derives from the verb oikein which also means "to build." This verb (oikein) is used to describe inward psychological and spiritual process (Rom 7:18; 8:9-11; 1 Cor 2:16) (TDNT, 5:135).
build a house."¹ In the NT it is used metaphorically in reference to spiritual stability²—"a term for the process of the growth and development of the community."³ "The compounds synoikodomeo (build together) and epoikodomeo⁴ (build further) underline the idea of fellowship which is contained in the concept of 'building up'" (1 Cor 3:10,12,14; Eph 2:20,22).⁵

Converts' Spiritual Furtherance

Oikodomeo was a favorite term of Paul who uses it thirty-one of the sixty-six times it occurs in the NT in its different


²The use of the metaphor of the foundation and building for spiritual activity is not uncommon; the same allegory or comparison is found in Philo and Epictetus as well. Paul uses the allegory because he wants to adopt familiar use (TDNT, 5:140).

³TDNT, 5:140. Oikodomein—"the imagery of the Mandaean writings seems to be significant. Here believers are chosen, planted and built up (in the building of life); they are integrated into the fellowship of life." The term became "a central concept in religious speech" early among Christians and it reflects "the manifoldness of the primitive Christian understanding of the church" (Acts 9:31; 15:16; 20:32; TDNT, 5:140). "In Pauline usage the primary reference is to spiritual furtherance" (ibid., 5:138, 139, 145).

⁴Another similar compound is anoikodomeo—to build again, to rebuild (Acts 15:16). See Robinson, p. 61.

⁵TDNT, 2:253.
forms.\textsuperscript{1} The apostle often uses this word "to signify spiritual progress or increase."\textsuperscript{2} In his letters it "denotes a specific apostolic activity"—that of the spiritual furtherance of both the individual and the church as a whole (Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 14:12, 26; Eph 4:29).\textsuperscript{3}

As is evident from the simile of building a house, Paul makes a fundamental distinction between two separate tasks of the preacher. The first is to lay the foundation (missionary proclamation, evangelism); the second is to build up the church (1 Cor 3:10).\textsuperscript{4}

Both the leaders and the church members have a share in this spiritual up-building. While the leaders contribute to the up-building of the church communally (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 10:8), the members are called to help build up themselves and one another (1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:12; 1 Thess 5:11, 14; 1 Pet 2:5; Jud 20). In view of the present study, mature disciples in Christ could make an important contribution towards building up new disciples.\textsuperscript{5}

Paul also uses oikodomeo in reference to the spiritual up-building of the church by the Deity (Acts 20:31-32; 1 Cor 3:9; 10:16; 14:33; 17:17).

\textsuperscript{1}Bachmann and Slaby, pp. 677-78, 1329-31, 1753.
\textsuperscript{3}TDNT, 5:141.
\textsuperscript{4}DNT, 1:662.
\textsuperscript{5}TDNT, 5:141.
Thus, without God's up-building intervention, all human efforts for building up fellow men are useless (Ps 127:1).

The Depth of Disciple-Building

Definition and Use of "Bebaios"

The term *bebaios* (vb. *bebaioo*) is related to *baino*, a word that is not found in the NT in its plain form. The meanings of *baino* are mainly related to motion (to go, to stride, to go away, to come, to go on before). In this sense, *bebaios* is the antonym of *baino* being its basic meaning, "firm," "steady."

In classical Greek from the 5th cent. B.C. it acquires the meaning of firm, durable, unshakeable, sure, reliable, certain; and in the legal sphere, valid, legal. Bebaioo similarly means make firm, strengthen, confirm; and also guarantee. Bebaiosis means establishing, confirmation,

1TDNT, 5:140.

2Bebaioo--20 times in the NT; 15 in the writings of Paul.


4TDNT, 1:518. Baino occurs in the NT only in compound words like anabaino (to go up, to rise, to grow), katabaino (antonym of anabaino), and metabaino (to move from one place to another). Ibid., 1:518-23.

5Liddel and Scott, p. 302.

6TDNT, 1:518.

7Liddel and Scott, p. 312.
or (in legal language) guarantee (legally valid confirmation of a legal act).\(^1\)

To grasp both the theological and practical meaning of \textit{bebaioo} in the NT, it is necessary to study it in the light of the context of each occurrence. From the standpoint of this work, this Greek verb is used in the NT to indicate the strengthening of a person in the gospel (Col 2:5-7; Heb 13:9; 2 Pet 1:10-12).\(^2\)

According to George Panikulam, \textit{bebaioo} became "a technical term to indicate growth in Christ by being solidly grounded in

\(^{1}\text{DNT, 1:518.}\)

\(^{2}\)Although the meaning of \textit{bebaioo} seems to be clear, there has been a controversial note with the term from the standpoint of sacramentology. "In some communions the word 'confirmation' is used to refer to the ecclesiastical rite of the laying on the hands by a bishop or other church officer at baptism, or at a later confirmatory ceremony. In the NT, four Greek verbs are used meaning 'to confirm.' Their exact meaning varies somewhat, but all basically mean to strengthen, establish, or ratify a person, a statue, a promise, or a covenant. The only word used for 'confirmation' is \textit{bebaiosis}, which occurs twice in the NT (Phil 1:7; Heb 6:16), in both cases signifies the firm establishment of things, not people. The references to Paul and his companions confirming the disciples (Acts 14:22; 15:32; 18:23) do not imply any ecclesiastical rite, but the inner strengthening of believers' faith (Merrill C. Tenney, ed., \textit{The Zondervan Pastoral Encyclopedia of the Bible}, 5 vols. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1975], 1:939). See also \textit{TDNT}, 5:40. In contrast to these arguments, see Frederick H. Chase, \textit{Confirmation in the Apostolic Age} (London: MacMillan and Co., 1913), pp. 51-53, 81-83. Here the term \textit{bebaiosis} is used to establish the rite of confirmation by the laying on the hands as an "outward and visible sign of the sealing of the Spirit" (ibid., p. 51)."
him."¹ For example, in 1 Cor 1:21-22 the term is applied to the activity of God, Christ, and the Spirit in the human heart: "But it is God who establishes (bebaion) us with you in Christ and has given us his Spirit in our hearts."

As in the legal sphere, bebaios was used to confirm a purchase in front of a third party;² in the spiritual sphere, converts in general, especially the younger ones, ought to be called to confirm their stand for Christ in front of the whole universe (1 Cor 4:9).

Rooted, Built Up:
Established

The passage of Col 2:6-7 is worthy of a special analysis: "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught." This passage is a mixture of several metaphors--"the Christian is to walk, to be rooted like a tree, to be built up like a house."³ Paul is calling believers to "a life continued in Christ, rooted and built up in Him, and for a

¹Panikulam, pp. 60-64. "In general, bebaios maintains its original character in the NT, that a thing is firm in the sense of being solidly grounded, though it acquires the note of validity in connection with certain substantives" (TDNT, 1:602).

²TDNT, 1:600-603.

strengthening in the teachings received."¹ This is the Christian life new believers ought to be challenged to live. Let us focus these spiritual metaphors closer:

**Rooted in him as a spiritual tree (errizomenoi).** The tenses of the verbs of these passages are "significantly varied."²

Fully rendered they would be, "having been rooted and being built up." The one is a part of an act done once for all, the effects of which are permanent; the other is a continuous process which is going on now. The Christian has been rooted in Jesus Christ at the beginning of his Christian course. His faith has brought him into living contact with the Savior, who has become as the fruitful soil into which the believer sends his roots, and both feeds and anchors there.³

**Built up in him as a spiritual house (epoikodomomenoi).** The gradual continuous building up of the structure of a Christian character is doubly expressed in this word by the tense which points to a process, and by the prefixed preposition represented by 'up,' which points to the successive laying of course of masonry upon course.⁴

**Established: The expected result (kai bebaiomenoi te pistei).** This phrase points to the outcome expected by Paul from the work of rooting and up-building of his converts—permanency in the faith they were taught. It "is apparently

---

¹Panikulam, pp. 60-63.
²Maclaren, p. 180.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., p. 181.
simply a more definite way of putting substantially the same thoughts as in the former clauses.\textsuperscript{1} Furthermore, the words \textit{kai bebaiomenoi} (and being established) point to a continuous strengthening. "The \textit{kai} is epexegetical, expanding on the meaning of the previous words, while the tense of the verb is present."\textsuperscript{2} "The present tense gives the idea of being more and more established."\textsuperscript{3} "A progressive increase of our faith is the condition of all Christian progress. This continual strengthening of faith is the most essential form of a Christian's efforts at self-improvement. Strengthen faith and you strengthen all graces."\textsuperscript{4}

**The Mission of Disciple-Building**

\textbf{Sterizo: Spiritually Stable and Strong}

The principal meaning of \textit{sterizo} is "to support," "to fix something so that it stands upright and immovable."\textsuperscript{5} In daily conversation it was used in reference to the supporting of plants by stakes until they were strong enough to stand by themselves.\textsuperscript{6} This is an object lesson of the kind of help new

\textsuperscript{1}Maclaren, p. 181.


\textsuperscript{3}Rienecker, 2:227.

\textsuperscript{4}Maclaren, p. 182.

\textsuperscript{5}TDNT, 7:653.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.
converts ought to receive while tender in their religious experience. Figuratively, sterizo\(^1\) means "to confirm," "to commit oneself to something," and politically it means "to pacify," "stabilize."\(^2\)

\(^1\)Sterizo/stereoo--26 times in the NT (sterizo 18 times, and stereoo 8 times). Paul and Luke use the two terms 20 times in their writings (Bachmann and Slaby, pp. 671, 1723, 1725). Stereoo is synonym of sterizo from the standpoint of their common root and meaning. In reference to things it means "firm," "hard," "anything solid" or "immovable" like the firmament. In reference to persons it means "steadfast," "to confirm" (Robinson, pp. 677-78). See stereos in the NT in Acts 3:7; 16:5; Col 2:5; Heb 5:12, 14; 1 Pet 5:9.

Sterizo is considered as interchangeable with bebaioo (TDNT, 1:602; EDNTW, 5:40). Its meaning suggests derivation from the root staste with suffix 'ro', thus staros or storas 'thick,' 'strong,' 'heavy,' 'great,' 'powerful,' 'firm'. Its figurative meaning derives from the literal concept of fixity of things. "In Hellenistic Greek sterizo is often used for heavenly phenomena: the rainbow which Zeus puts in the clouds, the security of earth to heaven by silver pillars, for the position of a star in heaven or fixing of sign in heaven." Sterizo is also rendered "to lean against" or "to support oneself on something" (TDNT, 7:653-54). Rienecker renders it "a settled condition" (2:424). The compound episterizo--"to give additional strength"--is exclusively used in Acts of the Apostles in reference to the task of establishing converts. See SDABC, 6:300; Boles, p. 228; EDNTW, 2:41; Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, 20 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 12:222. Barnes' work is hereafter abbreviated as NNT.

\(^2\)NNT, 12:222.
Transferred to the medical language, "sterizo was applied to the bones in particular." Indeed, the root of the verb used by Luke, a physician himself, when describing the healing of the paralytic sitting at the gate of the temple called Beautiful, is the same root of this verb. It means literally "he grew strong" (estereothesan)—another object lesson adequate to illustrate how converts should grow after the healing of their souls (Acts 3:2-8).

Sterizo: An Apostolic Activity

Besides the ideas of fixity and strength, sterizo is also a common term used in Acts of the Apostles to describe part of the work of Paul during his missionary journeys (Acts 24:21-25; 15:32,41; 16:5; 18:23). Paul uses it in his letters, particularly those to the Thessalonians (Rom 1:11-12; 1 Thess 3:2-3,13; 2 Thess 3:3). The term is also used in Jas 5:8 and 2 Pet 1:10-12 with the same sense of establishing people in the truth of the gospel. What sterizo consists in, partially, may be appreciated by the comparison of the texts in the following parallel.

1The medical use of sterizo is surprisingly common in Hellenistic Greek. In the sense "to strengthen," it is used medicinally with bodily strength (TDNT, 7:654).

2Rienecker, 1:268.

3Ibid.

4Sterizo is used in the NT "of establishing of persons." Neither the laying on of hands nor the impartation of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the NT in connection with either these
1 Thess 3:2-3
And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel to establish (sterizai) you in your faith and to exhort you, that no one be moved by these afflictions.

Acts 14:21-22
When they had preached the gospel to that city (Derbe) and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and Iconium and to Antioch strengthening (epister-izontes) the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith . . . and in the gospel of Christ.

Acts 15:32-33
And Judas and Silas exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened (epister-izan) them. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brethren.

The parallel illustrates the apostles going out to establish believers after doing evangelistic work in several cities. In other words, the technicality of sterizo, from the standpoint of an activity, can be appreciated. The second set of passages of the parallel demonstrates that the strengthening was not limited to words (related to sterizo) or with the synonymous verb "bebainoo" (EDNTW, 2:41). Commenting on Acts 14:22, where sterizo is used, Barnes adds, "It is scarcely necessary to say that the word here refers to no such rite. It has no relation to an imposition of hands, or to the thing which is usually supposed to be noted by the rite of 'confirmation.' It means that they were established, strengthened, made firm, or encouraged by the presentation of truth and by the motives of the gospel (NNT, 12:222).
doctrinal teaching and preaching alone. Other areas of converts' needs like comforting the bereaved were attended, as can be seen from the general context of 1 Thessalonians.¹

The passage of 2 Pet 1:10-12 is significant because sterizo is the same term Luke puts on Christ's lips when charging Peter with the task of strengthening the brethren after his restoration (Luke 22:32). Some writers have concluded that sterizo (like bebaioo) was another technical term used in the work of establishing new believers both inside and outside the Christian Church.²

¹See sterizo in 1 Pet 5:8-10 in the light of the general context of 1 Peter as well).

²Os kai bebaiosei umas—"Who also will confirm you" (1 Cor 1:8). There is a similar expression in oriental Gnosticism, e.g., O. Sol. 38:16: 'I was confirmed and won life and salvation; my foundation was established at the side of the Lord.' Mostly, however, we should expect sterizein rather than bebaioun, for the former had become a technical term. Yet the two words are interchangeable, as may be seen from a comparison of 2 Thess 2:17 with Heb 13:9 (TDNT, 1:601-602; 7:653-56). On the other hand, a study of the passages related to bebaioo, reveals that not even once is this term used in the sense of overseeing converts. Although it is true that both bebaioo and sterizo are used interchangeably in the NT in the sense of exhorting converts to confirm their vows with Christ, when it comes to describing someone's actual activity of leaving to do follow-up work among converts, the terminology used is invariably a verbal form of sterizo. This is confirmed by the fact that although bebaioo and sterizo are interchangeable from the viewpoint of shades of meaning, Greek-English dictionaries do not offer the original meaning of sterizo among the optional meanings given for bebaioo. In other words, the concept of stability from the standpoint of an object strongly fixed is not offered for bebaioo. In the book of Acts and in 1 Thess 3:2 this practical notion of
Christ, the Real Disciple-Builder

Paul makes clear that while all disciples have a share in this task, the real disciple-builder of converts is Christ himself (Rom 1:11-12; 16:25; 1 Cor 1:8; 2 Cor 1:21; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 2:17). They were only instruments through whom Christ worked to strengthen and invigorate the spiritual life of their fellow Christians.¹

Stability in the Light of Bebairoo and Sterizo

As it has been remarked, some writers consider bebairoo and sterizo as interchangeable and synonymous. Their interchangeability is illustrated with texts like 2 Thess 2:17 and Heb 13:9.² However, each one of these terms has its peculiar

sterizo is transferred to the environment of the church and used in reference to the work of follow-up carried on by church leaders among converts. It would be like saying that they went out to see if converts were fixed in the faith. (See these terms in the following references. Bebairoo: Mark 16:20; Rom 4:6; 15:8; 1 Cor 1:6, 8; 2 Cor 1:7, 21; Col 2:7; Heb 2:2-3; 3:6, 14; 6:9; 9:17; 13:9; 2 Pet 1:10, 19. Sterizo: Luke 9:51; 16:26; 22:32; Rom 1:11; 16:25; 1 Thess 3:2, 10; 3:13; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:3; Jas 5:8; 1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 1:12; 3:17; Rev 3:2. Stereos: Acts 3:7, 16; 16:5; Col 2:5; 2 Tim 2:19; Heb 5:12, 14; 1 Pet 5:9).

¹SDABC, 6:475.

²Note the parallel: Comfort your hearts and establish (sterizai) them in every good work and word (2 Thess 2:17). Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened (bebaiosthai) by grace (Heb 13:9).
shade of meaning which is determined mainly by the context.\footnote{From this point of view, it is necessary to keep these terms in proper balance. Synonymity calls for avoiding the danger of overstressing one term at the expense of overshadowing the other, especially in passages where the general meaning is simply "firmness" for both terms.} For example, \textit{sterizo} is often used alongside \textit{parakaleo} (1 Thess 3:2; 2 Thess 2:17; Acts 14:22; 15:32). On the other hand, \textit{bebaioo}, "in practice, though not originally, is close to \textit{pistos}".\footnote{\textit{TDNT}, 1:600.} In this sense, \textit{bebaioo} is more abstract in meaning than \textit{sterizo}. Although both words are used in reference to spiritual stability, their original meaning and the contexts in which they are used serve to distinguish between two kinds of stability which are difficult to differentiate when they are used interchangeably.

While the rendering of "firmness" for \textit{sterizo} derives from its original meaning of the fixity of things, the "firmness" referred to by \textit{bebaios} is closer to inner assurance and insight\footnote{\textit{Bebaioo} is often found with reference to \textit{logos}. A \textit{bebaios logos} is a firm, sure, well-grounded \textit{logos}. It grants insight (\textit{TDNT}, 1:600).} (2 Cor 1:7; Col 2:7; Heb 3:14; 6:19; 13:19). Therefore, the firmness or stability referred to by \textit{bebaioo} could be described as inner unshakeability while the stability referred to by \textit{sterizo} could be described as unchangeability from an adopted position (concrete fixity). Yet, because of the interchangeable use by NT writers, \textit{sterizo} can be used figuratively in the sense of...
unshakeability, and *bebaiōo* can be given the sense of unchangeability.

From the standpoint of the NT and this study, new converts need to be established in the two senses of these terms. They need to be led to stability in the sense of *sterizo* (fixity), to remain always the same in their spiritual stand like fixed mountains or like the stars of heaven—perennially fixed in Christ. On the other hand, this practical stability must be founded in the sense of *bebaiōo*—in an inner insight and understanding of what is believed.

**Theological Correlation of Concepts**

Having analyzed the NT terms on disciple-building separately, it is necessary to assemble them together from different points of view in order to (1) better appreciate their interrelationship, (2) catch a comprehensive theological picture of the entire terminology, (3) better apply the terms to the pragmatic task of disciple-building, and (4) bring out the main principles enclosed in these terms as the basis for a foundation of disciple-nurture.

**Correlation by Basic Needs of New Converts**

The NT vocabulary on disciple-building is a unit which describes both the needs of believers and the work of the church leaders to assist them. Those needs are but a sample of what new believers lacked in earlier times and now. Meeting
converts' needs was a challenge for the church leaders yesterday as it is today.

Joining the terminology from the viewpoint of the needs of believers it could be said that (1) auzano points to new converts' needs of growth in every spiritual direction; (2) parakaleo stands for new converts' need of encouragement; and (3) oikodomeo stresses new converts' need of spiritual nurture by all possible means until they become fully established (bebaios/sterizo) in their new style of life and in the church fellowship.

Correlation by the Purpose of Disciple-Building

Oikodomeo. This term may be useful to define the purpose of a theology of disciple-building which, as conveyed by the meaning of the term, is to build up church members in general and newly baptized ones in particular. The meanings of the other terms are thus intimately related to this basic purpose.

Since the idea of disciple-building runs parallel to the idea of disciple-nurture mentioned by the Lord in John 21:15-17, oikodomeo could wed both concepts. In other words, when referring to a theology of disciple-building both concepts—to build up (oikodomeo) and to feed (bosko)—could be brought together. Of course, every disciple-building plan should describe both the "feeding" (content) and the "upbuilding" (activities related to it).
Furthermore, since oikodomeo indicates the apostolic activity of spiritual caring of individuals and the corporate community,¹ it also seems to be adequate to define part of the mission of the church from the viewpoint of follow up.²

Correlation by the Goals of Disciple-Building

While oikodomeo could stand for the general purpose of a NT theology of disciple-building, auzano, bebaioo, and sterizo could stand for illustrating the specific results expected from this theology. As these terms indicate, the aims of disciple-building are the pursuance of growth, strengthening, and stability of new converts.

Auzano, heavenward growth. Auzano may be used to convey the constant heavenward goal set before converts (Col 1:10). Believers who do not keep themselves growing in Christ in the long run may abandon, not necessarily the church, but the Christian way of life. Leaving the church is a secondary result of drifting away from Christ.

Basically, spiritual growth comes from God (1 Cor 3:6-7). Man is only given the privilege of fostering it, but quickening it is beyond man's power (Luke 13:8). Good programs cannot produce it; they are only a means to facilitate it. They are but a

¹Alexander, p. 715.

²Follow-up is the conservation, maturation, and multiplication of the fruit of evangelism. Winning and building are inseparably linked together in the Scriptures (Moore, p. 17).
guidance to the Source of all growth. Without the aid of the Spirit, programs are worthless (John 15:5; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Rom 8:9). Moreover, programming all new converts to do the same thing successfully is not an evidence of their growth. Disciple-builders should bear in mind that the Spirit fosters converts through many different ways (John 3:9; Heb 1:1). Hence, there is need for multiple approaches. Programs to facilitate the spiritual growth of new converts ought to be experimental undertakings with people and the Spirit.

On the other hand, spiritual growth, like physical growth, cannot be forced (Matt 6:27). Men are free to resist it. Converts should be motivated to hold fast to their faith and keep growing, but they should never be forced to do anything. This means at least two things: (1) that attending a program of disciple-building should be a voluntary decision on the part of new converts, and (2) that if any particular program of disciple-building is successful, there is always the danger of institutionalizing it to the extreme so people may be herded into it automatically. This may lead people to attend the program under pressure rather than because they love to.

**Bebaioo, the ideal of disciple-building.** Conveying the idea of stability from the viewpoint of inner assurance, bebaioo illustrates the quality of faithfulness which disciple-building should aim to nurture. Hence, guiding new believers to determine to be stable in Christ on the basis of inner insights and inner resolutions may be the ideal goal of disciple-building.
Pragmatic Correlations

Sterizo: Fostering bonds with the community. Spiritual insight would be meaningless if taken out of the context of the church or if it did not lead new believers to loyalty and confidence in it. This side of disciple-building seems to be adequately illustrated by the term sterizo.¹ Strengthening, from the standpoint of the literal meaning of this term, refers to fixity and permanency in the church and its truth (2 Pet 1:12).²

¹Sterizo/oikodomeo. Referring to the apostolic activity of disciple-building, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between these two terms. From the standpoint of the general meaning, sterizo (strengthening) forms part of oikodomeo. In other words, sterizo is a disciple-building action. From the viewpoint of the act of going out to the mission of overseeing and giving further stability to converts, the term used in the NT is sterizo and not oikodomeo (cf. 1 Cor 3:10-14; 2 Cor 12:19; 13:10; Eph 2:20-22; 1 Thess 5:11; Acts 4:11; 9:31; 14:21-22; 15:16, 32, 41; 16:5; 18:23; 20:32; 24:21-25). It is in this sense that sterizo is particularly technical. Once the church leaders arrived to the places, all the activities they did were upbuilding spiritual activities (oikodomeo) to establish converts (sterizo or bebailio). In conclusion, these two terms go hand in hand but they are not synonymous.

²The singularity of 2 Pet 10-12 is that both bebailios and sterizo are brought together by a NT writer using them differently. In other words, Peter does not use them synonymously. Peter calls the brethren to confirm (bebailios) their call and at the same time he says that he will always remind them the truth of the gospel even when he knows that they know it and are established (sterizo) in it. Thus he gives bebailios the sense of invitation and sterizo the sense of assurance. He trusts they are firmly settled in the truth, and he asks them to confirm themselves even more in it.
Sterizo: Looking for disciple-builders. In a theology of disciple-building, this term also seems to be especially suitable to emphasize the activity of assimilating new believers into the church both yesterday and today. The example left by the apostles in connection with sterizo makes this term appropriate for stimulating people in the church to become disciple-builders.

Practical duties of disciple-builders. The remaining Greek concepts considered in this study illustrate other pragmatic activities regarding disciple-building. Encouragement (parakaleo), for example, is a need of new converts, but it is also a task that needs to be performed by somebody. Thus, it is a call in one particular area of disciple building. The terms krato (to hold fast), steko (to stand firm), kateko (to make for), epeko (hold forth), and many others contained in the NT with a similar meaning also illustrate a task which needs to be performed by disciple-nurturers.

Summary

The study of the NT concepts on the assimilation of converts bears the following principles and conclusions:

1. Auzano seems to be adequate to lay the principle of keeping oneself growing in Christ. This principle should be set before new believers as a life-long challenge. They should be taught that spiritual growth is not easy, that the devil works to stunt it.

2. Oikodomeo portrays both a principle and an example left by the leaders of the Apostolic Church to their posterity.
This is that both the ministers and lay people must engage in the manifold areas of disciple-building—church upbuilding (preaching, teaching), mutual upbuilding, special ministries based on personal spiritual gifts, and special disciple-building programs. The term points to an apostolic activity which cannot cease while the gospel is preached and people keep responding to its calls.

3. Sterizo and bebaioo, being related to the concept of external and internal spiritual firmness, underline the principle of deep disciple-building. Depth in disciple-nurture must be emphasized to reduce the number of shaky converts. The natural corollary seems to be that deep disciple-building may result in strong converts while superficial disciple-building may result in feeble converts.

4. Parakaleo and other terms related to the idea of appealing may serve to stress the principle of entreaty—getting personally concerned and involved in the spiritual welfare of converts, in general, and, in particular, in those who are young in the faith. Parakaleo carries within itself both a need and a call. First, it conveys the idea that someone needs to be encouraged. If the "someone" is a new convert, he may need special encouragement during his period of adaptation to the style of the Christian life. Second, parakaleo calls for encouragers; it calls for caring church members and caring disciple-builders. The same may be said about the Greek terms pointing to the meanings of "holding fast" and "standing firm." In other words, someone may need to hold fast his faith but
somebody should be willing to support him to endure in the midst of trials.

Chapter 2 presents an illustration of these principles in the ministry of the Lord and the apostles.
CHAPTER II

DISCIPLE-BUILDING IN THE MINISTRY
OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES

This chapter demonstrates that disciple-winning and disciple-building are inseparable, and that the second deserves a special emphasis in order to retain the fruit of the first.

Christ, the Disciple Builder

Christ was the greatest disciple-builder who ever lived. In fact, a large amount of the material of the gospels could be classified as nurturing material—convert-building instructions given by Christ both publicly and privately (Matt 5-7; Luke 22:25-32; John 13-17).

Variety in Disciple-Building

Christ carried on his work of disciple-nurture through many avenues—healing, preaching, teaching, and feeding people. His parabolic command at the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand people is a challenge for disciple-nurture today. When his disciples suggested he should send the crowd away to get provisions, he said, "You give them something to eat" (Luke 9:13). From the point of view of disciple-building, Christ's order still is, "You nurture them."
Building up the Twelve

Of all the examples of Christ's work as disciple-builder, the supreme one is his task of building up the men who were to be the leaders of the early Christian Church after his ascension.

In his training of the disciples the example of the Saviour's life was far more effective than any mere doctrinal instruction. He had strengthened their confidence in God's word, and in great measure had set them free from fear of the rabbis and their bondage to tradition.¹

Christ is seen establishing his disciples both individually and as a group. Once he asked them, "Who do men say I am?" After listening to their different answers he sought a more personal testimony, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt 16:13-15). That Christ was strengthening and preparing his disciples to face his fate on the cross is very clear from the context (Matt 16:24).

Christ's private manifestations to the disciples after his resurrection are another evidence of his concern for strengthening their faith before returning to heaven (Luke 24:13-32,36-49).²

Building up Individuals

Christ's upbuilding touch. Christ could have gone on his way the day a sick woman touched his garments believing she

¹E. G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 349.

²Ibid., p. 793.
would be healed by so doing; but he did not let her go home unnoticed. He wanted to give her more than just physical healing. Therefore, he stopped to give her a spiritual touch. After listening to her testimony of faith, he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (Mark 5:34). In other words, Christ stopped to impart to her not only physical but spiritual healing as well. He wanted to build up and strengthen her faith. By stopping and saying a few words to her he let her know he cared for her personally in spite of the hurry he was in to get to Jairus' home.

Building up Mary's faith. One of the clearest examples to portray Christ's personal work of disciple-building, outside the circle of his twelve disciples, is the case of Mary, the sister of Lazarus. Here he is seen visiting a home not so much to receive but to give. Although he appreciated Martha's concern for preparing him a good meal, he told her in a very tactful manner that he was visiting them not so much to receive but to give a blessing which only Mary was getting to the maximum. He was giving her "the good portion" of spiritual furtherance which could "not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). Mary at the feet of Christ portrays a disciple-building picture.

Building up Peter's faith. The record of the NT concerning Christ's care for Peter is unique to illustrate his work as a personal disciple-builder. Christ is seen building up Peter's sinking faith on the sea of Galilee (Matt 14:28-31). That incident was a symbol of a spiritual sinking that would come to a climax
at Christ's sacrifice. Christ knew it and was very concerned about it. He revealed his concern for building up the sinking faith of his disciple at the last supper. Foretelling Peter's denial of his Lord, Christ told the apostle he had been praying for him that his faith might not fail at that stormy moment (Luke 22:31-33). Then, at the scene of Peter's denial, Christ "turned and looked at Peter" (Luke 22:61). In other words, while suffering all kinds of ill-treatment, Christ was thinking of Peter, and when the cock crowed, he turned to build up his disciple with an eye-to-eye look of compassion.¹ But Christ's special work with Peter did not stop there. When he rose from the dead, he sent Peter a personal message letting him know he accepted him in spite of his sin (Mark 16:7). Finally, one morning, after feeding the downcast disciple physically, he fed him spiritually and reestablished him in his place in the church, commanding him to carry the same spiritual work in behalf of others (John 21:15-19). Thrice Peter was led to admit that no one's faith can stand on his own strength, and thrice he was charged to teach that fundamental principle to other converts.

There are many sinking Peters today, especially among new converts--people whose faith is frail and who would end up in shipwreck unless others are willing to stretch out their hands

¹Christ's example, points to the fact that disciple-building can be done even through simple means. A hearty greeting or a warm smile are ways more established church members can let new converts know they realize their presence at the church.
to lift them. Christ, continually reaching out to Peter to build up his faith, sets a model to be followed by disciple-builders today.

Building up fellowship. The blind man only knew that his name was Jesus. The Sabbath he was healed he was sent to the pool of Siloam to wash away the clay from his eyes, and "he came seeing" (John 9:9). Next he was taken before the Jewish council to bear witness in favor of One he had never seen. With courage, he testified about Christ as a prophet sent from God, until finally he was cast out of the synagogue. To be cast out of the synagogue meant the loss of fellowship. This man had recovered his sight but had lost the fellowship of his church. At that moment he likely wondered, "And Jesus, where is he now? Has he fled to hide himself from the wrath of the Jewish leaders?" John says that when the Lord heard that this man had been cast out of the synagogue, he sought him. In other words, now was Christ’s opportunity to go after this man to offer him the support of his fellowship, a fellowship he needed badly at that moment. Having found him, Christ asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (John 9:35). The voice of Christ must have sounded familiar to him, but to be sure, the one who had been blind asked, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" (John 9:35). Then, Christ revealed himself to him, strengthening and building up his faith in him. The Saviour brought a man who had lost the fellowship of his church into

1SDABC, 5:999-1000.
close fellowship with himself. Here he clearly illustrated the work that needs to be done in favor of those who separate themselves from their former church fellowship for his sake. Recovering spiritual sight--discerning what is truth for this time--may not be enough; being illuminated with the message and being baptized may not be enough. Like Christ, we too will sometimes find it is necessary to go back after new converts to strengthen their faith in times of crisis in order to save them from despair and a sense of abandonment. In short, at critical times new converts need the loving support of people in the church.

Building up the Lambs

The parable of the lost sheep. This parable appears twice in the gospels (Matt 18:1-13; Luke 15:4-7). However, Matthew's and Luke's stories are not merely repetitions. A careful comparison between the two leads to the conclusion that the same parable was narrated twice in different settings to teach two different lessons. Although Matthew and Luke recite some common elements in their accounts of this parable, there are two differences which turn their material into two distinct parables!1 The first has to do with the context set forth by each evangelist. While the hearers of Matthew are the disciples at home with Christ in Capernaum (Matt 18:1-4; Mark 9:33-37), the audience in Luke are the Pharisees and the scribes--probably at the house

1See SDABC, 5:815.
of Matthew.\(^1\) (Luke 5:27-32; 15:1-2). The second difference has to do with the focus of the parable in each context. In other words, the main lesson taught by each is completely different. Luke's parable of the lost sheep focuses on the repentance and forgiveness of the despised people with whom Christ was acquainting himself. On the other hand, Matthew's parable of the lost sheep was told to illustrate Christ's special care for spiritual lambs, both the youth born in the church and the new converts. In Matthew, the lost sheep is illustrated by a child,\(^2\) not by adults as in Luke. Moreover, Matthew's account contains a double lesson. First comes the child who is called by Christ and set in the midst of the disciples as a concrete object lesson teaching them to stop their strife about who was the greatest. Second comes the parable of the lost sheep directly related to that child. The focus of Matthew's parable is not on repentance


\(^2\)\textit{Paidion}, little or young child. The fact that the lost sheep in Matt 18 is represented by a child changes that parable (in that context) into the parable of the lost lamb. Yet, since a lamb is a 'sheep' (\textit{probata}) as any other of its kind, the etymological argument based on the meaning of the Greek wording of Matt 18:1-10 is useless to prove this conclusion. The word "sheep" includes both adult and young sheep. Therefore, this conclusion is based only on the material of the context.
of the lost sheep. It is on a concern for caring for that sheep in order to keep it from leaving the fold.¹

Limiting the application of the parable to young people born in the church would limit the meaning of the symbols of the parable—child, sheep, disciples. The sheep represents the child; the child represents both youth and young believers in the church; and the disciples surrounding the child illustrate the protection that both youth and new believers should receive from mature or spiritually experienced church members. "Literal children are, of course, included, but Jesus here refers primarily to those who are yet 'children' in the kingdom of heaven, that is, immature Christians"² (1 Cor 3:1-2). "These little ones are those who believe on Jesus."³

In contemporary language, it could be said that in Luke 15 the parable of the lost sheep illustrates the ministry of disciple-winning (leading the unconverted into repentance), while in Matt 18 it illustrates the ministry of disciple-nurture, or disciple-building (leading converts into further commitment). Christ's emphasis on disciple-building in Matt 18 is so strong that twice he warns older church converts (illustrated by the disciples) against causing "one of these little ones who believe in

¹It should be kept in mind that Matthew's focus on disciple-building may be related to the Jewish audience of his gospel. See SDABC, 5:273 664. Luke, however, is thought to have written especially for Gentile readers (SDABC, 5:664-65).

²SDABC, 5:446.

me to stumble" (scandalizo) or "despise" them (Matt 18:6, 10). Therefore, Matthew's parable could be taken to illustrate how careful the older members of the church should be in the way they treat new believers. Furthermore, in the light of the context which led Christ to call the child into their midst and tell the disciples this parable, it could be concluded that just as the debate between the disciples regarding who was the greatest among them was a poor modeling for children around them, so controversies among the older members of the church are a poor example for newborn converts.

In summary, the focus of the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15 is on calling people to repentance while the focus of that parable in Matt 18 is caring for people in the fold of the church, especially youth and new converts, so that they may not be caused to sin or "to stumble" (Matt 10:6, 10; Luke 15:7).

The commission of disciple-building. Christ's commission to Peter before his denial is, perhaps, one of the best examples available in the gospels to illustrate his concern for new believers.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren. (Luke 22:31-32)

As was indicated in the preceding chapter, the Greek term for "strengthen" in this passage is sterizo. In the context of Luke 22:32, this word points to a commission which was repeated and enlarged in John 21:15-17. When these passages
are joined with Matt 28:19-20, they become one mission with two big phases of work. The first phase comprises outreach or soul-winning (Matt 28:19-20). The second (soul-building) is implied in Luke 22:31-32 by the charge of strengthening converts, but it is clearly stated in John 21 by the command to feed both the sheep and the lambs.

Moreover, converts were clearly divided by Christ into two groups: sheep and lambs. Spiritually mature converts are

1 This does not mean that Christ's commission in Matt 28:19-20 refers only to disciple-winning. It seems clear that disciple-building can also be included in that context by the order, "Teach them all that I have commanded you." The point is that disciple-nurture seems to be more clearly emphasized in Luke 22:31-32.

2 There is "a fundamental distinction between two separate tasks of the preacher. The first is to lay the foundation (missionary proclamation, evangelism); the second is to build up the church" (Brown, DNT, 1:662).

3 It seems evident that the background of John 21:15-17 is Isa 40:11. There are different Hebraic terms in the OT in reference to sheep, dams, rams, and lambs of different ages. The lambs (telaim) of Isa 40:11 are "young sucking lambs, which by natural instinct, join themselves to their dams" (William Wilson, Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies (MacLean, VA: MacDonald Pub. Co., n.d., p. 242.

"He shall gather the lambs with his arms" (Isa 40:11). "This is a most beautiful expression, denoting the care of God the Saviour for the feeblest and meekest of his people, and for the young and feeble in years and piety" (Albert Barnes, "Isaiah" in Notes on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950], pp. 63-64).

4 The prophecy regarding the ministry of the Messiah portrayed him gathering the lambs in his arms, carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young (Isa 40:11). He would not only carry a ministry in favor of mature
referred to by the term "sheep," while spiritually immature ones are referred to by the term "lambs." The lambs represent those who are "young in the faith" while the "feeding" indicates that they are to be "educated" in that faith.¹

Christ's parabolic message to Peter implies two distinct types of feeding. One is the feeding of his "sheep"; the other the feeding of his "lambs."² Spiritually adult sheep are fed with "solid food"—the advanced principles of the gospel (Heb 5:14; 1 Cor 3:1-2); while spiritual lambs should be fed with "milk"—"the first principles of God's word" (Heb 5:12-13). Therefore, the feeding calls for two distinct spiritual menus fitted to each group. In other words, different approaches of work ought to be developed to properly nurture these two types of converts.

his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young (Isa 40:11). He would not only carry a ministry in favor of mature sheep, but would display a tender concern for the lambs. Certainly, this points to his concern for young people, as it is clearly illustrated by Matt 19:13-14, but it would be wrong to limit it to the literal meaning (see SDABC, 5:446).


²The word here (John 21:15) rendered 'feed' (boske) "means the care afforded by furnishing nutriment for the flock. In the next verse there is a change in the Greek, and the word rendered 'feed' denotes rather the care, guidance, and protection which a shepherd extends to his flock." The expression 'feed my lambs' "undoubtedly refers to the tender and the young in the Christian church; to those who are young in years and in Christian experience" (NNT, 11:382-383).
Paul the Disciple Builder

Paul's Upbuilding Experience

Although it is evident that all the apostles engaged in the task of convert assimilation (Jas 5:8; 1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 1:10-12; 1 John 2:27-29), the figure of Paul excels for his zeal to see that new members became spiritually strong.\(^1\) He himself, at the beginning of his Christian career, did not go immediately to proclaim his new faith. He took time to reorient all he had learned in Judaism in the light of the gospel. After his conversion, he says that "immediately he went away into Arabia" (Gal 1:17-18). In Arabia he lived a life of quiet meditation, equipping himself for his great work, and calmly waiting for indications from God.\(^2\) It could be said that during that time, Christ himself, by means of the Holy Spirit, was establishing his great apostle to the Gentiles.

Disciple-Building Zeal

Judging from his solicitude for Timothy, revealed in his letters to him, Paul "would be as much concerned about the spiritual growth of individual members as he was for the general

\(^1\)"The careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands" (Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub Assn., 1911], p. 206).

condition of the churches he had founded."¹ He longed to see his converts "stable" and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which they heard (Col 1:23).

These were young converts surrounded by enemies and exposed to temptation and danger. They had but a slight acquaintance with the gospel, and it was therefore important that they should then be further instructed in the truth.²

Writing to Titus, Paul says, "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective" (Titus 1:5). The Greek term rendered "defective" is leptona (from leipo) which refers to "the things remaining" or "the things that are lacking."³ In other words, Paul left Titus in Crete to follow up or complete a spiritual task he had begun among converts in that place.

It is also worth noticing that a great number of Paul's converts were from heathenism, and were under persecution. "Family ties had been broken, social ties severed, and they were in need of encouragement."⁴

Paul had a keen sense of the conflict which every soul must wage with the agencies of evil that are continually

²NNT, 12:222.
³Rienecker, 2:305.
seeking to deceive and ensnare; and he worked untiringly to strengthen and confirm those who were young in the faith. He felt that preaching alone would not suffice to educate the believers to hold forth the word of life.

It is evident that Paul's ministry kept a proper balance between disciple-winning and disciple-building.

**Pauline Methods of Disciple Building**

Paul's ministry discloses three distinct ways by which he established people in the church:

1. He visited them personally from place to place and from house to house (Acts 14:21-23; 20:20). His missionary journeys had the purpose of both preaching in new territories and nurturing the churches previously established (Acts 15:36; 16:13; Rom 1:11). He longed to see his converts face to face (2 Thess 2:17-18; 3:6, 10, 11; 2 Tim 1:4; Heb 13:23).

2. When Paul could not go, he would send some of his associates to inquire about the spiritual condition of the churches (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Thess 3:1-2, 5; 2 Tim 4:12). Timothy, Titus, Tychicus, and Epaphras are mentioned among the men doing this type of work in behalf of the apostle (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Thess 3:2; 2 Tim 4:12; Titus 1:5). These were men Paul himself had trained and instructed as to what to do when they arrived at the churches.

---


2Ibid., p. 206.
3. Paul assisted his converts by writing. His epistles are full of counseling material establishing converts in their faith. Some letters, like those to the Corinthians, indicate how he endeavored to correct their waywardness. The letter to the Galatians is a strong attempt to win back a backsliding church. The letter to the Colossians includes a note asking them to have the letter read to the church of Laodicea; and the one sent to Laodicea was to be read to the Colossians (Col 4:16). The first epistle to the Thessalonians is unique to demonstrate Paul's fears regarding the possibility of backsliding among converts in that church. It reveals both the apostle's season of great concern and his happiness after receiving positive news about their spiritual state. He even wrote them telling that the news about their unwavering faith was the very breath of life for him and his faithful companions (1 Thess 2:20; 3:1-8). The Philippian converts he exhorted to hold fast to "the word of life" so that at the end he might be proud that he "did not run in vain" for them (Phil 2:16).

Peter the Disciple-Builder

Traveler Disciple-Builder

On the basis of Acts 8:1, 4-5, 40 and 1 Pet 1:1 it seems that there were many missionary travelers in the early Church. Churches were established everywhere--"in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Rapid church growth by baptism made urgent the need for special care for new believers. They were in the same need of confirmation and nurture as
those won by Paul's team of workers. Were these converts left unattended or did the other apostles, like Paul, engage from time to time in missionary journeys to strengthen and further instruct their new converts? No doubt nurturing was extended to these converts as well.

It may be inferred from Acts 9:32 that the apostle Peter traveled to the churches testing their spiritual temperature: "Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda."

The key Greek phrase of concern in this text is "dierchomenon dia panton" which literally means "passing through all quarters." The term dierchomai (to go through) is a favorite word with Luke's writings for missionary labor (cf. Luke 9:6; Acts 8:40; 9:32; 11:19; 13:6). The phrase of Acts 9:32 may also be translated "among them all," referring either to the church groups of the previous verse or to the "saints" mentioned in this verse. Either way the idea of reviewing the spiritual condition of converts is conveyed.

Building up Cornelius' Family

Peter is seen establishing new converts at the house of Cornelius after the baptism of a company of Gentiles in that

---

1SDABC, 6:239.
2Ibid., 6:213.
3Ibid., 6:239.
place. Luke states that "for some days" Peter was with them giving them further instruction concerning their new faith (Acts 10:48). The time he stayed with those converts was brief, but the context indicates that he could not leave them hungering for additional knowledge about Christ.

**Building up by Writing**

Like Paul, Peter also sent letters of counsel and instruction for the confirmation of the churches which he had established: "By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it" (1 Pet 5:12).

Peter's letters reveal a special concern for the Christian converts in time of persecution. He endeavored to protect them from repeating his shameful sin of betraying his Master by giving up the faith in time of trial (1 Pet 4:12-14). Undoubtedly, he was consciously doing the work of "strengthening" or building up converts to which he was commissioned by the Lord (Luke 22:32).

In the final words of his second letter, Peter encouraged his readers to be stable in their faith and keep themselves growing in the grace and knowledge of their Saviour (2 Pet 3:17-18).

Although the NT record concerning Peter's activities in relation to convert building is briefer than Paul's, it seems clear that he engaged in similar tasks.
John the Disciple Builder

Joy in Disciple-Building

Like Paul and Peter, John's epistles also exhibit a deep concern for those new Christians with whom he had worked. The language of these epistles is clearly a nurturing and convert-building language. He fondly calls his converts his "little children" in Christ (1 John 2:1, 12, 18, 28).

To "the elder," receiver of his second letter, he says, "I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children following the truth" (2 John 4). Advising him and his family he also wrote:

Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward. Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. (2 John 8, 9)

John's joy in seeing his converts persevering in the Christian faith can be fully perceived in the following words written to Gaius:

For I greatly rejoiced when some of the brethren arrived and testified to the truth of your life, as indeed you do follow the truth. No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth. (3 John 3).

An Upbuilding Admonition

A key thought in John's writings showing his concern to see people fully established in the Christian faith is the Greek expression menete en auto. "Remain in Him!" was a very common admonition of this apostle (1 John 2:27-29; 2 John 8, 9). This phrase appears forty-one times in his Gospel and twenty-
six times in his epistles.¹ Besides its mystical meaning, the idea of being established in Christ stands out sharply through the phrase.²

Face-to-Face Disciple Building

As with the other apostles, John also realized the value of personal touch with his converts. Both to "the elder" of his second epistle and to Gaius, he repeated his wish to see them "face to face" (1 John 12; 3 John 14).

Another trait of John's writings is his addressing his readers with loving care and tenderness (1 John 2:1, 7, 18; 4:1, 4, 7; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1, 5, 11). Loving care for new converts, in particular, is fundamental for their assimilation into the church. Without this element all nurturing efforts are naught. It does not take long for newcomers to find out whether they are wanted and loved or not by the other members of the church. In the final analysis, this is the determinant factor in the new converts' resolution to remain in fellowship with their brethren or to abandon them. Spiritual children cannot grow up successfully without love. "Feeding, protecting and training, without love will produce unbalanced, distorted lives in the spiritual realm as well as in the natural. Christlike love is to be

¹SDABC, 7:638.

²Explaining the mystical meaning of this phrase is not the burden of this study. (See John 14:10; 15:4-10; 1 John 2:24, 28; 3:6, 24.)
the foundation of all attempts to give parental care to spiritual babes."\(^1\)

**Summary**

**Christ and Discipleship**

Christ's teachings on discipleship constitute a mission of two phases: outreach and inreach. Outreach mission is often emphasized in references like Matt 28:19 and Mark 16:15-16. Nurture mission is regarded as the continuous instruction of converts in general (Matt 28:20). Christ's ministry is a model of the balance that should be present in these two phases of work with converts.

Furthermore, it seems clear that Christ's charge to Peter and the other apostles in Luke 22:32 and John 21:15-17 calls for differentiation between nurture of new believers and nurture of mature believers. Christ pointed to two types of converts within the church and for the provision of two different nurturing approaches. In other words, spiritual lambs should be nurtured with a special spiritual menu adequate to their peculiar needs. As was noted above, these passages are fundamental to establishing the duty of the church in spending as much time in building up new converts as winning them in the first place.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Moore, p. 24.

\(^2\)Someone may comment, "Could a special work of disciple-building be so badly necessary? Aren't we spending as much time in disciple-building as we do in disciple-winning by preaching, calling on homes, holding meetings for spiritual
In Matt 18:1-6, Christ warns the spiritually full-grown Christian to avoid hurting and being stumbling blocks for beginners in the faith.

The Apostles and Discipleship

On the basis of the information in the Acts of the Apostles and his own letters, Paul was as strong in his ministry of disciple-building, as he was in his ministry of disciple-winning. Besides, his confirming activities among converts included both individual members and the community of the church as a whole.

Peter's and John's ministries manifested their concern for the faithfulness of converts, particularly in time of persecution and apostasy. Luke presents Peter engaged in the spiritual supervision of the churches (Acts 9:32). When Peter could no longer visit them, he wrote them letters of encouragement and advice with the object of protecting them from betraying Christ in time of trial (1 Pet 4:12-14).

revival, having the Lord's Supper, fellowship meetings, and other common church and pastoral activities? I know many fine Christians who haven't had anything special but this and they are faithful." No doubt that all these activities are a part of disciple-building as any other special program, but the point is that a special program means a special effort for certain people at a special time in their Christian life. How many more could have been retained if special programs and special efforts had been made to nurture them? (See E. G. White, Evangelism, p. 351).
John's preference to see his converts rather than writing to them is a hint of his missionary trips on behalf of his converts (2 John 12). His deep concern for their full assimilation in the church is particularly expressed in his constant appeal to them to abide in Christ and his doctrine (John 1:18; 2 John 8-9). Finally, John's ministry sets forth love as a touch-stone principle in convert spiritual building (1 John).

The apostles' activities in establishing converts could be classified in three main areas:

1. Face-to-face encounter. Their missionary journeys were prompted both for their desire to plant the gospel in new places and their desire to oversee the spiritual situation of converts.

2. Supervision and instruction by men trained to accomplish those tasks.

3. Personal and public letters.
CHAPTER III

SMALL GROUP VALUES FOR

DISCIPLE-BUILDING

Definition of Small Groups

A group is not just a collection of individuals. A group is a number of persons who communicate with one another often over a span of time, and are few enough so that each person is able to communicate with all the others, not at second hand, through other people, but face-to-face. Sociologists call this the primary group. A chance meeting of casual acquaintances does not count as a group for us.

People become a group when they are joined by common interests and goals. By realizing that they have common problems and common needs, they become "one out of many."

---

1As a human phenomenon small groups can be traced in the NT in places like Matt 18:20; Mark 3:14; and Luke 17:12-14.


and "each is less alone."¹ "Similar in basic ways, groups vary according to different objectives, leadership, needs and interest of participants, and prevailing circumstances."² Hence, groups have become a field related to all aspects of man's life.³

**Small Groups Benefits for Disciple-Building**

Many reasons could be mentioned to suggest the use of small groups as an approach to integrate new believers into the church. From the sociological point of view, Clovis R. Shepherd says:

The small group is an essential mechanism of socialization and a primary source of social order. There is little doubt that a small group provides the major source of the values and attitudes people have, and an important source of pressures to conform to social values and attitudes. There is also little doubt that the roles which children learn within the family and the play group serve as the initial roles which they take into other situations.


The small group serves an important mediating function between the individual and the larger society.\textsuperscript{1}

From the standpoint of education, it is said that "most effective human learning occurs when one learns in a social situation, when interpretations are checked with the interpretations of others, when interactions facilitate growth."\textsuperscript{2}

In harmony with these sociological and educational remarks, this study points to six areas stressed by small groups which could be considered to foster and nurture new converts' growth in the church. These are small-groups emphasis on (1) fellowship, (2) relationships, (3) communication, (4) togetherness, (5) cohesiveness, and (6) caring listening.

\textsuperscript{1}Clovis R. Shepherd, \textit{Small Groups: Some Sociological Perspectives} (San Francisco: Chandler Pub. Co., 1946), p. 1. Shepherd's insight is a two-edged sword. While the small group is a positive "essential mechanism of socialization" and "serves as an important mediating function between the individual and the larger society," it also carries the negative ingredient that it has been used as a "source of pressures to conform to social values and attitudes." In this study this means that nurture groups should not be used as a means to pressure new converts into conformism with the social values and attitudes of the church.

Growth by Fellowship

Man was created as a social being. "It is not good," God said, "that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). These words constitute a fundamental principle for man's physical, mental, and moral growth. "The human spirit in isolation is miserable. We are made for one another, to live in families, and to find satisfaction in groups."2 "The basic social nature of the human condition is well captured in the immortal lines of John Donne: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent."3

Man's sense of abandonment, when isolated, is at the bottom of self-pity. So real is this that it has become an argument among some people leaving the church: "I was

---

1Schaller, pp. 69-97. According to Schaller, fellowship is the strongest of the inclusive factors to assimilate people into the church. He says that "it is easier to become a member of a congregation than it is to be accepted into the fellowship of that community of believers." Very often people feel that "they have been received into membership, but have never felt they have been accepted into the fellowship circle." They feel a sense of belonging when they find their way to the inner circle of church fellowship. In other words, when they overcome the syndrome of "us-them" or "we-they"--the excluding factors typical of local congregations (ibid., pp. 16, 19, 81-84).

2Kirby Page, How to Find the Will of God (Nashville: Tidings, 1954), p. 44.

abandoned by the church," they say, "I was left alone and since no one sought me I felt I was unnecessary there in."¹

The kind of spiritual environment a new believer experiences will play a large part in his subsequent Christian growth, or lack of it. It definitely makes a difference where a new Christian has fellowship. The spiritual temperature of the church in which a new believer finds himself will control to a certain extent the vitality of his life. A lukewarm or cold church environment can be devastating to a new Christian's growth.²

Since the needs of new converts are largely relational, the caring environment of a small group could be a place where new members could find fellowship.³

Christians will grow to maturity in a group relationship where Christian fellowship is real. Individual personal attention has its place, but Christians are learning that fellowship is not a means to the end of their individual growth. It is the fellowship that we are to live. It is through fellowship that we experience some of the healing love of God which we need to heal deep personal hurts. It is through fellowship that we learn to serve and discover the gifts God has given us for the body of Christ. Such fellowship may be provided in a special beginner's group.⁴

Furthermore, small-group fellowship may help to eliminate the feeling of being lost in the crowd experienced by

¹See: Burnside, p. 17-20; Nielsen, p. 192.

²Hanks and Shell, p. 127.

³Kilcher, p. 12.

some converts during the first months of their Christian life. Assimilation into the church may be easier when people move from the small-group fellowship than when they start out alone.1 "The warmth of real Christian relationships is better experienced in small groups. Here new converts immediately acquire a nucleus of friends"2 which becomes a supportive anchor to hold them in the church.3 Group fellowship also helps bridge the gap "between the time they unite with the church and the time they gain a sense of safety and mutual contentment that they cannot find as isolated individuals."4 According to Schaller, "the larger the congregation, the more important these small groups are in the assimilation of new members."5

1Barlow, p. 24.


3Four "anchor lines" to hold new members in the church are: (1) Faith in the church--believing in the doctrines and teachings of the community; (2) developing a circle of friends; (3) having a sense of belonging to a group; and (4) holding some responsibility based on their particular spiritual gifts (Kilcher, pp. 4-5).


5Schaller, p. 77.
Growth by Relationships

"Living things survive collectively."¹ This principle of mutual interdependence is illustrated in nature in countless ways. A herd of deer, for example, "can more readily cope with deep snow than can the individual animal, and a flock of birds can survive where a single member of the species cannot. When attacked by wolves, musk oxen assemble themselves into a star-shaped formation with their antlers poised to fend off their assailant; in this fashion, each animal avoids an attack from the rear, against which musk oxen are almost totally helpless."² Man is not an exception to this rule of survival. "Biologically, he is the least specialized of Earth's creatures, and poorly equipped to survive alone."³ When compared with other creatures,

his body is weak, unprotected by hair, scales, or shells; and it lacks claws, tusks, or stingers. He cannot climb, dig, or conceal himself as well as can many of his competitors, and he is equipped with less sensitive organs of sight, hearing, and smell. Nature has left him no alternative; he can combine his efforts with those of his fellows, or he can perish. But man has survived. Indeed, he has achieved 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the Earth' (Gen 1:28).⁴

²Ibid., pp. 1-2.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
This "relationship of one human being with another has been God's business for a long, long time. What psychologists learned early and theologians learned late, the Bible puts in the creation narrative: man was made for relationship"¹ (Gen 2:23). Fellowship and relationship go hand in hand. One cannot exist without the other. It may be said that God first created loneliness--Adam as one social unit; loneliness, in turn, felt the need of fellowship--Eve; and they both felt the need of building up relationships.² This activity, initiated at the garden of Eden, continues in all human affairs today but must be particularly emphasized by the church. Hence, one of the church's main tasks is to help people grow "into meaningful life-changing relationship" within its fold.³ The fact that building up relationships is the core of small groups yields another positive factor to support the approach to nurture new believers in the church. Barlow says,

Any method or experience which deepens or enhances responsible interpersonal relationships among people is an advance towards the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has been described as the 'kingdom of right


²"There is risk in relationship because it has the power to create or destroy. Loving, authentic relationships create. Dishonest, masked, or manipulative relationships destroy" (Brown and Deitz, p. 116).

³Ibid., p. 117.
reconciliations'. Reconciliation and loving relationships are at the heart of the gospel.¹

On the other hand, small-group association is not a guarantee that new converts will develop a healthy and lasting relationship with the church. The strategy might fail for many reasons. For example, the leader may not have the right training or the training may have the wrong focus. However, the small-group approach might be fruitful if used as a means to initiate Christian interpersonal relationships between individuals. The small group may be "the ideal arena for deepening relationships and consequently accelerating growth."² Relationships have been called "the key factor to conserving members."³

We are molded by our relationships. Only rarely do people make significant changes in their attitudes or actions entirely apart from some relationship. If in the church we are hopeful of changing persons (including ourselves) we should remember that it will most likely happen because of the relationships that are established or strengthened.⁴

The kind of group life in which new members participate may affect their spiritual development to a large degree. Their successful growth depends upon the strength, warmth, and

¹Barlow, p. 55.


richness "of their interaction with other converts in the church."¹ "Growth of the self includes and requires interpersonal relations, meeting between I and Thou, in which each person recognizes the other as he is; each says what he means and means what he says; each values and contributes to the unfolding of the other without imposing or manipulating."² Thus, the caring environment of a small group could become "home for the growth of new converts and a way to strengthen their bonds with the church."³

Growth by Sharing Communication

Improving skills in communication. "Relationship is dialogue . . . . It is a two-way process in which two or more people discuss meanings that concern them."⁴ Relationships are also emotional connections between people, and the connections are made and sustained through dialogical communication.⁵


³Ibid., p. 41. See also Cho, pp. 49, 51-53, 67, 71.


converts are not an exception to this rule. Like all human beings, they cannot grow in silence. To build up relationships in the church they need to communicate with their brethren. Since the ability to communicate easily with others is not a gift everyone has or can develop overnight, the small-group experience, with interactive communication as its lifeblood, may be an agency to establish lines of communication between both old and new converts. "The small-group experience, by providing the individual with an opportunity to speak, gives him a greater sense of worth. His ideas are responded to. As a result, his dignity as a person is enhanced."1 Moreover, "in the atmosphere of sharing, people can learn acceptance of different personalities and cultural concepts. They can come to enjoy other individuals for their stimulating variety of viewpoints, and thus gain perspective on themselves."2 They also may "learn to like each other, to reach some understanding of others, and to influence one another."3

Sharing--a deeper level of communication. In small group language, communication is often referred to as "sharing."4

1Casteel, The Creative Role, p. 114.

2Gibb, Platts, and Miller, p. 10.


4In the field of small groups the terms "sharing" and "caring" have been so tilled that they may be classified as subtle terms now. "A number of organizations like Faith at Work,
Sharing involves more than mere talking. It is "personal involvement by a willingness to disclose personal experiences, knowledge and feelings. Talking about hobbies, reading habits, sports, travels, family, and friends is important to the social health of the group."\(^1\) By personal sharing the group moves from a physical group level to an emotional group level. A group becomes a group not only by the sharing of knowledge and personal experiences, but when everyone, losing sight of himself, becomes deeply interested in the welfare of others—when people combine sharing with caring concern towards others. If they share but do not care, they reveal selfish holiness—a religious group in which each one is concerned with what he or she does at the expense of concern in what others say or do as well.

The benefits of proper self-disclosure/sharing can be summarized as follows:


\textit{Fellowship House}, and \textit{Serendipity} have risen to promote authentic self-disclosure among Christians. Is it appropriate to open up in a group of people as opposed to a private one-on-one relationship? The answer may be a matter of personal taste.... One caution is in order, though. Group sharing is healthy only when participation is voluntary. We must protect a person's right to remain silent even if it makes us feel uncomfortable" (Emory A. Griffin, \textit{Getting Together: A Guide for Good Groups}, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1982], p. 124).
1. It usually draws people together. "Personal sharing fosters attraction. People discover how similar they are.\textsuperscript{1} They realize they are "brothers under the skin."\textsuperscript{2}

2. Generally, personal sharing releases tension--people feel more relaxed.\textsuperscript{3}

3. People become better known by others.

4. It carries "the benefit of introspection"\textsuperscript{4}--through the experience people get to know themselves better.

Growth by Togetherness

The term "togetherness" implies both a sense of community--being a family--and a sense of commonalty--attraction by common needs. Alvin Zander says:

Birds of a feather flock together and create a more distinct entity when they do. People too form a better unit if they are alike, and an effective leader develops oneness within a set by encouraging likeness among members. To do this he (or she) recruits persons who will interact well because of similar purpose, background, training, experience, or temperament.\textsuperscript{5}

This sense of "togetherness" is a basic element in small groups. "Individuals come together and stay together because

\begin{itemize}
\item[2]Ibid.
\item[3]Ibid., p. 117.
\item[4]Ibid., p. 118.
\item[5]Zander, p. 3.
\end{itemize}
they experience the same strong motivational basis."¹ Generally speaking, new converts come into the church in small groups. Sometimes they form peer groups by attending the same baptismal class and by being baptized at the same time. But above anything else, they are bonded together by their mutual spiritual needs. Hence, the similar needs of new converts may serve to deepen a sense of togetherness which may be the basis for the formation of nurture groups.²

**Growth by Cohesion³**

Small groups could be a way to nurture the principle of unity. Unity among church members is one of the most important principles stressed in the Bible (John 17). Small-group language refers to this principle by the term "cohesion."

¹Mills, p. 66.

²The above point does not deny absence of dissimilarities. Dissimilarities in people are as real as their similarities--family background, religious background, education, age, etc. In spite of all these opposite factors, similarities may be exploited to bring people together in cooperative action. (Shepherd, pp. 1, 59-60; Mills, pp. 1-3).

³Togetherness and cohesion are very close but they are not necessarily identical. Togetherness may refer to group trust and group building; true cohesion, on the other hand, involves a deeper level of trust among group members. Cohesion is defined "as the sum of all the factors influencing members to stay in the group" (Johnson and Johnson, p. 233). This is why it has been used to illustrate the inner sense of unity which should be nurtured among church members which was emphasized by the Lord in John 17.
Cohesion is defined as the ability of a group to stick together, or "group loyalty." Cohesion is also defined as "the feeling of togetherness that members have towards each other and towards the group as a whole. It is shown by member's identification with the group." However, loyalty and self-identification with the small group is not a guarantee that new converts will develop the same sense of loyalty towards the church.

It should not be assumed that a cohesive group is always effective. Effectiveness is much more than simple togetherness. Effectiveness also means better average communication... The greater the communication, the greater the understanding, and ordinarily, the greater the accomplishment.

The small-group setting might be a place where new believers could start building these bonds of unity towards the rest of the church members.

Growth by Caring Listening

To be listened to is one of the greatest needs of all human beings. New converts are no exception. They became acquainted with the church for the first time, by some type of

1Bormann and Bormann, p. 10.
2Ibid., p. 331.
4Barlow, p. 62.
listening experience. It could have been by the radio, the TV, a series of evangelistic meetings, or listening to the still voice of the Spirit speaking to them through the literature of the church. This listening process must not stop after baptism. It should continue on a new level of communication—that of church-member or mother-child relationship. Such dialogue must be kept from declining. New converts need to listen closely to their adopted spiritual mother to learn her teachings better and to become more closely acquainted with the church family.

New believers need to be listened to as well. This is one of the best ways through which the church may demonstrate a caring concern for them.\(^1\)

The distinction between a robot and a man hinges upon sensitivity. Caring persons makes a man a man. The scarecrow in the fantasy *The Wizard of Oz* cries out for a heart, symbolizing the caring which is basically humanizing. He longs for that which would change the perpetual stupid grin on his face to the warm, sensitive visage of one who is able to enter deeply into the feelings of another.\(^2\)

The language of new converts is the language of babes in Christ. They may not have much to contribute, from the doctrinal point of view, many may feel too shy to speak, some fail to express themselves because they feel ignorant in comparison with the older members of the church, yet they must be heard because

\(^1\)Barlow, p. 60.

Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. . . . The friends that listen to us are the ones we move toward, and we want to sit in their radius as though it did us good, like ultraviolet rays. . . . When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. . . . It makes people happy when they are listened to.¹

While talking is one way of sharing, listening is a way of caring. The small-group experience could introduce new believers into a caring "listening fellowship" which might prove to be redemptive for many of them.² Robert A. Edgar points out that in small-group relationships, new converts could be more easily "introduced to the beginning of Christian love."³ Moreover, active group listening could prove to be a bridge to deepen both communication and relationship between new converts and the church.⁴ In nurture cells, new converts should not merely play the role of silent listeners. Meeting with peer members who not only share common needs but also have, more or less, a common level of knowledge and understanding may be an easy way for them to interact with one another.

Summary of small group values. The positive elements of small groups to integrate new people into the church are so closely interrelated that they seem to overlap. A better way to

¹Barlow, p. 61.
³Ibid., 42:15.
⁴Wegmeyer, p. 30.
appreciate these values is approaching them from an opposite side in the light of new converts' basic sociological needs. Thus, new believers cannot grow aloof, they need fellowship; they cannot grow alone, they need to build up lasting relationships; they cannot grow in silence, they need to communicate; they cannot grow ignored, they need to listen and to be listened to; they cannot grow in disharmony, they need to learn keep unity; and, as birds of a feather flock together, they need a peer group. Could the strategy of small groups be a supportive means to attain these sociological needs of new converts? Only years of practice would prove it. Now, we consider the risks involved in the strategy.

**Small Group Dangers**

It would be a mistake to work with small groups with a biased mind—looking only to the positive side of the approach. Good as small groups may be, it should be remembered that "any important truth can be taken to an extreme and perverted into error."\(^1\) Small groups have already "come under severe attack, and the experiences of groups led by irresponsible, incompetent 'leaders' have made many of those attacks justified."\(^2\) The interest in group work is not without its dangers. The group situation contains forces which can be harmful as well as helpful

\(^1\)Hanks and Shell, p. 122.

to the individual, and an unfocused group can be doubly hazardous. Therefore, perspective group leaders should be wise to shun the following group dangers.

**General Dangers**

Difficulties in a small-group program can be traced to three items. First, the groups are begun with little or no preparation or education. Second, everyone is expected to participate. Third, groups are assigned from a list instead of allowing individuals to voluntarily group themselves around goals. To be effective a small-group strategy must provide adequate orientation for people before they move into groups, and must keep the group mission-centered and voluntary.

**Specific Dangers**

Leaders with poor or total lack of training.

The most flagrant misuse of groups are ill-prepared group leaders who apparently do not recognize that accepting responsibility for a group implies an ethical commitment to members to ensure that they experience positive growth, and that they find caring relationship, that they can place trust in leadership, that their personal privacy will not be invaded... 

---


A group leader should beware of "easy answers" because working with small groups may be "quite complex."¹ "Anyone embarking on a group work of any kind must start from some particular viewpoint and must have hypothesis about group behavior, a framework, and a vocabulary."² In other words, to be an effective group leader a person should seek instruction and training.

**Overemphasis on methods and procedures.** A leader may fall into a subtle temptation when working with growth cells--relying too much "on a certain method, or perhaps a sequence of instructions" at the expense of a "dynamic relationship with Christ" in his life.³

When too much emphasis is placed on the process, procedures may be employed indiscriminately, without adequate reference either to their appropriateness for the occasion or to their suitability for the content being considered. They may, in fact, become ends in themselves, and a person may almost feel compelled to use certain methods, more because they are 'fashionable' than because they accomplish desired goals. Even informality in leadership may become an end in itself. (And an artificial informality is more amusing than helpful!)⁴

---

¹ Wegmeyer, p. 84.

² Kahn and Thompson, p. 53.

³ Hanks and Shell, p. 122.

In other words, overemphasis in methods and procedures may carry the leader into the danger of too much technicality, thus unfocusing the group from person-centered and Christ-centered to procedure-centered.

Excessive optimism. "The small group process is not some kind of magic cure all."\(^1\) Group leaders should avoid falling into "a blindness to weakness" or to be biased--looking to the spiritual development of group members through "rose-colored glasses."\(^2\) "As you see disciples develop and realize how far they have come, and watch their growing effectiveness for Christ, it is easy to become blind to their weaknesses."\(^3\)

Being optimistic is fundamental for the success of any task, but optimism needs to be mingled with a measure of realism as well.

It is dangerous to assume that group study will automatically produce changed persons or, even, that it is the only approach to people. Unless people really study individually as well, they may have nothing to contribute after a while.\(^4\)

A group leader must not assume that every person in a small group will be benefited. "Experience has shown that some


\(^3\) Eims, p. 106.

people profit more from growth groups than others and some probably should not join at all."¹ Clinebell's assertion may be partially applied to growth cells. These groups should be a help and not a hindrance to new converts' spiritual development. No one should be compelled to become a member of the group, and no one should be left unattended if he or she stops attending the meeting for some reason.

Rigidity. "The mistake of thinking that because something worked in one situation it can be immediately transferred to another situation, must be rejected like the plague."² Since believers are different, no one method is successful for them all.³ This type of rigidity could be called blind generalization—a syndrome which may hinder people from differentiating (1) persons as individuals and (2) changing situations when applying a strategy of work.

Holding meetings mechanically. Some small-group meetings "are held for no good reason. Perhaps originally the meeting may have served a function, but as time goes by, the organization changes and the meeting loses its purpose. The meeting is held out of habit."⁴ Such situation would kill a

¹Clinebell, p. 26.
³Moore, p. 110.
⁴Bormann and Borman, p. 7.
nurture group, and it is doubtful that group members would get any nourishment from it.

**Becoming only a social group.** "After meetings have been held for several months, with members coming to enjoy each others' company more," people fall easily "into the pattern of social groups."¹ "The fellowship that develops is rewarding and fresh in its authenticity and group members naturally desire to be together for some other activity."² This is not altogether wrong for the social dimension of the small group should not be ignored,³ but extremes in socializing should be avoided.

An occasional social activity helps members to learn more about each other in a different context, as well as binding them in that sharing of a common experience. However, allowing such social activities to take the place of a group meeting, or turning the social events into encounter sessions, violates the psychological contract of the group.⁴

**Lack of a sense of mission.** "Groups can become exclusive instead of inclusive--so centered on Bible study or prayer or sharing that they make no attempt to attract outsiders."⁵

¹Casteel, *The Creative Role*, p. 186.
²Brown and Deitz, p. 77.
³Bormann and Bormann, p. 7.
⁴Brown and Deitz, p. 77.
⁵Sahlin, p. 10. The terms "exclusive" and "inclusive" are used by Sahlin with the meanings of "self-centeredness" and "outreach," respectively. Schaller's use of these terms is different. He calls exclusionary barriers or preventive forces those which keep people from joining the church. On the other
The ultimate purpose of small groups is not to end up turned in on themselves, but to be engaged with God in mission. If small groups just meet to be meeting and enjoying the fellowship of a warm intimate community alone, the small group will continue to turn more and more inward. . . . 'The journey to turn inward . . . must come to grips with the new dimension of the journey outward' if there is to be real power and endurance to small groups in the church. Otherwise, they become just another fad, which the church has tasted and once gotten all the juice out of, like chewing gums, is discarded in the endless search for the next fad, and so on.1

A sense of mission should be sown in new converts' hearts for every program held in the church is to advance its mission on earth.2 "Fringe groups that do not serve Christ's purpose should be left to die."3 In the work of disciple-building, mission becomes one way by which new believers "can engage in experimental learning."4 Moreover, "the only way to grow in grace is to be interestedly doing the very work Christ has enjoined upon us to do. . . . Christians who are constantly growing hand, inclusion for him are those positive factors which attract people to the church (Schaller, pp. 13-20, 51-68, 75-77).

1Clemons and Hester, p. 123.

2Ellen G. White adds, "When souls are converted, set them to work at once. . . . It is by meeting opposing influences that we become confirmed in the faith" (Evangelism, pp. 355-57).


in earnest, in zeal, in fervor, in love, such Christians never backslide."¹

**Group conflicts.**

Groups can become scenes for conflict rather than concerted action--so heterogeneous that goals cannot be agreed upon or even approached. The promise held out by the small group idea has soured in the mind of many because of these problems.²

Expecting no conflict in a nurture group just because it is a religious unit would be to ignore the realities of human differences.³

A small group does not become successful by ignoring differences and demanding that members love one another and spend much time together (as proponents of 'togetherness' movement seem to advocate) but rather by expressing differences, by finding areas within agreement can be reached, and by learning to live with disagreement.⁴

Conflict should be expected sooner or later when people relate.⁵ They "think differently and have different needs and


²Sahlin, p. 10.

³We are always concerned in the church when there seems to be too much apathy or discord and turbulence. This is a problem in all groups, but it seems to be magnified in the church (Wegmeyer, pp. 82-83).

⁴Shepherd, p. 66.

⁵Johnson and Johnson, p. 139.
wants. These differences are the basis from which disagreements . . . often spring."¹ Conflicts and disagreements may arise among new believers in nurture cells because it is hard "to remove long-cherished errors from the minds of men, which have been taught from childhood."² However, "Conflict and disagreements themselves are not necessarily harmful."³ Properly managed, group conflict does not have to be a destructive experience but can be constructive. "It is the failure to handle conflict in constructive ways that causes problems."⁴

Misusing small groups to compel conformity. A small group may become an intensive effort in the form of persuasion to compel conformity.⁵ Genuine spiritual growth and obedience cannot be forced. New converts should be led to obey Christ and practice Bible principles on the basis of love for him. A conscientious Christian leading a growth cell must avoid all kinds

¹Sasse, p. 189.
²E. G. White, Evangelism, p. 341.
³Sasse, p. 189.
⁴Ibid. See also Johnson and Johnson, p. 140.
of compulsion and adopt the strategy of "understanding, acceptance, and gentle challenge."

**Misuse and/or improper conduction of sharing.** A negative aspect concerning sharing is that it may be misused. While "no discussion of content would be complete without a focus on emotions, enforced sharing is unethical." People do not have to share all they feel or all they have lived. "Research findings confirm that overdisclosure can dampen attraction. It can be shocking and tedious," and even hurting. People are hurt by other's candor. The term 'brutal honesty' has come to describe the bludgeoning technique of telling others things for their own good." "The question of whether to reveal personal history, private thoughts and hidden emotions is not either/or. Rather it's one of appropriateness. There should be openness and drawbacks." Therefore, keep sharing within the following boundaries:

---


2Griffin, pp. 124, 130.

3Ibid., p. 119.

4Ibid., p. 120.

5Ibid., p. 121.
1. Keep group focus--growth cells are not "encounter groups"\(^1\) or groups especially designed to provide emotional support. Therefore, avoid diagnostic probing with emotions.

2. Allow free personal sharing while avoiding overdisclosure and the misuse of feelings--feelings must not cast out reason or be the basis for commitment.

3. Avoid extremism--decide what is proper to be shared and what should not.\(^2\)

4. Since groups, like individuals, grow by stages, do not encourage emotional sharing before a level of trust has been developed by time and personal history-giving. Moreover, do

\(^1\)Someone might ask, "Isn't every group an encounter group?" Yes, because "there is no person without an encounter with other persons. Persons can grow only in the communion of personal encounter" (Theodore O. Wedel, "Group Dynamics and the Church," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 9 (1955): 204-5). However, the issue here is not "encounter." It is well known that unless there is some kind of encounter both physically and emotionally, people remain as individual cells. The issue here is the purpose of encounter. It should be kept in mind that every small group receives its peculiar identification (name) according to the purpose of member's encounter--getting information, emotional support, growth of some kind, and so forth. Nurture groups for new converts should not be encounter groups in the sense of the encounter group movement where many people have experienced breakdowns because of overdisclosure (Griffin, p. 124).

\(^2\)Keep present both the depth and the breadth of sharing. "Depth refers to the amount of risk involved in sharing." Too much can be embarrassing. "Breath has to do with the range of topics discussed. It's possible to go very deep in one area but barely touch the surface in another" (Griffin, pp. 128-29).
not enforce but encourage spontaneous sharing as much as possible.

**Groupism versus individualism.** Another danger "may develop when there is too much emphasis on the importance of the group. A part of the current trend is a swing away from an overemphasis on individualism."¹ Consequently, both the social and the individual aspects of man should be kept in proper perspective. Man is a social being, but he is also an individual. As such he must experience a personal, private growth, for which no group can be a substitute. Nurture groups for new converts would be a failure if this individualistic dimension of man is overlooked. In the final analysis, one of the main goals of nurture cells should be to stimulate new converts' personal growth and help them stand on their own spiritual feet.

**Summary**

Since the spiritual commonality and experience of new converts cluster them together almost naturally, the approach of small groups seems appropriate to facilitate their integration into the church. Besides spiritual nurture, this approach could help them grow in fellowship, interpersonal relationships, sharing communication, caring by listening and being listened to, and unity. These positive elements of the approach could hardly be fostered unless group leaders face them with proper training. Training may help them to avoid the possible extremes and

dangers—excessive optimism regarding the approach; a rigidity which does not allow for necessary changes; too much emphasis on group technical procedures; turning the group meeting into a social activity; holding group meetings routinely; becoming exclusively a self-nurtured group without a sense of mission; being unprepared to face group conflicts; forcing the group into conformity of some kind; and emphasizing group work at the expense of neglecting people as individuals as well.

Having discussed these general views concerning the approach of small groups to establish new converts in their faith, the next chapter deals, more specifically, with the program of growth cells and how it can be implemented.
PART TWO

MANUAL OF DISCIPLE-BUILDING
THROUGH GROUP MINISTRY
CHAPTER IV

LEADERSHIP AND CURRICULUM

OF GROWTH CELLS

The main burden of this chapter is to explain how to begin and lead a growth cell and how to develop its curriculum.

Growth Cell Focus

The most important thing is not the name of a small group but the "focus of the group."1 Considering together the material, and the activities to be carried on in a growth cell, its focus is on spiritual sharing and training by means of a group model that is both a study group and a relational group. Keeping these two ingredients in proper balance may give growth cells a particular distinctiveness. From the standpoint of training in knowledge, Leslie says that "sharing takes place best within a commitment that is based on serious study. A fellowship of sharing that is devoid of any responsible study is a futility." He adds: "The most natural way to introduce the note of sharing into small groups is through study."2 Although "learning should be

1Clemons and Hester, p. 89.

accepted as the primary purpose of the group," it "should be approached as a cooperative enterprise."¹ From the viewpoint of personal sharing, on the other hand, Ellen White says, "It is not preaching alone that must be done. . . . More time should be devoted to patiently educating, giving the hearers opportunity to express themselves."²

Growth cells are also intended to be one answer to the cry of many new believers that the church does not have anything especially designed for them. In his study concerning the factors of backsliding from the Adventist Church in Michigan, Louis Nielsen found that³

the most frequent statement regarding lack of spiritual development was that the church did not do much for them after they were baptized. They felt that the churches often forgot that a newborn Christian needs continued spiritual food and loving care to develop and grow up into Christ.⁴

Growth cells could be one way to help new converts, in general and also a type of "incubator facility" in places where "undue

¹Johnson and Johnson, p. 280.

²E. G. White, Evangelism, p. 338.

³Nielsen's finding cannot be taken as a general rule for the church as a whole, but it demonstrates a need which may be felt in some fields, and Puerto Rico seems to reflect some similar problems.

⁴Nielsen, p. 192.
haste in baptism" has produced "church babies prematurely born."¹

Growth Cell Leadership

A Challenge for Leaders

Working with new converts demands time and dedication. Leaders should remember that "the task of building disciples . . . is demanding and hard to publicize and sell. People are more impressed with statistics on evangelism than with those on disciple-building."² Like other lay activities of the church, disciple-building is an unpaid task. These may be some reasons why so few "are willing to give that parental care which keep the new convert from becoming a spiritual orphan."³ However, persons willing to devote themselves to this task will be rewarded by the love and respect of those babes in Christ, and by seeing many of them growing spiritually and becoming local church leaders.

Leadership Qualifications

It should not be assumed that growth cells should be led particularly by ministers. Because of their training, ministers may be better equipped to lead growth cells than the majority of men and women of the church. Yet, ministers are but a handful


²Wilson, p. 218.

³Moore, p. 23.
of people in comparison to the thousands of lay members. Scores of men and women in the congregation, when properly instructed, could become excellent disciple-builders for Christ. Besides, ministers are already burdened with many church duties. The invasion of another program demanding their time would be fatal to the program and possibly to the ministers. In other words, the disciple-building plan should not depend exclusively on the ministry for its success.

Lay people can learn this program as well as anyone else for it is not designed exclusively for "professional Christians." The world is full of ordinary people who can do fantastic things! All can learn with self-discipline and proper training. Therefore, the key, at least for the partial success of growth cells, seems to lie in the old counsel of Jethro to Moses: "Choose able men from the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe; and place such men over the people as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and tens" (Exod 18:21). This counsel contains both the strategy of leaders over small groups and some qualifications for such leaders.

---

1 Ministers should play the role of disciple-builder trainers rather than carrying out the program solely by themselves.


Trustworthiness, fear of God, and hate of bribe could still be included among the qualities for leaders of growth cells. Thirteen additional qualifications for growth-cell leaders are:

1. **Personal spiritual growth and maturity.** How could a disciple-builder become a means to stimulate spiritual growth in new converts if he is not growing spiritually himself? Hence, this must be the first qualification of a person undertaking the leadership task.

2. **An understanding of human nature.** "An understanding of human nature, as well as a knowledge of the gospel, is a prerequisite of leadership. Any attempt to help others must be done within some frame of reference regarding the nature of man."\(^1\)

3. **A heart for people and ability to relate to them.** "The leader should have a love for people that is expressed in patience, tolerance, courteous listening, and genuine concern."\(^2\) Ability to relate to people also includes a non-passive warmth. This is a "personal concern that does not require the development of dependency."\(^3\)

4. **A good listener.** "One of the greatest faults of most untrained leaders is that they talk too much."\(^4\)

---


\(^2\)Barlow, p. 107.

\(^3\)Leslie, *Sharing Groups*, p. 182.

\(^4\)Barlow, p. 106.
discussion does not mean that a leader has to be talking all the time. Stimulating others to talk and listening attentively to what they say may give the leader a better understanding of persons in the group.

5. Emotional maturity. The leader does not have to feel that he is a "cure all" person. He should not become discouraged because of his lack of answers for many of people's questions or because he fails to get expected results. He is there to guide the group "to find its own answers. He needs to be able to leave matters unfinished, to allow discussion to be open-ended, to see questions raised without finding answers for them" and never become discouraged or disgusted about these situations.¹

6. Empathy. The ability to "feel with" people, to put oneself in their shoes,² is an important qualification for the leader both in order to understand people and to meet any embarrassing situation in group discussion.

7. Growing insight. The leader must continue to grow in insight to keep from becoming stereotyped or bound by fixed processes of work.

8. Confidentiality. A disciple-builder should not share the personal problems and shortcomings of new believers with any one. This would destroy their confidence in him and hinder their progress within the setting of the group.

¹Leslie, Sharing Groups, p. 183.

9. **Flexibility.** The ability to adjust to circumstances is a desirable quality for any leader.

10. **Ability to motivate.** Motivation seems to be close to the heart of the success of any activity in behalf of people. Therefore, in order to be a good motivator, "the leader must be at least as strongly desirous of attaining the group's goals as any other member, and more than most."\(^1\)

11. **Vision.** The leader should view individuals in the group from the standpoint of their potential for change. "He must accept each person's uniqueness and seek to establish an atmosphere of acceptance within the group."\(^2\) Moreover, his vision of his own human nature and the human nature of others should lead him to deal with each person in a different manner.

12. **Enthusiasm.** Enthusiasm is one sign which generally indicates that a person is committed to his task.

13. **Loyalty.** The group leader should be a model of loyalty towards the church and its doctrine. It seems clear that no church, including Adventism, would run into the risk of having its new believers ill-educated by a person unloyal to its beliefs.\(^3\)

---

\(^1\)Reeves, p. 184.


\(^3\)Growth cells ought to operate under the supervision of the local pastor and in harmony with the standards of the *Church Manual.*
Leadership Tasks

The group leader is responsible for many facets of development in the members of his group. Four special tasks are upper most.

1. Being a facilitator or enabler. He facilitates a group atmosphere of love, concern, and acceptance; he helps develop an honest, authentic fellowship in the group; he "facilitates development of group identity through significant relating and sharing;" and he helps the group to sustain both an intellectual and feeling exchange around a subject.

2. The leader establishes a model of behavior by his participation, acceptance of criticism, non-evaluative comments, willingness to deviate from pre-planned procedures, ability to listen with understanding, ability to capture and reflect feelings, by clarifying comment, and by the method of expressing his own feelings. "In the hands of an adequately trained leader, participants need not fear a destructive experience but can anticipate growth."

---


2Clinebell, p. 37.

3Brown and Deitz, p. 78.


5Bates and Johnson, p. 9.
3. The leader should guide the group in appreciating its dependence on the church as Christ's representative agency on earth for the nurture of his followers. He should also provide "a religious quality which leads the members to an awareness of Christian values in the definition of group goals and in the interaction of persons in the group." Christ should be kept in the center of the group meeting.

Leadership Dangers

While the special tasks of the group-cell represent the positive aspects of leadership, the leader must also try to avoid the negative aspects. Three dangers should be eschewed:

1. Shun a possessive attitude regarding the group cell. He should not refer to its members as "his group." "The group does not 'belong' to the leader; it 'belongs' to all the members." "This non-scriptural possessive attitude can stunt the growth of the group." Besides, this attitude could provoke some difficulties with the other members of the church.

2. Avoid overprotecting the new converts. Parental care for them could turn into paternalism, and new converts are not to be forever dependent on the leader. Therefore, help people to

---


2Hestenes, Using the Bible, p. 42.

3Eims, p. 105.
be interdependent in the group meeting, and Christ-dependent inside and outside the group.

3. Avoid the danger of stagnation—going into the cycle of doing the same thing routinely without any change. This can kill any program in the bud. To avoid this danger, a group leader must avoid losing the art of being creative—he must always be looking for new material and ideas, and studying to get fresh thoughts to share with the group.

**Growth Cell Membership**

Baptismal groups are a mixture of people of different ages, different levels of education, and different backgrounds. That is, it may be preferable to keep them all mingled—adolescents with adult and young people born in the church with newcomers. In this way they can listen to the experiences and the struggles of one another and develop human insights from each other. Besides, listening to each other's stories of conversion could give all mutual spiritual strength.

However, this should not be taken as a rule. A large group of new converts could be sorted out in small age groups of different interests, and a group of newly baptized youngsters from the church school might require a separate growth group.

**Growth Cell Size**

The size of a growth cell is always subject to variations. As a rule, the larger the group, the more difficult it is to achieve interaction. People tend to participate less in a larger group. Thus, if a group of new converts is very large, it should be
divided into several smaller groups. Based on the negative factors against large groups, this study suggests growth cells of no more than twelve persons.¹

**Growth Cell Duration**

Three factors are related to the time that a growth cell should last:

1. **Time spent preparing converts for baptism.** The shorter the time spent in preparation for baptism, the longer should be the duration of a growth cell. Therefore, this study suggests a variable span between six months and one year.²

2. **Regularity of baptisms.** In a place like Puerto Rico where baptisms are held very often, growth groups could not go on for a long period because it would make too much work for the individual who works as the leader. However, if other persons are willing to help, several cells can be organized and function throughout the year.

3. **Phases of instruction.** Some church leaders suggest there ought to be several phases of training besides doctrinal

¹When only one person is baptized, (1) establish a growth cell with him or her and several other members of the church or (2) gather together new believers from nearby Adventist churches.

²Like the fruit in a tree, some people grow and mature faster than others. e. g., it may not be necessary to hold a lengthy growth cell training for those who are born Adventists. On the other hand, while one year may be enough for some converts, others may need a longer period of time. If one year is taken, the program could culminate with the celebration of a spiritual "birth" anniversary.
instruction in order to carry out a thorough job on behalf of new converts.\(^1\) Commenting on this need Wilson says:

> After doing basic follow-up with a new Christian, most Christian workers don't know what else to do! Rather than leave him a spiritual baby, they teach him how to eat and walk and then leave him a spiritual toddler. While follow-up to evangelism needs to be encouraged, this inadequate concept of disciple-building must be corrected.\(^2\)

Wilson also realizes that "a disciple-building program can extend indefinitely over many years," and "if it is carried on by one teacher, dependence can be very greatly prolonged."\(^3\)

This study suggests a program of three or four stages of instruction: (1) doctrinal and topical nurture,\(^4\) (2) training in missionary work, (3) training in leadership in the local church, and (4) a series of meetings dealing with the history of the Adventist church. A program covering all this work can take at least one year or longer.

**Growth Cell's First Meeting**

The first meeting of the growth cell is a key one. It is the meeting where the leader must get the interest of new converts in the program. Three purposes of this meeting are: (1) to

---

\(^1\)See Caslow, pp. 25-27, 31, 37; Rudy, p. 30.

\(^2\)Wilson, p. 59.

\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Topical nurture deals with care, choice, criticism, feelings, relationships, and the like.
introduce the plan of work, (2) to get acquainted with one another by personal sharing, and (3) to discuss the group norms on which the cell will operate.

**Getting Acquainted**

"The first error of many small groups is to assume that a group can go immediately to the study of a book, or the accomplishment of a task without doing the necessary work of building group relationships." It should be kept in mind that, generally, when a discussion group meets for the first time, people "feel ill at ease. They do not know what to say or how to begin." The first meeting may be tense and cold and need to be warmed up. The ice should be broken by the leader sharing a

---


2Clemons and Hester, p. 86.

3Bormann and Bormann, p. 35.

4"Every group, like every individual, has a unique life history and identity." It grows little by little through several stages of development. Growth cells should be expected to pass through some of these stages if not all. The most important thing, however, is not merely knowing these stages of group life but being able to facilitate growth at every stage--coping with each stage adequately equipped to meet the needs of new converts. These stages can be summarized as follows: (1) Initial anxiety, testing, and attempts at connecting. To reduce their anxieties about new relationships, some members usually push the leader to take over and 'run' the group. If the facilitator falls into this trap, the group will stay leader-dependent and never become a growth group. This danger is better realized if we

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
bit history-giving about himself and asking people to do the same—their names or how do they prefer to be called, their place of birth, family relationships, childhood dreams, school experience, significant people, and so forth.¹

Introducing the Plan

Once a building relationship has been built between group members, the leader explains the purpose and general objectives of growth cells. Then, using two or three passages of Scripture related to continuous spiritual growth, he should involve new converts in a short group discussion with the purpose of instilling in them the idea that "no Christian should be keep in mind that at this early stage the task of the leader is harder because he must introduce his plans, procedures, objectives, and stimulate the skill of group interaction. (2) The honeymoon. The dominant feeling at this stage is enjoyment of group camaraderie. (3) Frustration and questioning. In this stage there may be a spirit of group depression, flatness, and disillusion. The struggle, conflict, and questioning are the narrow gate through which groups must go to achieve genuine intimacy and become an environment for growth. (4) Effective growth work. Changes in individuals and in relationships begin to occur during stage 4; they flourish in stage 5. Members work to help one another toward growth goals. (6) Closing. Terminating a group should be a gradual growth-productive process. A group which has achieved a sense of caring and community approaches termination with grief feelings. Coping with these feelings in the group produces growth in the ability to live constructively with the series of losses which is an inescapable part of life" (Clinebell, pp. 31-34).

¹The leader should explain to the group what sharing is and set a model by sharing facts concerning his/her life. See sample exercises in appendix C.
content to remain in the 'first principles' or ABC's of Christian knowledge and experience. He should go on unto perfection, completeness, or adulthood in Christ"¹ (Heb 6:1; Eph 4:13-15).

**Group Norms**

A small group cannot get too far without group norms.² "Fellowship for the sake of fellowship becomes tiresome; and relationship without good discipline . . . becomes a chaos."³ Group norms are important "to build and maintain cohesion."⁴ In the setting of a growth cell, group discussion without group norms might become shallow--members could fail to deal in depth with spiritual issues and their application in practical life. Hence, the lack of group norms could result in superficial

¹Hendrix and Householder, p. 107. For useful material for one of the first meetings of growth cells, see also Robert Boyd, *First Words to Young Christians* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Assn., 1905), pp. 11, 13, 25.

²Group norms are the "code of operation adopted by a group" (Gordon L. Lippit and Edith Seashore, *The Leader and Group Effectiveness* [New York: Assn. Press, 1962], p. 35). They establish "what is proper and acceptable behavior; which subjects may be discussed; which are taboo; and how openly members may express their feelings" (Malcolm S. Knowles and Hulda Knowles, *Introduction to Group Dynamics* [New York: Assn. Press, 1959], p. 46). Group norms should be few--strictly those that are necessary, and should not be introduced as a list of do's and dont's. Moreover, they should be discussed with and adopted by consensus in the group (Clinebell, p. 30).

³Howe, p. 83.

⁴Johnson and Johnson, p. 248.
growth.¹ Five general guidelines concerning group norms in growth cells are: (1) Make a clear statement regarding the purpose of the group or why it exists; (2) indicate the time factor--agree on the day and time to begin and finish the group meeting, as well as the general time span during which meetings will be held; (3) specify at the outset that the group should be bound by confidentiality--whatever is said in the group remains there, especially if it has to do with a member's private concern; (4) found group relationships on the basis of mutual respect; and (5) avoid domination of any one person in the group discussion--everyone should have an equal opportunity to speak.²

Study Exercises

Study exercises are suggestions and material handed out to people to read or reflect upon outside group meetings. They should be plain, clear, easy, and interesting enough so that

¹Some group experts approach group norms as "commitments--the disciplines which the group is willing to adopt in order to accomplish its purpose" (Kilcher, appendix 3; Gestenes, Using the Bible in Groups, pp. 20-23, 28-29).

²Johnson and Johnson, pp. 248-49. Sometimes group contracts are disregarded for it is felt that they are a "symbol of leader-dominance" (Clinebell, p. 30). A group contract does not give the leader any right to control people. It is only a means to facilitate working with them. If misused, a contract is worthless and a group can do very well without it. This study leaves group-leaders free to use or not to use a group covenant. The above suggestions are guidelines for those who prefer to use one. See ideas in Hestenes, Using the Bible in Groups, pp. 20-23, 28-29.
converts can do them for fun. Do not burden new believers with difficult study tasks which may discourage them.¹

Prayer Time

Different ways of praying can be suggested for every group meeting both at the beginning and at the end of it. Some are conversational prayer, chain prayer, group prayers, etc.

Growth Cell Curriculum

In order to develop a convenient curriculum for new believers in growth cells, the leader should define their needs and their interests.

Curriculum Needs

While many people in the church agree that something should be done to establish new believers, too often they are "unclear as to what needs to be done."² This may be due, in part, to the lack of a clear plan to be followed to work with those

¹See appendix C. Ideas to vary exercises: (1) Ask converts to ponder upon a portion of Scripture and answer a sharing questionnaire; (2) give the title of a subject without any scriptural reference; ask people to find in the Bible one or two passages directly related to that subject; (3) give converts an article and some questions to be answered after reading it; (4) tailor home exercises according to subjects--for example, a subject on forgiveness serves to ask people to make a self-analysis on this subject; and (5) hand out a case study dealing with a problem (fashion it from Biblical material, an every day situation, or a combination of both); ask group members to bring solutions to the problem at hand.

²Hanks and Shell, p. 114.
persons. To avoid this uncertainty, this study suggests the use of a curriculum as a guideline to conduct the program. To prepare such a curriculum, the new converts should have the opportunity to express their needs publicly, by writing, or by listing their general needs and asking people to check the ones they feel. For example, ten universal needs of new converts are:

1. **Adaptation to church environment.** Some call this period of transition⁴ "the gap between joining and belonging"—the time a new member unites with the church until the time he gains a sense of belonging and develops loyalty toward his new fellowship.²

2. **Strengthening commitment.** "It is common for a new Christian to experience doubt regarding the validity of his decision for Christ."³ They should be strengthened with the

---

¹Finley identifies four critical periods new converts go through, in general, during the first two years after baptism. The first is "the crisis of discouragement--when an individual fails to live up to the high standards that he has been espoused, immediately previous to his baptism." The second is "the crisis of integration--when the individual fails to replace the old friends in his life with new ones." The third is "the crisis of life style--when the person simply fails to integrate his own life style with the value system of Scripture and the Seventh-day Adventist Church." The fourth is "the crisis of leadership--as the member finds his place in the leadership structure...he comes to recognize that not all the church members are 'saints'. The halo that has surrounded all things connected with the church becomes tarnished" (Finley, pp. 8-9).

²Caslow, p. 29.

³Hanks and Shell, p. 115.
assurance "that they have truly been born again and that they enjoy acceptance from Christ."¹

3. **Encouragement.** Very often new converts face problems at home, especially if no other relative belongs to the church. At this point they need the support of their spiritual family, otherwise persecution may be too much for them to stand against and cause them to give up their faith.

4. **Church fellowship.** New believers need to know they are "accepted and loved" by the longer established church members.²

5. **Development of devotional habits.** New converts need to be taught to feed themselves from Scripture. Very often they are people whose common expression is "I don't know" or "I didn't know." Therefore, "they need to develop a desire for consistency,"³ especially in their devotional life.

6. **Further understanding of doctrines.** Believers who have been prematurely baptized may have some doctrinal gaps. "The truth is new and startling, and people need to have the same course presented the second time, to get the points distinct and the ideas fixed in the mind."⁴

¹Eims, p. 62.
²Gardner, p. 66.
³Eims, p. 62.
7. **Training to be witnesses for Christ.** "Everyone who receives Christ is to be trained to act some part in the great work to be accomplished in our world."\(^1\)

8. **Development in local church leadership.** New believers need to realize that they too have a role to play in the local church.\(^2\) They need to discover what their spiritual gifts are and how to develop them for the spiritual benefit of their fellow brethren.

9. **Church vision.** New converts need to know the history of the SDA Church and its role in earth's history. Instilling church vision through the history of the movement may motivate loyalty toward it.

10. **Development of Christian character.** Some converts strive to adjust their temperament to the beliefs and standards of the new system. E. G. White says that "their sinful traits of character that have not been controlled, strive for the mastery,

\(^1\)White, *Evangelism*, p. 367.

\(^2\)In spite of their need of getting involved in the activities of the church, very often new converts are relegated to almost total inactivity. Granted, they may lack experience, but they should be trained and given opportunities to gain it.
and too frequently obtain it."¹ They need to understand that the development of the Christian character is a life-long task.²

Curriculum Goals

The goals below are tentative and purposely related to the needs of new converts presented above.³

1. Goals for nurture groups, in general, are: (a) to provide a setting for the spiritual growth of new believers and (b) to help them come into deeper personal relationships with church membership.


²When new converts are brought into the church on the basis of truth, they frequently come with high ideals and great expectations. They have found a church which has the truth, and they expect the members to live accordingly. When they discover that the church is people, many of whom are not too perfect at that, they become perplexed and find it difficult to make lasting friendship (Nielsen, p. 183).

³Goals should be: (1) Precise and clear; (2) relevant to people; (3) purposeful--so meaningful that people will make efforts to achieve them; (4) realistic and attainable; (5) specific and objective--they should point out the values to be accepted, strengthened, and acted out; (6) flexible--no one should be "afraid to change goals which are too difficult to reach"; (7) able to foster the change of the whole person including his feelings, attitudes, ideas, and behavior; (8) simple in wording (Johnson and Johnson, p. 3.)
2. Goals to strengthen commitment are needed to strengthen new believers in "the validity of their decision for Christ."\(^1\)

3. Goals on Bible understanding aim at: (a) Equipping new believers with further understanding of the Word of God, (b) furnishing new believers with some basic tools to interpret the Bible in their private study, and (c) assisting new believers in learning to study the Bible in ways that would help them to apply it to their own personal needs and relationships—"To see truth assimilated into the life, not to fill the head with facts."\(^2\)

4. Doctrinal goals are designed (a) to review with new converts those doctrines which they feel need of further understanding, and (b) to lead new converts to commitment regarding aspects of doctrines and church duties in which they may have been poorly instructed prior to baptism.\(^3\)

5. Devotional goals help new believers develop consistency in their devotional lives.

6. Fellowship goals are designed (a) to help new believers become integrated into the life of the local church, (b) to guide new converts into the realization of the importance of church attendance, (c) to assist new converts in their attempt to

\(^1\)Hanks and Shell, p. 115.

\(^2\)Eims, p. 148.

\(^3\)Sometimes new believers hold back from practicing some duties arguing that they were not taught to do so before baptism.
adapt themselves to the life-style of the SDA Church,¹ (d) to build up interpersonal trust between new converts and the older church members, and (e) to help new converts grow in awareness and knowledge of each other in the small group.

7. Mission goals are designed (a) to train new believers to share their faith with others, (b) to help new converts realize that they have a role to fulfill in the leadership of the local church, (c) to assist new converts in understanding that the Adventist Church is more than a local congregation--that it is a worldwide movement with a mission they should commit themselves to support financially, and (d) to help new converts cope with house-to-house missionary workers of other denominations.²

8. Christian home goals try (a) to help new converts cope with non-Adventist relatives and (b) to instruct new converts in the standards for Adventist homes.

¹Adventism is a subculture of its own. The life-style of a genuine SDA differs considerably from that of non-Adventists, regardless of nationality, race, or culture. It is possible that some new converts do not fully understand the extent of their commitment, nor the changes which must take place before their baptism. Therefore, if they do not receive an abundance of loving help from the church, they will soon become discouraged and drift away (Nielsen, p. 173).

²Having an undeveloped capacity to perceive doctrinal discrepancies, some new converts may be easy target for people entangling them in doctrinal controversies. Therefore, they need to be oriented to deal with this kind of problem.
9. Norm-goal\(^1\) on the Christian life is an attempt to help new converts realize the cost of discipleship from the standpoint of faithfulness to every aspect of the Christian life—including Christian temperance and healthful living.\(^2\)

**Curriculum Subjects**

The general content of the plan of work with new converts should include: (1) A general statement of the purpose of the program; (2) a list of the needs of group members; (3) a list of personal spiritual goals of people in the group; (4) a schedule of the subjects for discussion; (5) group exercises; (6) a list of material to be used—books, Bibles, articles, and other; and (7) the worksheets.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Norms have to do with everyday practices—behavior, dress, language, habits, etc. Very often the success of a group is measured by the positive changes made by its members (Barlow, p. 76; Clinebell, p. 110; Douglas, p. 3). "The significance is not that they learn something but that they may become something" (Hendrix and Hoseholder, p. 240). These changes may take the form of personal goals referred to as the "covenant of accountability" or the personal commitment to change (Hestenes, Using the Bible in Groups, p. 20). Yet, in spite of human efforts to bring about changes in people, it is the Holy Spirit who is really accountable for this change (E. G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 172).

\(^2\)The SDA Church believes in "three aspects of man's nature—the physical, the intellectual, and the spiritual" (SDABC, 10:574). Since all these aspects of man were affected at the fall, man's restoration is threefold. Therefore, disciple-building ought to be considered against this total picture of man.

\(^3\)Four qualities of a curriculum for new converts are: (1) variety—avoid a routine program; (2) flexibility—change
The topics of the curriculum should include: (1) subjects which participants desire to discuss;\(^1\) (2) "various lines of work committed to the church"\(^2\); (3) subjects related to new converts' doctrinal gaps; and (4) subjects of encouragement.\(^3\) The next step is to agree on the order of preference in which subjects will be considered, giving primacy to high felt needs. Two subjects when necessary and include new felt needs; (3) broadness—cover a varied range of subjects (doctrinal, character-building, relationships, and other related matters) instead of limiting it to a fixed set of studies; (4) brevity—include only the topics that are essential so that the program may not go on indefinitely.

\(^{1}\)A disciple-builder with a plan of study which does not allow room for the input of the group may find it difficult to open the door for suggestions. People may ask him more than he is planning to give them. Consequently, it may be challenging for him, for he would have to decide whether he should go ahead with his own plan or include their petitions in order to cope with their needs. Thus, pleasing the group may mean additional work for him.

\(^{2}\)E. G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 338. Some of these lines of work have been defined by E. G. White as "health reform, spiritual gifts, systematic benevolence, and the great branches of missionary work (ibid., p. 343). In the light of this point, it can be seen that flexibility in growth cells should not be confused with total freedom to study only what is pleasing to new converts. There are some areas of study--like the ones noted above--which must not be overlooked. Why? Because we are building disciples in a SDA context.

\(^{3}\)In connection with this point, E. G. White says, "Our conversation with these souls should be of a spiritual, encouraging character (E. G. White, *Testimony Treasures*, 2:390-91).
curriculums are given below. Leaders should decide with the group what they would like to discuss from this material.¹

Curriculum of Bible Studies

Encouragement
Study: The Challenge of Steady Growth
Purpose: Facing new believers with the biblical challenge of continuous spiritual growth.

1. Growing into maturity (Heb 5:11-6:2).
2. Growing by dying daily (1 Cor 15:31).

Assurance of Salvation
Study: How We Can Know We Are Accepted by God
Purpose: Building up new converts' assurance in Christ as their personal saviour.

We can know we are Christians (1 John 5:13)
   a. based on the works of Christ (John 1:12,13)
   b. the promise of the Word (1 John 5:11-12)
   c. and the witness of the Spirit (Rom 8:16).

¹Studies above are not fixed or exhaustive, but a sampling of the topics. Subjects of new converts' interest should be added. See other studies in Moore, pp. 186-201; and Eims, pp. 159-180.
Sin and Temptation

Study: Withholding Sin Under the Power of Christ

Purpose: Guiding new converts to realize the help they may have in Christ to overcome sin.

1. Ps 17:4; 119:9, 11 (Building up inner strongholds).
2. 1 Cor 10:13; Isa 41:10, 13 (God's promises).
3. 1 Cor 15:57 (True victory comes through Christ).
4. Isa 59:19; Zeph 4:6 (Victory through the Spirit).
5. Rom 6:12-14; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 John 2:15-16 (Avoid sin).

Study: Temptation and Sin Are Not Synonymous

1. Job 1:11-12 (Holy people were tempted).
2. Heb 4:15 (Christ was tempted).
3. Jas 1:12 (Temptation is a test).
4. Job 2:6; 38:11; 1 Cor 10:13 (Temptation will not be beyond man's capacity of endurance).
5. Heb 2:18 (Christ helps those who are tempted).
6. Mic 7:8 (Resolution of not giving up).

Steadfastness

Study: The Race That Is Set before Us

Purpose: Challenging new converts with the scriptural portions dealing with God's desire for them to remain faithful.

2. Gal 1:6; Heb 3:12 (Backsliding must be avoided).
4. Isa 30:21; 1 John 2:28 (Invitations to remain faithful).

How to Keep the Sabbath
Study: Biblical Instruction for Sabbath-Keeping
Purpose: Guiding new converts to realize that the Bible not only specifies the right day to be kept but also the way in which it should be kept.
   1. Exod 20:9-10 (How to keep the Sabbath).
   2. Exod 16:22-23 (Preparation to keep the Sabbath).

Beholding Christ Only
Study: The Contemplation of Christ
Purpose: Guiding new converts to fix their eyes on Christ.
   1. They saw no one but Jesus only (Matt 17:1-8).
   2. Don't make flesh your arm. (Jer 17:5).
   3. Giving account of oneself to God (Rom 14:12).

Dependance on Our Heavenly High Priest
Study: We Have a Heavenly Priest
Purpose: Guiding new converts to appreciate the intercessory ministry of Christ in behalf of men.
Study the Word

Study: The Importance of Personal Bible Study

Purpose: Guiding new converts to feel their need for growing in Bible knowledge and understanding.

1. Acts 8:26-35 (Reading and understanding).
2. Acts 17:11 (Commendation for further Bible study).

Church

Purposes: (1) Guiding new converts to realize the importance of church attendance. (2) Studying with them the principles of church discipline both in the Bible and in the Church Manual. (3) Guiding converts to realize the importance of the sacraments and, particularly, their participation in the communion service.

Study: Church Attendance, a Key to Fellowship

1. Ps 122:1 (Going to church with gladness).
2. Heb 10:24-25 (Not neglecting to meet together).
3. Acts 2:46 (The example of the early Church).

Study: Church Discipline (Caslow, Profile/4, pp. 22-24).
Study: Church Sacraments (Caslow, Profile/4, pp. 26-29).

---

Fruitful Christian Life
Study: Created to Bear Fruit
Purpose: Guiding new converts to feel the need of becoming fruitful for God.
1. Matt 13:1-23 (Fruitful or fruitless).
2. John 15:2-5 (Christ's plan for bearing fruit).

Spiritual Gifts
Study: Finding Your Spiritual Endowment
Purpose: Helping new converts find their spiritual gifts.
Gifts could be listed on a blackboard as people mention them directly from the Bible.
1. 1 Cor 12:8-11, 27-30 (Spiritual gifts and the Spirit).
2. Rom 12:4-8 (Variety of gifts for a variety of functions).

Triumphant Faith
Study: The Significance of Faith
Purpose: Helping new members realize the role of faith in the Christian life.
1. Heb 11:6 (Without faith it is impossible to please God).
2. Eph 6:16 (Faith gives victory over Satan).
3. 1 John 5:4 (Faith overcomes the world).
5. Mark 5:25-34 (Faith must be in touch with Christ).
The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Study: The Holy Spirit and Myself

Purpose: Guiding new converts to realize that there cannot be real spiritual progress without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

2. Rom 8:14; Gal 5:25 (The guidance of the Spirit).

Witnessing

Study: Christians with a Mission

Purpose: Guiding new converts to realize their need of growing by sharing their faith with other people).

1. Rom 13-14 (The need of witnesses).
2. 2 Cor 5:20 (Ambassadors of Christ).
3. Isa 52:7-8 (Feet willing to go witnessing).
4. Rom 1:16 (Not being ashamed of witnessing).
5. 1 Pet 3:15 (Always ready to witness).
7. John 4:3-26 (Our Model on witnessing).

Attitude Towards People of Other Denominations

Study: Evasiveness, the Poorest Strategy

Purpose: Equipping new converts to relate with people of other denominations.

1. Matt 8:11-12 (There will be surprises in heaven).

3. John 4:1-26 (The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father).

4. Acts 18:24-26 (The work of Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos should be the work of every true convert with other people. "They took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately").

5. Rom 10:12 (The same Lord is Lord of all . . .).

True religion is more than going to a place or holding a name (John 4:20-21). According to Christ, true religion is worshipping God every moment at every place in "spirit and truth" (John 4:23). The Holy Spirit and the truth are so inseparable that He is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17). Since these are the marks of true religion, new converts should not avoid talking with people of other denominations. While avoiding entering into doctrinal controversies, they should study their Bibles and learn to share their faith with others as well. They should also be willing to listen and learn spiritual insights from them.

Prayer

Study: Prayer, the Pathway of Christians

Purpose: Guiding new converts to feel their dependence from God through prayer.

1. Matt 26:41 (Why man needs to pray).

4. Dan 6:10 (Praying in time of difficulties).
5. 1 John 3:22 (Answer to prayer is conditional).

Obedience

Study: The Commands of God.

Purpose: Strengthening commitment to obey Christ.
1. John 14:21 (Obedience, the test of love towards Christ).
2. John 15:10,13 (Obedience, a sign of unity with Christ).
3. James 4:17 (Obedience should be willing).
5. John 14:23 (The reward of obedience).

Study: What Does the Lord Require of You?

Purpose: Facing new converts with the fact of personal responsibility in the practice of the Christian life.
1. Deut 10:12 (To walk in all His ways).

Study: The Meaning of the Commandments

Purpose: Helping new converts realize the deep moral meaning of the ten commandments.
1. Study of the commandments (Exod 20).
2. Reading: Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 303-309.¹

Sanctification

Study: Holy to the Lord

Purpose: Guiding new converts to realize the high standards to which they have been called.

1. Exod 39:30-31 (Holiness, God's ideal for man).
3. 1 Pet 1:15 ("Holy in all your conduct").
4. 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 12:14 (Holiness to see the Lord).

Study: Building up Yourself and Your Church

Purpose: Helping new converts realize their dualistic duty in building up both Christian character and the church.

1. Matt 7:24-27 (Building up Christian character).
2. 1 Cor 3:9-14 (Building up the church).

Study: Love, the Greatest of All Virtues

Purpose: Guiding new converts to view love as the primary virtue in their spiritual development.

2. 1 Cor 13:4-7 (The traits of love).
3. 1 John 3:17-18 (The concreteness of love).
5. 1 John 4:7-21 (The community of love).

Relationships

Study: Following Our Model on Relationships

Purpose: Guiding new converts to appreciate the gift of true human relationships.
2. Matt 15:22-28 (True relationships despise no one).
3. Rom 10:12; Col 3:11; Jas 2:1-3 (True relationships do not exclude or make distinction of anyone).

**The Tongue**

Study: *The Most Dangerous Member of Our Body*

Purpose: Guiding new converts to view the importance of tongue discipline.

1. Ps 9:1-2; 51:15; Rom 14:11 (The tongue, created for communication, and confessing and praising God).
3. Ps 34:13; Prov 4:24 (Controlling the tongue).
4. Jas 1:26 (Tongue control, a mark of true religion).

**History of SDA Church**

Study: *The Birth of Adventism*

Purpose: Furnishing new converts with the prophetic background of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1. Rev 10 (A people with a history rooted in prophecy).
4. Rev 19:10 (A people with a sign).¹

¹See additional material in Caslow, *Profile/4*, pp. 38-42.
The Seventh-day Adventist Mission

Study: The Last Message for the Last Hour (Rev 13:14)
Purpose: Reviewing with new converts the prophetic message held by the Adventist Church.
1. Rev 14:6-12 (The last call back to true worship).
3. Rev 14:11-17 (The last struggle with false worship).

Trial/Spiritual Warfare

Study: Facing Times of Trial
Guiding new converts to realize the need of getting ready to face times of trial.
1. 1 Pet 4:12-13 (Sharing Christ's sufferings).
2. Jas 1:2-3 (The objective of trials).
4. Isa 43:2 (God's promises in times of persecution).

Study: Getting Ready for the Last Test
Purpose: Facing new converts with the fact that there would be a special time of trial for all believers.
(Reading: Early Writings,1 pp. 56-58, 2).
1. Dan 12:1 (The time of trouble).
2. Rev 3:10; Matt 24:21 (The hour of trial).
3. Gen 32:24-28; Jer 30:7 (Jacob's time of distress).
4. Isa 54:15; 59:19 (Promises for the time of trouble).

Study: On Guard Against the Enemy of Our Souls
Purpose: Guiding new converts to realize that Christians have to struggle against Satan's attempts to destroy their faith.
1. Matt 4:1-11 (Satan, a defeated enemy).
2. 1 John 4:4 (God's power at man's disposition).
3. 1 Pet 5:8-9 (Resisting Satan).
4. Rev 20:10 (The destruction of Satan).

Youth
Purpose: Guiding new converted youth to realize God's high spiritual ideals for them.
1. Eccl 12:1; 1 John 3:14 (God's call to youth).
2. Eccl 11:9 (God's options for youth).
3. 1 Tim 4:12 (God's ideals for youth).

Leadership
Study: Becoming a Local Church Leader
Purpose: Developing new converts in church leadership.
1. Finding your gifts (Eph 4; 1 Cor 12, Rom 12:4-8).
2. Characteristics of good leaders (1 Tim 3).

Stewardship
Study: The Unique Privilege of Giving
Purpose: Guiding new converts to appreciate the principle of stewardship from the standpoint of giving—to relieve people's needs and to support the cause of God on earth.
1. 2 Cor 9:7; Acts 4:33-37 (The right spirit in giving).
3. Matt 19:21; Mark 12:41-44; Ps 50:5 (Giving sometimes may be sacrificial).

SDA Education (Group discussion of E. G. White, Education), pp. 11-19 in Spanish edition.1

Curriculum with Bible and Articles

The Bible


Care


Choice


Christian Character


2Moore, pp. 130-33.

3Walden Howard, Faith at Work, June 1975, p. 22.


7Hanks and Shell, pp. 149-163.
"How to Get Our Characters."¹ Matt 12:35.

"Spirit-Fashioned Character."² Rom 14:8; Gal 5:22-23.

Christian Life

"Beginnings."³ Phil 1:6; Jas 4:7-8.


⁴Boyd, pp. 119-25.


⁷Ibid., pp. 50-58.


⁹J. R. Miller, Week-Day Religion, pp. 134-244.
"Something about Amusements."¹ Prov 17:22; 1 Thess 5:16.
"Definite Life Standards."² John 3:3, 5; 2 Cor 5:17.
"How to Live with a Tiger."³ Rom 7:15-21; Gal 5:16-17; Phil 4:12.
"Illustrations for Teaching."⁴

The Church
"The Church, the Avant-Garde of the New Creation."⁷ Matt 16:17-19; Eph 5:25-27.
"Unity of the Body."⁸ John 17; Eph 4:5.

¹J. R. Miller, Week-Day religion, pp. 245-247.
²Kerns, pp. 25-30.
⁴Moore, pp. 167-177.
⁷Sugden, pp. 53-61.
Commitment
"Commitment and Grace."¹ Rom 12:1-2.

Conscience
"Keep the Light Burning."² Prov 10:27; Matt 6:23.

Courage

Criticism

Doubt


Faith

"Planning for Faith Development."⁴
"The Marks of True Faith."⁵ Heb 11.
"Faith All the Way."⁶ Heb 11:6.

Feelings/Emotions: Anger/Depression

"Emotions, Our Friends."⁸

⁴Ibid., pp. 137-47.


"The Shadow."³ Ps 51.

"What to Do."⁴


"Make the Most of Your Anger."⁶ Gen 4:5-8; 1 Sam 25:36-37.


"Dealing with Depression."⁸ Ps 38:4; 51.

Fellowship


³Ibid., pp. 55-66.

⁴Ibid., pp. 109-124. See also Rom 5:6-11.


⁷Eastman, pp. 37-41.


"When Fellowship Is Creative."¹ John 15:12;

Forgiveness
"I'll Forgive, But I Won't Forget."³ Matt 18:15; Luke 17:3-4; Col 3:12-13.
"Forgetting."⁴ Phil 3:13.

Grace

Handicaps
"How to Handle Our Handicaps."⁶ 2 Cor 12:7-10.

The Holy Spirit
"How Is the Holy Spirit Related to Every Christian?"⁷
John 14:16-17; 16:7-14; Rom 8:14; John 3:5; 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 1:13-14.

⁴Meyer, Saved and Kept, pp. 129-134.
⁵Walden Howard, Faith at Work, August 1977, p. 40.
⁷Bright, pp. 201-203.
"Grieving the Spirit."² Eph 4:30.
"What Does He Do?"⁵ John 16.

Fruit of the Spirit

2. Joy.

"God Has Created Man to Enjoy Humor."⁸ Prov 17:22; 1 Thess 5:16

¹Coltman, pp. 67-77.
²Ibid., pp. 89-98.
³Ibid., pp. 101-107.
⁷Geo. W. Bethune, The Fruit of the Spirit (New York: Board of Pub. of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, Synod's Rooms, 1859), pp. 139-159.

"Joy."² Matt 5:22; Rom 8:28; 1 Thess 5:16, 18.

3. Obedience.


4. Patience.

"Patience and Self-Control."⁴ Deut 32:35; Jas 1:19-20.

5. Peace.

"Peace, Perfect Peace."⁵ John 14:27; 20:19, 21; Eph 2:13

Home Religion

"Religion in the Home."⁶ 1 Tim 5:8.


¹Flynn, pp. 59-61.

²Speas, pp. 127-132.


⁴Floreen, pp. 143-150.


⁶J. R. Miller, Week-Day Religion, pp. 77-86.

Loneliness

"Lonely Loneliness."² Isa 63:3; 2 Tim 4:9-11.

Loyalty

"The Triumph of Loyalty."³ Phil 3:7-8; 1 Cor 15:58; Gal 6:9-10.

Mind

"The Mind of Christ."⁵ Rom 12:1; Phil 2:5-8.
"The Control of Our Thoughts."⁶ Prov 4:23; 2 Cor 10:5.
"To Become Like Him."⁷ 1 Cor 1:30.

²Karl Olson, Faith at Work, October 1974, pp. 24-25.
⁶Meyer, Saved and Kept, pp. 49-54.
Prayer

"Hindrances to Prayer."
1 Cor 4:7; Jas 1:6-8.

"Is Your Soul Breathing Properly?"
2 Luke 18:1-8;
1 Thess 5:17.

"Prayer."
3 Mark 1:35; 6:46; Eph 6:18.

"Interrupted Power."

Relationships

"Prescriptions for Healthier Relationships."
5 John 15:12;
1 John 4:10.

"How to Get Along with Other Christians."
6 Rom 12:1-2;
Phil 4:2-5.

"Developing a Meaningful Relationship."
7 Prov 17:17; 1 John 1:3.

---


3 Carl Wilson, pp. 223-229.


7 Hanks and Shell, pp. 132-145.
"Abide in Christ, and in Love to the Brethren."1 John 15:12.


"Mutual Forbearance."5 John 15:12; 1 Cor 10:24.


"Bearing with One Another."7 Eph 4:2; Col 3:13.


"Relationships."9 John 1:35-42.


3Rice, pp. 70-75.


5Ibid., pp. 258-64.

6Hudson, pp. 74-88.


8Speas, pp. 121-125.


Religion


"The Disciple and the World in the Church." 1 John 2:15-17.

Sanctification

"Deliverance from the Power of Sin." Phil 2:12.

"Until We Shall Be Changed." Matt 18:1-3; 2 Cor 5:17.

Satan

"The Devil and His Methods." Matt 4:1-10.


"His Infernal Majesty." Isa 14:12-14; Jas 1:14-15.

"The Defeat of Satan." Matt 4:10; Rev 12:7-10.


2Stearns, pp. 135-45.


6Ibid., pp. 136-57.

7J. White, pp. 77-78.

Self-Denial

"The Price of Discipleship."\(^1\) Matt 16:24-25.

Self-Image

"Signs of Healthy, Positive Self-Image."\(^2\) Rom 12:3.

"Self-Image."\(^3\) Rom 12:3.

"Your Self-Image."\(^4\) Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 15:9-10.


The Senses and Spirituality


Spiritual Growth

"Consider the Lilies How They Grow."\(^7\) Matt 6:25-34.

"Am I a Growing Person?"\(^8\) Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 3:1-2; 13:11; Eph 4:13, 15.

\(^1\)Fletcher, pp. 33-39.


\(^3\)W. A. Miller, pp. 88-95.

\(^4\)Wright, pp. 133-156.


\(^7\)Hudson, pp. 117-130.


"Ten Tips on How to Stay in the Church." 7

"Growing up into Christ." 8 Ps 1; Isa 61:3; Hos 14:5-7; John 3:3.

Spiritual Indolence

"Keep Your Own Garden." 9 Prov 24:30-33; 1 Thess 4:10-11.

1Bright, pp. 118-119, 123.
2Duncan, pp. 27-33.
3Floreen, pp. 135-142.
7W. C. Scales (Miami: Ministerial Association of the Inter-American Division of SDAs, 1980).
8E. G. White, Steps to Christ, pp. 71-80.
9Rice, pp. 19-23.
Spiritual Warfare

"The Hour of Temptation."1 1 Cor 10:13; Jas 1:15.
"Spiritual Antagonism."5 Eph 6; 1 Pet 5:8-9; Rev 12:17.
"The Discipline of Disappointment."7 2 Cor 2:12-14; Phil 4:11-13; 2 Tim 4:16-17.

2Green, pp. 58-77.
6J. White, pp. 215-225.
7Edman, pp. 159-165.
Stability/Steadfastness

"Stand Fast." D. M. Lloyd.² Isa 52:7; 1 Cor 16:13; Eph 6:15.

Faithful stewardship

"Where Your Treasure Is."⁶ Matt 6:19-33

Witnessing


¹Speas, pp. 29-37.
²Lloyd-Jones, pp. 270-282.
³Meyer, Saved and Kept, pp. 115-121.
⁴J. R. Miller, Week-Day Religion, pp. 125-34.
⁶Howard, Faith at Work, August 1975, p. 22.
"How to Tell Others about Christ."\textsuperscript{1} John 4:5-16.

"But I Never Know What to Say."\textsuperscript{2} Mark 5:18-20.

"Fellow-Followers."\textsuperscript{3} Rev 14:6-7.

"When You Have Experienced Faithfulness in Action."\textsuperscript{4} Mark 16:15-16.

"Witnessing for Christ."\textsuperscript{5} Matt 28:19-20.


\textbf{Curriculum Material}

The material for growth cells can be prepared in one of two ways: (1) Use the Bible only\textsuperscript{7} or (2) combine it with SDA literature and appropriate material from other Christian writers. Seven principles for selecting material both from Adventist and non-Adventist writings are: (1) The literary style should be

\begin{itemize}
  \item Montgomery, pp. 105-112.
  \item Alberti and Emmons, pp. 85-92.
  \item Moore, pp. 197-201.
  \item Rice, pp. 39-43.
  \item The Bible must be the cornerstone of all study with new believers. A program of study which disregards the Book must be discarded. All material from other sources--books, periodicals, pamphlets . . . must be rooted in the Scripture or people will be nurtured with spiritual straw.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{1} Montgomery, pp. 105-112.

\textsuperscript{2} Alberti and Emmons, pp. 85-92.


\textsuperscript{5} Moore, pp. 197-201.

\textsuperscript{6} Rice, pp. 39-43.

\textsuperscript{7} The Bible must be the cornerstone of all study with new believers. A program of study which disregards the Book must be discarded. All material from other sources--books, periodicals, pamphlets . . . must be rooted in the Scripture or people will be nurtured with spiritual straw.
plain, interesting, and clear; (2) the material should be practical and relevant to people; (3) the writings should be brief—too many ideas in a long document may confuse new converts; (4) there should be a spiritual emphasis—written in a devotional tone rather than in a scholarly style; (5) Christ-centered—related to the Lord in a way that new believers may learn something about him or strengthen their personal relation with him—is always appropriate; (6) Bible-centered reading—clearly based on material from Scripture—is also acceptable; and (7) since new Adventist converts should be nurtured according to the life-style and beliefs of Adventism, reading material must be in harmony with Adventist teachings.

**Summary**

Growth cells are meant to be a tool to educate new converts in their spiritual development. The main aspects of the plan may be summarized as follows:

1. Keep the group as a mixed unit of people instead of dividing them by ages (except in unusual circumstances).
2. Keep the group small—no more than twelve persons—and make special arrangements when only one person is baptized.
3. How long a growth cell should last depends on the spiritual foundation of people, how often baptisms are held, and the number of phases of instruction contained in the program of disciple-building.
4. Group leaders are key people for the success of growth cells. They should undergo special training to be able to work with this program, and be willing to cultivate the qualities of good group leadership, some of which have been discussed in this chapter.

5. Devote special attention to the first meeting of the cell in order to ensure the support of new converts.

6. To develop the curriculum for group discussion: (1) Consider the basic needs of new converts; (2) set spiritual goals in harmony with those needs; (3) follow the guidelines to define a curriculum; and (4) get appropriate material to meet that curriculum. Chapter 5 deals with guidelines to steer group discussion.
CHAPTER V

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Group Discussion Styles

Group discussion can be held through many styles, among which are paternalistic, permissive, and participative:

Paternalistic Group Discussion

In the paternalistic style, the leader provides all the information and instructions needed by the group. People play.

Extremes to avoid in group discussion are excessive rigidity and excessive flexibility. "The approach of using a rigid plan seems to fail to see the disciple as an individual with special needs in changeable circumstances that require flexibility to apply appropriate truth. The spontaneous approach, on the other hand, fails to acknowledge that there is a normal logical progression to spiritual growth as there is in physical growth, and that plans can be made to help a person develop logically. Moreover, it fails to see that an individual needs to learn to be a part of a family group and that there are basic truths that all Christians need to be taught and that apply to them as a group, as well as truths that need to be applied individually" (Wilson, p. 58).

In a paternalistic group atmosphere "the leader is kindly, fatherly, sympathetic to the needs of all his 'flock', but he feels that he must make the major decisions for the group" (Gibb, Miller, and Platts, p. 17).
the role of attentive listeners, participating only when they have a doubt or a question to be answered by the leader who functions more like a lecturer than a keeper of interaction. "His decisions are based on the assumption that the group is inexperienced, untrained or uninformed about the matter under consideration."\(^1\) This type of procedure is not advocated for growth cells because it may stunt interpersonal communication among a group of individuals who are not only in need of learning subject content but also in need of getting acquainted with one another's spiritual interests.

**Permissive Group Discussion\(^2\)**

While extreme formality could be too rigid, extreme informality could be too relaxed. The informal meeting is


\(^2\)Permissive structure. "In the insecurity of developing democracy, it is felt that the way to lead is not lead at all, to let immature people have complete 'freedom', not guidance, nor control, nor help. . . . In group life this form of completely uncontrolled discussion often leads to unsatisfactory experiences. Because of the highly individualistic nature of our culture our group members have seldom learned the skills of socialization, tolerance for individual differences, and concern for the group that are necessary for effective group action" (Gibb, Miller, and Platts, pp. 17-18).

The term "permissive" is used in at least two different ways in small-group studies. On the one hand, it refers to leaderless group discussion, and on the other, it refers to an acceptance of group atmosphere. The former deals with a procedural type of leadership and the other with an environmental condition which should exist in group meetings.
practically leaderless—any member of the group could be the leader at any given moment. Besides, there is no structured plan of study, no pre-planned ideas, no special subject to reflect upon, and no group standards. This is called laissez faire leadership style or "permissive structure." When working with this kind of procedure, the group leader, if any, "waits on, and watches for each disciple to manifest his needs and then he would proceed to meet the needs."\(^1\) Following a procedure like this means the leader would have to adjust to the ever-changing needs of group members. He would have to be ready "at all times to teach anything. Since every person is different, a group ministry would have little value. It would obviously be very difficult to train leaders how to minister this way."\(^2\)

Three reasons for not advancing laissez faire procedures for growth cells are: (1) The leader would have to possess a broad training not only in the skills of small-group leadership but also a special professional training in the art of meeting the changeable needs of people. It would not only be a matter of spiritual equipping and the building of relationships, but a matter of being ready to meet any need outside the spiritual realm. This approach could essentially divert growth cells from their purpose of spiritual nurture. (2) Participants would become patients or people needing help in different aspects of life. (3) Because of the total spontaneous approach, the group

---

\(^1\)Carl Wilson, p. 58.

\(^2\)Ibid.
procedures would probably lack necessary discipline. The laissez faire format seems to lend itself more for a social group meeting than for a study group in which people have a special concern for a subject every time they meet. In an environment of total informality, new converts might not be able to reach definite helpful conclusions for them as persons just beginning to practice the Christian life. Besides, laissez faire group ministry could lead into laissez faire spiritual habits, and this is not supported by Scripture (1 Cor 14:40).1

Participative Group Discussion

The ideal procedural style for growth cells seems to be that of a mixture between formality and informality. The leader should become "another potential contributor to the group rather than the one on whom the others are dependent for a disproportionate number of contributions."2 This is termed "participative structure."3 In this procedure one of the main

1Laissez faire procedures may work with newly baptized young people who have grown up in the church.


3"In the participative group, members work together to achieve high group cohesion. There is a maximum of emphasis upon the growth and development of all the members of the group. The group works on the principle of consensus, and attempts to get a high degree of pleasant interpersonal relationships as a solid basis for the solution of its problems. In a group situation there is a fairly even spread of the verbal participation. The threat of individuals is minimized through informality and through mutual acquaintance through a
roles of the leader is to facilitate the "development of group identity through significant relating and sharing. He does this by fostering group-centered interaction."¹ Some suggestions for participative leadership during group discussion are: (1) Avoid lecturing and encourage interactive discussion, (2) redirect questions into group discussion instead of giving answers, (3) conduct group discussion to reach the goals and needs of group members, (4) let people express their thoughts without hurry, and (5) merge in the give-and-take situation created by group interaction--be "more supportive than instructive."²

Group Environment

"A group does not become a group merely by sitting down together. It takes time to become a group--it takes caring, sharing, forgiving and affirming."³ Several practical factors should be considered to achieve a group sense and an environment with these characteristics.

Group Building Process

It "has to do with the matter of becoming a team--a community of love, trust and acceptance where you feel a part of maximum of knowledge of the background, interests, and skills of other members of the group" (Gibb, Miller, and Platts, p. 118).

¹Clinebell, p. 37.

²Leslie, Sharing Groups in the Church, p. 156.

each other." The purpose of group building is helping people in a group to get to know each other in depth. However, group building is a process. It takes some time before people open themselves in public personal sharing. Therefore, they should be led by steps to overcome the natural feelings of anxiety and threat so typical of the first meetings. Not before they grow by mutual acquaintance and trust are they ready to go into deeper team work and study.

The process of group building includes much more than exercises to attain it. In reality, everything that is done in the group, verbal or nonverbal, contributes to build up people. (How they receive one another when coming together; talking to each other, looking at each other, praying for one another; etc.) Coleman suggests four activities and/or phases of group building: (1) History-giving—sharing past, present, and future personal information. The more information is collected from new members, the more the leader will be able to minister to the group when he gets to the deeper levels of group experience. (2) Affirmation—members responding to one another, reacting

1Coleman, p. 17.

2Group building is a term which may be somewhat subtle in meaning or subject to provoke confusion in some minds. In the field of group dynamics, it may refer to both the building of the social climate and/or the maintenance roles of group discussion. Either way it is a sociological group term referring to the activity of bringing people together in a cooperative, caring, sharing environment. Therefore, both meanings should be kept in proper balance.
specially to the positive qualities of one another. (3) Goal setting—"In the atmosphere of warmth and acceptance that has been created in the affirmation phase, you move on. The members of the group have been released to a new and deeper level of sharing, based on mutual love and trust." Now they are ready to share where they need to grow and their ideals to realize it. (4) Koinonia, support system—unity based not only on mutual acquaintance but on spiritual values.¹

Group Climate

Group climate is the genesis of group discussion. Barlow says, "Something extremely dynamic happens in a group of people where the atmosphere is relaxed, where the leader understands and accepts each person, and where the goal of the meeting is to help everyone grow in spiritual maturity and commitment to Jesus Christ."² "When there is warmth, acceptance and a 'feeling of understanding' in the group atmosphere, the problems of communication are minimal."³

Two aspects are involved in group atmosphere—the physical and the psychological. Physical atmosphere pertains to all that has to do with the place where people meet.⁴

²Barlow, p. 77.
³Gibb, Miller, and Platts, p. 29; Johnson and Johnson, p. 280.
⁴Growth cells could meet indoors or outdoors; at the church or at a house. If met in a room, the place should be well
temperature, light, ventilation, space, seating in a circle, and the like. The second aspect of group atmosphere is "the social climate of the group with such characterizations as warm, friendly, relaxed, informal, permissive, free" over against a "cold, hostile, tense, formal, restrained atmosphere."¹ Some suggestions to facilitate an accepting group climate are: (1) Allow time for mutual acquaintance of people in group meetings; (2) stimulate group members to share personal history facts--personal concerns, tastes, fears, accomplishments, failures, hopes, dreams, significant events, people and places in their lives; their spiritual background, their emotional ups and downs, and their present hurts and joys;² (3) have an informal refreshment time a few minutes before meeting--juice or similar beverage; (4) hold a play exercise to get common interest in something enjoyable or entertaining; (5) seat in a face-to-face circle so that people may get used to look at each other on the eye; and, (6) use sharing exercises concerning personal spiritual growth.³

¹Knowles and Knowles, p. 46.

²Coleman, Groups in Action, p. 18.

³Appendix C is an aid to build up group climate.
Group Feelings

"To the degree that a leader is sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, they are likely to respond to his leadership." ¹ Even though a growth cell is not designed to be a feeling healing agent in the sense of a therapy group,² it cannot ignore the fact that feelings are a full part of man. "People are just beginning to admit that human beings do have feelings and that they are not dishonorable."³ Brown and Deitz say: "There is a vital difference between a therapy group and a group that is therapeutic."⁴ They add: "Every group in the church should be therapeutic--that is, upbuilding, strengthening, supportive."⁵


²Therapy groups: Classified as encounter groups, the emphasis is on verbal behavior. These are groups for emotional support. See Mills, pp. 11-15.


⁴Brown and Deitz, p. 77.

⁵Ibid. "While most church groups are not structured as therapy groups and carefully avoid the probing of feelings and personality in depth common in group therapy, there are therapeutic or health producing effects in many small groups set up with an entirely different orientation. Acceptance can produce health, but rejection tends to have a negative effect on the personality. Love produces health; hate is more likely to be related to the sick personality. In a group in which love and acceptance are strong, there can be clearly therapeutic effects. It may be difficult to distinguish neatly between therapeutic
Besides, group interaction depends, largely, on the feeling atmosphere of the group. Shepherd comments, "Sentiment and interaction are directly related. If people like each other they will try to interact, and if they dislike each other they will try to avoid one another."¹ Then, if the free flow of feelings in a growth cell is suppressed, people may behave like robots or interact mechanically upon a subject on a cold, intellectual level. Barlow says:

Two distinct levels exist in each group meeting--content and feeling. Many small group meetings focus almost entirely on the content level and ignore the dynamic factor of participant's feelings. Both levels need attention by understanding leaders. Group members must feel wanted, needed, and appreciated. Above all they need to be listened to. While the content of discussion is very important and should be given serious attention, the feeling level in small groups is more elusive but equally important.²

Moreover, leaders of growth cells should be careful how they deal with emotional self-disclosure for it can be prolonged until it is out of control. A person could be "ripped apart, and no one has the professional training nor the time to get him together again."³ Therefore, intellectual interaction and a free, effect and the growth and insight referred to above, but nevertheless the category is helpful for more complete understanding of the group process" (ibid).

¹Shepherd, p. 61.

²Barlow, p. 77.

natural flow of emotional involvement should be kept in proper balance without going to any extreme. Furthermore, group leaders should carefully avoid probing into emotional levels deeper than the level of trust and cohesion developed by people in the group.¹

**Group Planning**

"Leading productive group discussion is not easy. People do not get together and begin interacting with each other just like that."² "Conversation is often mistakenly called discussion. Real discussion presupposes preparation on the part of the members."³ Gordon says, "Effective communication between individuals or between groups means a sharing of meanings. There must be some common understandings shared by the participants in a discussion."⁴ Therefore, a study guide of some

¹Group leaders should recognize their professional limitations by referring to a professional counselor any person with emotional disturbances.

²Zander, pp. 30-34.

³Little, p. 33. Some writers do not recommend planning the subject matter because it could make the group "teaching-centered rather than discovery-centered." This study does not adopt this position because it may be difficult for some disciple-builders to hold a Bible study in a growth cell without pre-planned guidelines. However, it is realized that it is "necessary to keep a balance between person-centered fellowship and the disciplined accomplishment of a task" (Casteel, The Creative Role, p. 184; Leslie, p. 118).

⁴T. Gordon, p. 80.
kind may help the leader to focus group discussion on subjects. This is practical because "the group that has no direction in its discussion is the group which covers the waterfront" and may end up "with feelings of small accomplishments and great frustration."¹ A written or oral plan may help the leader to establish "what he wants to be accomplished in the group meeting."² He does not necessarily need to have it in a written form to hand it out to the group but keep it as a private guideline in his mind. This kind of work represents an effort on the part of the leader which may indicate that he is taking his task seriously. In other words, disciple-building must not be understood as simply sitting down with new church members to improvise activities--study, relating, talking, etc.--without planning whatsoever. Some guidelines are suggested below to plan group discussion with new converts. Options are given at every step so that disciple-builders interested in this program may use it, at their discretion, as a framework to start with.

**Opening prayer** (use different types of prayers--conversational, prayer in small groups, etc.).

**Time for relating and sharing.** Some options to build a supportive, accepting group-building atmosphere are:

---


²Eims, p. 36.
1. **History-giving**—work satisfaction; personal valuable possessions; dreams expected to come through in the near future; childhood recollections; etc. Ask sharing questions: "What did you like to do when you were a child? Would you share something which made you feel important when you were a child? What one or two words would best describe your childhood?"¹

2. **Sharing reflections** describing philosophy of life.  

3. Encourage a group of newly baptized adolescents to share personal concerns. 

4. Encourage a spirit of affirmation among the group—strengthening one another by positive reactions toward reflections of fellow group members. 

5. **Sharing exercises**—spiritual self-analysis, relationships; inventory of values, home religion, and so forth.²

6. **Relational games.**³

---

¹See other questions and ideas in appendices B and C.  


³See samples in appendix A.
Time for group interaction on a special subject.

1. Group discussion can be based on a portion of Scripture or a practical article related to the spiritual growth of new converts (doctrinal or character building)—the Christian life, commitment, doubt, fellowship, fruit of the Spirit, relationships, self-denial, and other similar topics.

2. Questions. Make questions practical, self-sharing, opinion seeking, self-reactional, leading from a lower to a deeper level of understanding.

3. A sampling of sharing questions are: What would you buy if you could afford it? Share about your conversion. Describe your ideal house and how you would furnish it.¹

4. Sample questions for group-meeting discussion based on articles are: (a) Did you find the subject of the article clear/confused? Why? What do you think the writer was trying to convey to you through his thoughts? How did his views touch you particularly? (b) Share a thought, a lesson, a passage, or a comment which impressed you the most? Why? (c) Which passage of those quoted in the article, idea, or thought touched a negative feeling in you, if any? Why? (d) Could you share a practical thought which benefited you

¹A sharing question stresses personal, history-giving, personal feelings, impressions and reactions. "Sharing questions should encourage some level of risk while not forcing persons to share beyond their own willingness to do so" (Roberta Hestenes, Building Christian Community Through Small Groups (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), p. 83.
5. Sample questions based on Scripture reading or study are: (a) Reflection on the original meaning—e.g.: How do people who first received this message react? Why? What were the acceptable conditions established by God? (b) Drawing meaning for the world and the community today—e.g.: What message is contained in this passage for people today? How do people in our community fulfill this portion of Scripture? Compare the historical context of the passage with our world today. (c) Personal opinion-seeking questions—e.g.: What does this passage say to you personally? What does it mean to you now? How do you see your experience reflected here? How can you apply this Scripture to practical everyday life? (d) Deeper meaning questions—e.g.: On what do the verbs of this passage center? What can you learn from this passage about God? What is the main truth of this passage? Is there a command here to obey? Is there a warning to heed? Is there a promise to claim? What do you

\[1\] Sometimes there are professional people among newly baptized converts. Therefore, not all questions should touch just the surface of subjects. Besides, there is so much religious literature around that new converts need to be trained to think as critically as they can according to their capacities and educational training.
think this passage means? What does it mean to you? (e) Use questions of relational and inductive Bible studies.

6. Use exercises to interpret the Bible in growth cells—e.g.: relational Bible studies, dramatizing portions of Scripture (group members taking the place of people in Bible history or a in a parable, etc.).

**Group conclusions.** Some ways to finish group discussion are:

1. Have people summarize the main thoughts, lessons, ideas, concerns, personal learning, goal achievement, spiritual growth benefit. Not all conclusions need to be positive; negative sides of issues may also bear practical lessons.

2. Encourage personal commitment in relation to practical behavior, thinking, and character building.

3. Have people enumerate practical ways in which the study or group meeting helped them grow.

4. Have people enumerate practical ways to practice what they learned from now until next group meeting.

**Closing prayer.** Include:

1. Praying for one another.

2. Calls for personal commitment.

3. Asking for the Spirit to practice what was learned.

**Group Discussion Guidance**

In order to guide group discussion successfully, some practical steps are suggested.
Plan a Good Start

"A 'group' begins with interaction."¹ This does not refer to mere talking but getting involved. Two suggestions to achieve involvement are: (1) Choose a strategy to get the meeting started—a warm up period to create "a congenial emotional climate."² Besides those mentioned above, the leader could begin by relating an experience of the manifestation of the power of God in his life. When people see that the leader dares to share, most of the time they follow his example. (2) Select a subject which may be genuinely of common interest to the group.³ Whenever possible, provide material for study and reflection on that subject ahead of time⁴—avoid turning group meetings into reading sessions.

Follow Group Dynamics

Group dynamics aim at involving people in personal interaction.⁵ When people meet together in a group, dynamics must be presents, otherwise people will be a set of silent, listening statues.⁶ In other words, group dynamics is "not

¹Southard, p. 52.

²Douglas, p. 96.

³Benne and Buntyan, p. 75.

⁴Johnson and Johnson, p. 281.

⁵Barlow, p. 74.

⁶"The word 'dynamics' is derived from the Greek word for 'power'. Group dynamics stands for the fact that all groups
something you have or have not. Group dynamics are. Every group has dynamics."¹

**Tasks or Group-building roles.** "Group dynamics" is also a term technically related to the tasks or group-building roles which "help build and maintain group rapport."² Group leaders should be careful to avoid the extreme of emphasizing these techniques rather than applying the practical principles involved in them. Whereas building and maintaining group rapport should be part of growth cells, these group-building roles do not have to function in the same way in a meeting with new converts. Four suggestions concerning these roles are: (1) Use them to help new converts to get insights into human behavior; (2) encourage the natural sociological behavior of human beings; let converts be themselves without burdening them with play roles which may withhold free group interaction;³ (3) emphasize have dynamics—forces and powers growing out of the interpersonal relationships that exist in a particular group. Sometimes the term is used loosely to designate any of the many new techniques of group work" (Hendrix and Householder, p. 27).

¹Clemons and Hester, p. 102-3.

²Sasse, p. 322.

³Group discussion should be developed without hang ups; that is, people could be distracted by group process rather than being totally involved in the subject being discussed. A carefully structured group discussion could become artificial. People would be wondering whether they are doing the right thing instead of expressing themselves naturally. Therefore, it may be more practical if these task functions are played
the principle behind each group-building role; and (4) use the principles to cultivate a relational, supportive environment. This is illustrated as follows:

1. **The role of encouraging and affirming.**¹ This is more than a mere task role. It is both a need of new converts and a NT principle related to the Holy Spirit. Every Christian should involve himself in this task (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:25). In a growth-cell setting, it may be practiced by "being friendly, warm, and responsive to others . . . showing regard for others by giving them an opportunity for recognition!"² Group participants should be encouraged to both affirm others and express gratitude when they feel benefited by others' insights. Besides, sociologists point to recognition as one of the basic needs of human beings.³

¹Affirmation "means hearing and giving positive feedback. Positive attitude and caring concern to the particular needs, hurts, fears and hopes, joys and dreams that were expressed by people" (Coleman, *Groups in Action*, p. 18). See also: Driver, pp. 28-29; Panikulam, pp. 46

²Lippitt and Seashore, p. 49.

³Bormann and Bormann, pp. 22-23.
2. **The role of expressing group feelings.** Kept in proper balance, this role serves for "sensing feelings, moods, and relationships within the group."\(^1\)

3. **The role of harmonizing or mediating—**"attempts to reconcile disagreements; reducing tension by 'pouring oil on troubled waters'; getting people to explore their differences."\(^2\) These are ways of dealing with group conflicts. Harmonizing is a way to reach unity through struggles. Since every person is different, conflicting ideas may arise in growth cells which may require the application of this principle both by the leader and by group members.

4. **The role of compromising.** "This means admitting error and being willing to 'give' a little bit. The compromiser is flexible. He is able to find a middle ground that is attractive to others who hold different ideas."\(^3\) It is "conciliating differences in points of view."\(^4\) Learning to admit error is hard. The 'give and take' of group interaction may develop circumstances which may require compromising--people admitting error and a willing flexibility to conciliate divergent ideas.

5. **The role of gate keeping.** Gate keepers help "keep communication flowing between all group discussion."\(^5\) A gate

---

\(^1\)Bormann and Bormann, p. 49.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Sasse, p. 322.

\(^4\)Knowles and Knowles, p. 52.

\(^5\)Lippitt and Seashore, p. 324.
keeper is a controller. This is even a biblical picture (Mark 14:34). Moreover, where would a group get without control? Although the group leader, as the most skillful person of the group, must be the main gate controller, he should ask people in the group to cooperate regarding control in all areas of group life.

6. **The role of setting standards.** "The standard setter helps the group express what the goals are . . . and whether or not the group" is meeting them.\(^1\) Goals are part of man's life. A life without goals of any kind may be a purposeless life. A small group, then, being a combination of persons, may also be a combination of goals. Goals, in turn, are useless if no effort is made to achieved them. Therefore, people checking goal-achievement are necessary. In growth cells this may be a group activity.

7. **The role of following.** "Going along with the group, somewhat passively accepting the ideas of others, serving as an audience during group discussion, being a good listener"\(^2\) are a part of the following role. Attentive group listening should be emphasized as much as group discussion.

8. **The role of relieving tension.** This is "draining off negative feelings, diverting attention from unpleasant matters."\(^3\)

\(^1\)Sasse, p. 324.

\(^2\)Knowles and Knowles, pp. 52-53.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 53
Group-building rapport from this viewpoint is necessary, but again, group leaders should be concerned regarding the unfinished business of these "unpleasant matters." In other words, relieving tension at the price of suppressing feelings or guiding people to hold grudge may hurt someone or leave him uneasy. Of course, the nature of the issue-provoking tension should determine how to apply this group principle.

This study does not advocate any one special format for the implementation of the above principles to hold group discussion with new believers. Keeping lines of communication open in all directions is most important. In this way group discussion could be kept balanced--"a constant flow back and forth between spontaneity and directed discussion." Therefore, group leaders should use their judgment while using these principles of group discussion so that group meetings may not degenerate into a classroom. They should encourage people to

---

1At any given moment, every group has a participation pattern. For instance, it may be all one-way, with the leader speaking to the members and the members speaking to one another and to the group as a whole. . . . In a given group this pattern may tend to be quite consistent, or it may vary from time to time. The studies do not indicate that any one participation pattern is always best; it depends upon the requirements of a given situation. But many studies show that, on the whole, the broader the participation among members of a group, the deeper the interest and involvement will be (Knowles, p. 43).

2Ibid.
ask questions and express themselves in any possible way which would facilitate group interaction.

**Raise Interesting Questions**

The ability to ask appropriate questions is basic in stimulating communication between persons in order to keep it going.\(^1\) However, questions should not be misused. They should be a means to control group process but not group members. "The trap inherent in the use of questions is that it does control the members. The most efficient method of keeping members in submission is to interrogate them."\(^2\) On the other hand, how could a small group function without using questions at all? Questions seem to be a necessary evil. Asking and encouraging people to ask questions can do much to keep the subject matter tailored to the needs of people.\(^3\) Some recommendations to prevent the misuse of questions are:\(^4\)

1. Avoid asking too many questions. Frame only some basic ones--other questions will arise in group discussion.

---

\(^1\)In formulating or selecting questions, it is important to consider where the group is in its life cycle. If it is just beginning, history-giving questions are easy to ask. As time continues in group life, the questions can become more substantive (Kilcher, p. 21).

\(^2\)Bates and Johnson, pp. 53,75.

\(^3\)Moore, p. 110.

\(^4\)See additional material on the art of questions in appendix B.
2. Begin with opinion-seeking questions--from the known to the unknown, from surface concepts to deeper ones.

3. Build up questions one upon the other in a logical sequence. The sequence may be broken by group discussion, but it may be even worse if discussion is held discarding the use of questions. In other words, the sequence of questions may help keep the sequence of thoughts, avoiding the confusion which could result if the group works without using questions.

4. Avoid too many "why" questions. Answers to this type of questions may sound like a confessional--giving account for things done. Besides, some persons dislike being asked too many of this type of questions, and others are not immediately ready to answer "why" questions.

5. Shun the pattern of question-answer, question-answer. This mechanical pattern of question may become boring. Shift to conversational interaction on the key thought which is supposed to be the answer to the query. For example, instead of asking what is Peter's advice to Christians in 2 Pet 3:18, ask the group to read the passage and suggest some ways to put that advice into practice. While with the first method people would be silent, waiting for another question after answering the previous one, the second method would involve them in a brainstorming conversation. This is fact-seeking versus opinion-seeking.

6. Avoid prescriptive styles of answers. The manner in which the leader answers questions greatly influences its effect upon the group. Some leaders convey, by their manner, that there is only one correct answer--'This is my answer'. Instead,
he ought to say, "Here is one answer but I'm sure some of you have others."¹ Instead of prescribing the right way, the leader should open up possibilities so that people may discover by themselves different ways to deal with the problem.²

7. Avoid probing questions presented in a non-directive general manner. A directive question, on the other hand, should be clear in its purpose--specific and/or open in the answer(s) being sought.³ Windings and slants typical of some counseling types of questions should be shunned because people may be confused regarding the reason behind the question or what it is pursuing. Furthermore, leaders should both encourage group discussion around answers and seek the involvement of specific individuals. "However, care should be given to avoid embarrassing participants. . . . A person should not feel that he has failed."⁴ This may be particularly true of new converts who are not used to small-group processes.

¹T. Gordon, p. 226.

²Kahn and Thompson, p. 141.

³Samples of directive questions are: How do you feel about this particular--point, subject, view, etc.? Could you mention one specific reason for . . . ? What do you think is the best way to--implement, come about, solve, answer--this--situation, problem, question etc.? If you could go back in time, what would you do different to--improve, change, etc.--that situation? Which of the reasons being discussed is the most appropriate for your everyday life? What does it mean to you?

⁴Bright, p. 9.
8. Questions should seek both information and reaction of feelings—personal sharing as opposed to probing for mere answers.¹ Some examples are: What do you think is the meaning of the passage? What does it mean to you? How do you feel about the message of the verbs of this passage?

Meet Group Conflicts

Sometimes there might be a clash of personalities in group discussion. Here the leader plays the role of a mediator by "having each party state his position and the other person restate it to his satisfaction."² Though difficult, the leader should keep himself from favoring any party unless it is extremely necessary for him to state his position in order to settle the point. Even then, he could suggest a deeper study of the subject instead. He would then have an opportunity to get some facts to clarify the misunderstanding over the point being discussed. In nurture cells, conflicts may take the form of disagreement over the interpretation of a portion of Scripture. The leader should guide the group to see that sometimes a great deal can be learned by the disagreement of some of the members over a passage.³ He moves people to focus each others' views understandingly.

¹Leslie, pp. 46, 145.
²Barlow, p. 131.
³Bright, p. 9.
Exploit Group Silence

There are times when the leader offers a "subject and is met with silence or a brief response and then silence."¹ Leaders should not be afraid of moments of silence. Group members do not need to be talking continually to show interest or to give a sign of progress. Silence is natural. When there is a silent time, the leader could ask the members their reaction to it.² Then, too, "group interaction is very likely to get boring and frustrating at periodic intervals."³ This situation could be lessened, in part, by keeping the discussion moving on at a good pace. This may be the time when the leader should summarize the point and go on to the next using the summary as a resource to warm up group discussion. One should remember, however, that no one should be forced to participate in group discussion.⁴ Instead, all participants should be allowed "to be themselves, to have their say in their own way and in their own time."⁵ Some persons are naturally talkative while others prefer to remain silent; and "some people do not need to say very much in order to participate fully and feel a vital part of the group."⁶

¹Zander, p. 36.
³Erickson and Phillips, p. 84.
⁴Barlow, p. 131.
⁵Kahn and Thompson, p. 141.
leaders ought to remember that the shy person needs the sharing of their "humanness and warmth more than the gifted."  

The silent member may not contribute for various reasons. Perhaps he is afraid to talk before the group or maybe he is unable to keep up with the flow of the discussion. It may be that he is not able to formulate his ideas quickly enough.

On the other hand, nonverbal communication--body language and attitudes--are as important as oral participation. An attentive person participates as much as anyone else.

**Keep Interest Alive**

When interest in group discussion seems to be dropping, the leader should look for ways to arouse it. Variation in group process and activities may be of some help.

---

1 Carin and Sund, p. 3.

2 Kemp, p. 139.

3 Variation in group discussion may be: (1) Scenario: Individuals view their own future. Everyone presents his vision of his future and receives back comments from the other members for its improvement. (2) Case studies: A problem or a hypothetical circumstance is discussed and possible ways suggested for its solution. (3) Role playing: Asking participants to assume the parts of other real or imaginary persons and to carry on conversation and behave "as if" they were those persons. (4) Relational Bible study: A story of the Bible is studied as "a picture of my Christian pilgrimage now." Group members identify themselves with the main person of the story. It may be good if every member contributes a little bit to the task of reviving the story. Questions are made on the basis of four types of relationships: God, ourselves, other significant people, and the world in general (Gardner, pp. 109-10; Clemons
Make Closing Enthusiastic

Two ways to conclude group discussion are:

1. Ask group members to summarize key points and to draw conclusions from the subject. The leader could ask, "What are the main ideas discovered today?" or "Tell us in your own words the main points you learned today."¹

2. Another way to conclude group discussion is with a reaction review. "The data obtained through reaction reviews could be used for planning other group meetings."² However, the technique of asking questions at the end of a group meeting is useless unless the group has opportunity to use it "to improve its working relationships."³ In other words, the practice may become too mechanical and without concrete practical results for the group. Hence, time should be spared not only to answer the questions of the reaction review but also to discuss the answers with people⁴.

¹See Johnson and Johnson, p. 281.

²Clinebell, p. 35.


⁴For reaction reviews see appendix C.
Group Discussion Outlines

Keep Yourself Growing

Purpose: Getting to know one another and informing new believers of the aim of group meetings.

Activities

1. A hymn or a song preferred by someone in the group
2. Prayer
3. Getting acquainted tasks
   (a) Personal history-giving
   (b) How did you get in touch with the SDA Church for the first time?
   (c) Share your feelings concerning your baptism.
4. Challenge to grow
   (a) No Christian should be content with the first instruction (Hendrix and Householder, pp. 107, 139).
   (b) "First Words to Young Converts," (Boyd, pp. 11, 13, 25).
   (c) Keep growing: Heb 6:1 and Eph 4:13-15
5. Objectives of growth cells
   (a) What is a growth cell?
   (b) Procedures concerning group meetings: When and where will we meet? Mutual trust, willingness to participate, and personal input.
6. Filling in the worksheets of appendix A
7. Closing prayer
Reflect on Your Spiritual Needs

Purpose: To encourage new believers to share their personal spiritual needs

Activities
1. Song
2. Prayer
4. Sharing personal spiritual needs:
   (a) Share some blessings which you have received as a result of your being a Christian (Matt 19:27).
   (b) Where do you see yourself spiritually?
   (c) How would you describe your faith?
   (d) What problems are you experiencing in your Christian pilgrimage?
   (e) Can you identify some of your growth steps?
   (f) Share one area where you would like to grow.
5. Summary of needs
6. Prayer groups

Set Your Spiritual Goals

Purpose: To stimulate new believers to set their spiritual growth goals.

Activities
1. Time for singing and praying
2. Time for sharing
   (a) How would you describe the first stage of your Christian life up to the present moment?
(b) Who were the key people in your conversion experience? Why these persons?
(c) What are some of your life goals and dreams? How do these goals affect your faith life?

3. Time for spiritual goal setting. Last week we discussed together our spiritual needs:
(a) Which ways could you suggest that the church and the group could provide to meet your needs?
(b) What personal goals would you like to establish in order to grow in Christ?
(c) Could you share a passage, which summarizes your spiritual desires?

4. Summary of group spiritual goals
5. Closing prayer

Develop Loving Relationships

Purpose: To discuss with new converts the view that developing relationships is a key factor to stay in the church.

Activities
1. Singing and praying
2. Getting acquainted exercise: "Picture me" (appendix C)
3. Subject for group discussion: "How to Get Along with Other Christians"¹
4. Questions and thoughts
   (a) Have you ever had trouble getting along with

¹Montgomery, pp. 51-55.
(b) Poor church relationships between some brethren is not new. See the case of Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-5.

(c) Elements to get along with others: to live in harmony with the Lord, to work together for unity, to rejoice together in the Lord, and to cultivate a forbearing spirit.

(d) Additional references: personal acquaintance with Christ (John 1:35-30); love, the key note of relationships (John 15:12); not to despise anyone (Matt 15:22-28); not to make distinction of anyone (Rom 10:12); and mutual forbearance (Col 3:12-13).

Ask people to read these texts and share their positive and negative reactions.

5. Summary: Loving one another sincerely is the secret for church relationships and the key to stay in it.

6. Closing song and prayer

How to Study the Bible

Purpose: To encourage new converts to study their Bibles.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing personal impressions on Bible understanding (Have you ever discovered that the Bible does not say what you first thought it said? How did you react?)
3. Christ, the heart of the Bible (John 5:39)
4. Tips on Bible study
   (a) Meditation (Ps 1:2; Josh 1:8, 1 Tim 4:15)
   (b) Memorization (Ps 119:11; Deut 6:6; 11:18; Prov 7:1-3)
   (c) Studying (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15)
   (d) Reading (Rev 1:3; 1 Tim 4:13)
   (e) Hearing (Rom 10:17; Rev 2:7, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)
5. Summary: Commitment to meditate, to memorize, to study, and to follow Bible instruction
6. Closing prayers in groups

Ten Tips on How to Stay in the Church

Purpose: To share with new believers ten general principles recommended by church leaders to stay in the church.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Exercise: spiritual self analysis (see appendix C)
   Standards to evaluate yourself: (a) what you believe you are; (b) what others believe you are; and (c) what God believes you are.
3. Group discussion: Tips to stay in the church
   (a) Prayer (Ps 55:17; 1 Thess 5:17)
   (b) Study (2 Tim 2:15)
   (c) Church attendance (Heb 10:25)
   (d) Trust in God (Isa 26:4)
   (e) Follow Christ, not others (John 21:21-22)
   (f) Be a witness for Christ (Acts 1:8)
(g) Don't be deceived (Gal 6:7; Matt 24:4)
(h) Practice love (1 John 3:14; 4:7-8)
(i) Keep your eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:2)
(j) Help others (Matt 25:40)

4. Summary

5. Prayer

The Secret to Stability

Purpose: To discuss four roles to become a stable person: accepting authority, ourselves, other people, and life as it comes.

Activities
1. Singing and prayer
2. Sharing exercise: "Projecting." Who would you want to be if you couldn't be you? How would you change your life if you could live it over?
3. Group discussion: Accepting God-given roles
   (a) Share God-given roles to you
   (b) God-given roles from the biblical perspective (Phil 4:11; 1 Thess 5:14; Rom 8:28; Isa 45:9; Jer 29:11)
   (c) How does accepting or not accepting your God-given roles strengthen (hinder) your stability in Christ?
4. Everyone makes a brief summary of his or her God-given roles.

5. Prayer

1Speas, pp. 29-37.
The Importance of Your Trials

Purpose: To discuss with new converts the fact that the Christian life is also a warfare against evil.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing: Describe your faith with one word
3. Group discussion: Facing times of trial
   (a) One troubling experience you can go through as a new Christian is to encounter a trying trial.
   (b) The Christian is never free from problems.
   (c) What problems or trials are you facing right now?
   (d) Do problems make you want to quit the Christian life, or do they draw you closer to God?
   (e) Share your personal reactions to 1 Pet 4:12.
4. The correct attitude towards trials
   (a) Face them with Christ's help (Luke 22:32)
   (b) Do not flee (John 10:12)
   (c) Trust God's promises (1 Cor 10:13)
5. Prayer

The Secret of Continuance

Purpose: To share with new believers the fact that the source of our permanence in the faith comes from the intervention of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

1Webster and McAllister, pp. 47-48.

2Meyer, Saved and Kept, pp. 115-121.
Activities
1. Singing and prayer
2. Sharing: What prompted you to think about God today?
3. Group discussion
   (a) Read Phil 1:6 (God is in charge of our restoration)
       Share God's beginning deeds in you.
   (b) Heb 7:24-25 (Christ ministers our sanctification)
       Share a practical meaning of the intercession of Christ in your life.
   (c) Rom 8:1, 4, 9, 14 (Strengthened by the indwelling of the Spirit; share an incident of the guidance of the Spirit in your life.
4. Summary: The secret of continuance is keeping oneself close to each member of the Godhead.
5. Closing prayer

How to Care for Friends and Relatives When Only You Have Been Converted

Purpose: To help new converts to meet hostility from friends and relatives and how to witness to them.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing: What is the most beautiful thing about people, especially your friends and relatives?
3. In what way can you reflect that the best thing which has happened to you has been to become a Christian?

1Gordon and Funk, pp. 79-86.
4. Have you ever felt tempted to hide from someone that you are a SDA? Share your feelings.

5. Practical ways to care for friends and relatives
   (a) Face indifference and hostility with joy (Acts 5:41)
   (b) Be always ready to serve (Eph 6:6-7)
   (c) Be sincere in your conversion (Ps 24:3-4)
   (d) Listen to them, avoiding entering into controversies
   (e) Be patient with those at home

6. Closing prayer

Our Defense against the Devil

Purpose: To strengthen new believers with the commands and promises related to the defeat of Satan through Christ.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing exercise: Self-appraisal inventory (appendix C)
3. Group discussion: The defeat of our enemy (Jas 4:7)
   (a) What does submission to God means to you?
   (b) What does it mean for you "to resist?"
   (c) "Be sober." "A passionate man is a weak man. A cool head and a calm heart are the conditions of successful contest with the devil." What does it mean to you to be sober?

---

1 Bounds, pp. 136-157.
2 Ibid., p. 139.
(d) Cultivate a spirit of forgiveness (Matt 6:12-15).

"An unforgiving spirit is not only Satan's widest door into our hearts, but it is the strongest imitation and warmest welcome."¹ Share why it is difficult for you to forgive.

(e) Fill your mind with the Word (Ps 119:11)

(f) Be watchful (Mark 13:37)

(g) Put on the whole armour of God (Eph 6:11-18).

Share your understanding about this armour.

4. Summary of interaction

5. Prayer

To Become Like Him²

Purpose: To reflect and to study with new believers the principle of transformation by beholding Christ.

Activities

1. Song and prayer

2. Sharing: Write all you can about Jesus in forty words.


   (a) Imagine yourself on the Mount of Transfiguration. How long could you behold Christ? Can we be as dormant as the disciples? (Matt 17:1-8)

   (b) Trusting only man means death (Jer 17:5)

   (c) Beholding is intimacy with God

¹Bounds, p. 139.
²Cooper, p. 83.
(d) Fix your eyes upon Jesus (Heb 12:1-2)

4. Summary: A Christian is in a state of dynamic change.¹

5. Prayer

**The Holy Spirit and You**

Purpose: To help new converts to understand and seek the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

**Activities**

1. Song and prayer

2. Sharing time

   (a) Where do you see yourself spiritually?

   (b) How would you describe your faith?

   (c) What problems are you experiencing in your Christian pilgrimage?

   (d) Can you identify some of your growth steps?


   (a) The Spirit regenerates (John 3:5)

   (b) The Spirit guides (Rom 8:14; Gal 5:25)

   (c) The Spirit indwells (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; John 14:15)

   (d) The Spirit assures us of our salvation (Rom 8:16)

   (e) The Spirit seals the believer (Eph 1:13)

   (f) Share a fruit of the Spirit in you (Gal 5:22-23)

4. Summary and prayer

---

¹Cooper, p. 83.
Cultivating a Spirit of Forbearance and Forgiveness

Purpose: To discuss with new believers the fact that an unforgiving spirit hinders Christian growth and relationships.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Exercise: "Self-study in forgiveness" (Appendix C)
3. Group discussion subject: Our Model on relationships
4. Article to read: "I'll forgive but I Won't Forget"¹
   (a) Histories about Christ forgiving people's sins
      Which is the most impressive to you and why?
   (b) No one should be despised (Matt 15:22-28)
   (c) Avoid judgment (Rom 10:12; Col 3:11; Jas 2:1-3)
   (d) True relationships involve mutual forbearance and mutual respect (Col 3:12-13; Heb 13:17)
5. Conclusion: "We can't receive forgiveness and keep our feet on our brother's neck and our hand at his throat."
6. Prayer groups

"A Question of Feelings"²

Purpose: To help new converts not to depend on their feelings as a thermometer for their faith.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. How is your background related with your feelings?

¹Flynn, pp. 71-79.
²Davis, pp. 95-100.
3. Share how your feelings help or hinder your relationships with your relatives and friends.

4. Share your feelings concerning religion before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist.

5. Feelings in the Bible
   (a) Creation of man and feelings (Gen 1:26-27).
   (b) The control of our feelings (Prov 14:29; 15:13; 16:32; 17:22; 25:28; Rom 12:19).

6. Summary: "A Christian's hope does not rest upon the sandy foundation of feelings."\(^1\)

7. Closing prayer

"The Church, the Avant-garde of the New Creation"\(^2\)

Purpose: To help new members understand the purpose and role of the SDA Church on earth.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing: My beginnings in the SDA Church
3. Group discussion
   (a) A family, the ideal definition of the church (Eph 2:19; 3:15). Do you feel at home in the SDA Church?
   (b) Objectives for the organization of the church (Matt 16:18-19; Eph 3:10; 1 Tim 3:15; Rev 14:6)
   (c) What do you expect from a church that is like a family?

\(^1\)Davis, pp. 95-100.

\(^2\)Sugden, pp. 53-61.
(d) How could you contribute to this family spirit?

(e) The church is a sign of the presence of the King and his kingdom in the world (Luke 17:21).

(f) Committed to Christ and the Church (1 Cor 10:32)

4. Summary: By being in the church, we are part of a family and of a Kingdom.

5. Prayer

Developing Faith Capacity¹

Purpose: To discuss with new believers the conditioning factors to develop faith capacity.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Trust test game (appendix C)
3. Group discussion
   (a) Inborn temperamental tendencies. Classify your personality (sanguine, melancholic, etc.).
   (b) Personal experiences. Share one incident in your life in which you had to demonstrate your faith.
   (c) Personal adjustment. "Hidden fears, as phantom anxieties hiding in the secrecy of repression, hinder one's ability to trust God."²
   (d) Views of the universe. (Believing in a real God).

¹Mavis, pp. 118-127.
²Ibid., p. 120.
(e) Sincere spiritual intentions (Matt 9:20-22; Heb 11).

(f) Personal acquaintance with other Christians.

(g) A knowledge of the Scriptures (Rom 10 17).

(h) Acquaintance with God through worship.

4. Where do you see weaknesses which could hinder your faith development?

5. Prayer

How to Develop Our Characters

Purpose: To analyze the principle of accumulation found in Matt 12:35 in relation to of Christian character-growth.

Activities

1. Song and prayer.

2. Sharing exercise: "If I were a disciple with Jesus I would probably be __________. " Share the qualities which you admire in that disciple. (Appendix C)

3. Group discussion

(a) "Character is that which is found still standing when the crash is over. Character is moral cash on hand when creditors close in life. Character is what you are when no one is around."²

(b) Read Matt 12:35 silently several times.

(c) What do you think is the key word in this passage?

(d) How would you apply the passage to yourself?

¹Werner, pp. 138-48.

²Ibid.
(e) A good Christian character grows the hard way.

4. Prayer

Life Is a Ladder

Purpose: To view the Christian life as a spiritual ladder.

Activities

1. Song and prayer

2. Exercise: Which person of the Bible would you like to be like besides Christ? Name three traits of character of that person.

3. Group discussion
   (a) Spiritual growth is described in the Bible with a ladder (Gen 28:10-13; 2 Pet 1:5-8).
   (b) Evaluation yourself in the light of Jacob's dream.
   (c) Lessons from the ladder: We walk upward step by step; Christ came down step by step.
   (d) Don't become discouraged because of hard climbing.

4. Summary and prayer

Importance of Tongue Control

Purpose: To discuss with new converts how the misuse of tongues hinders Christian relationships and spiritual growth.

Activities

1. Song and prayer

2. Getting acquainted exercise: "Telephone" (appendix C)

---

1 Miller, Practical Religion, pp. 82-90.
3. Article for group study: "The Mightiest Muscle"¹

4. Group discussion
   (a) Share your understanding of Jas 1:10; 3:3-12.
   (b) Share your feelings when criticized (Prov 11:13)
   (c) Results of soft sayings (Prov 13:13; Matt 12:36.
   (d) Four attitudes towards criticism: (i) to expect it;
       (ii) to listen to it; (iii) to ignore it, and (iv) to seek
       to be pleasing in the sight of God.

5. Summary and prayer

Witnessing

Purpose: To aid new converts to share their faith.

Activities

1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing personal witnessing experience
3. Share what the Lord has done for you (Mark 5:18-20).
4. Learning to communicate with assertiveness
5. Factors in communication: eye contact, body posture,
     emotional control, gestures, voice, fluency, timing, and
     content
6. Have group members help one another by evaluating
   their behavior in these areas.

7. Summary
8. Closing prayer

¹Eastman, pp. 65-68.
Finding Your Spiritual Endowments

Purpose: To help new converts to discover their spiritual gifts and encourage them to cultivate and exercise these gifts.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Sharing: What are you good at? What are you poor at?
3. Group discussion
   (a) Purpose of spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7-8).
   (b) Variety of gifts and functions (Rom 12:4-8).
   (c) The relation between the gifts and the Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-11, 27-30).
   (d) Which gifts fit your character and background?
4. Summary: Let the Spirit lead you as you exercise your spiritual gifts (Acts 13:2).
5. Closing prayer

How to Keep the Sabbath

Purpose: To help converts to improve Sabbath-keeping.

Activities
1. Song and prayer
2. Share one activity that you enjoy doing on Sabbath (or your Sabbath schedule).
3. Group discussion
   (a) The fourth commandment specifies how to keep the Sabbath (Exod 20:9-10)
   (b) Preparation for Sabbath-keeping (Exod 16:22-23)
   (c) The right behavior on Sabbath (Isa 58:13-14)
(d) Christ's example (Luke 4:16; Matt 12:12)
(e) Share personal ways to commit yourself to improve your personal Sabbath-keeping.

4. Summary of main aspects of group discussion

5. Closing prayer

**Sin and Temptation**

Purpose: To help new converts to meet trials.

Activities

1. Song and prayer

2. Article to read: "Turning Troubles into Triumphs."

3. Share what you consider to be the biggest trial that you have had in your life.

4. Group discussion
   (a) The Christian life and trouble (Job 5:7)
   (b) Think about Christ as a sufferer (Isa 53:3)
   (c) Reflect on God's promises when facing troubles (Isa 41:10,13; 59:19; Zeph 4:6)
   (d) From the article that you read, share a thought that you enjoyed for some reason.

5. Summary
   (a) Complaining increases trouble.
   (b) Troubles should be expected.
   (c) Do not magnify trouble.
   (d) Do not breed troubles.
   (e) Face trouble with a triumphant spirit.
   (f) God allows troubles that we may not become too attached to the passing world.

6. Closing prayer

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Summary

Productive group discussion does not occur by accident. It results from the combination of a number of elements. This chapter notes ten elements—developing the leader's attitude and behavior, creating an adequate environment, caring for the flow of feelings, planning oral or written guidelines, devising a way to start group discussion, following group procedures, learning how questions are made and answered, managing group conflicts, noting people's pattern of participation, arousing interest when it is failing, and choosing ways to close group discussion.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Three views are established in the first part of this study—(1) the validity of a NT terminology for a theology of disciple-building; (2) the balance that exists between disciple-winning and disciple-building in the ministry of Christ and his apostles; and (3) how the strategy of small groups can be beneficial for the strengthening of new believers. The second part of the study is a manual of instructions to help potential group leaders in small-group ministry for new converts. Chapter 5 points to the qualifications of group leaders and the development of a curriculum for new believers. Chapter 6 presents a series of instructions to lead group discussion.

Conclusions

The unfolding of this study leads the student to the following conclusions:

1. There are not very many references in the NT to differentiate between more established and newly baptized converts, but the few which are available seem to be clear enough to justify this differentiation (Mat 18:1-13; Luke 22:32;
John 21:15-17). On the other hand, there is abundant material in the NT that illustrates the balance between disciple-winning and disciple-building in the ministries of Christ and the apostles. Therefore, their modeling calls for the development of strategies to nurture and establish new converts in the church today.

2. The theological terminology of the NT concerning disciple-building clearly points to this ministry in the early Church. Therefore, it seems still adequate to emphasize this same ministry in our time.

3. The example of Christ and the apostles indicates that success in disciple-building is closely related to the degree of personal involvement of disciple builders. As Ellen White notes, it is not just preaching that new converts need; but it is giving the care of spiritual "fathers and mothers" willing "to take these babes in the truth to their hearts"\textsuperscript{1} that is so important. Falling into this category of heart-to-heart involvement, the strategy of growth cells seems to be adequate for establishing newly baptized converts. Furthermore, the nature of man as a social being who cannot grow in isolation also points to the positiveness of small group (growth cells) as a strategy that may be worth testing for assimilating new converts into the church.

**Recommendations**

Conclusions lead to the following recommendations:

\textsuperscript{1}E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 4:68-69.
1. Since disciple-building is the other side of the commission of disciple-winning, this study recommends that it be made a special emphasis by the church, especially in Puerto Rico, in order to bring balance to the work of discipleship.

2. Based on the example left by Christ and the apostles in the NT, this study recommends the development and implementation of multiple strategies to establish new believers in the SDA Church in Puerto Rico. In other words, as different strategies are tested to win disciples, different strategies should be tested to hold them. This recommendation seems to be justified further by the manifold needs exhibited by new believers--multiple strategies for integrating converts into the church may contribute to better meeting their needs.

3. Since success in disciple-building may depend on the degree of personal involvement of disciple builders, this study recommends the use of small groups (growth cells) to integrate converts into the SDA Church in Puerto Rico as a heart-to-heart approach based on the principle of building relationships between group members. In turn, this leads to the recommendation for the training of disciple-builders, in general, and to the training of leaders of growth cells for new converts wherever this particular plan is adopted.

4. Since the spiritual education of new believers should be as balanced and complete as possible, this study recommends at least three phases of nurture in disciple-building in the SDA Church in Puerto Rico--doctrinal, mission and leadership, and history of the church.
5. This study recommends that a professional research be made to detect the special reasons for backsliding from Adventism in Puerto Rico. This may help, in part, to better adapt the strategies of disciple-building to retain converts in that field.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INFORMATION CONCERNING NEW CONVERTS
INFORMATION CONCERNING NEW CONVERTS

1. Name: ________________________________

2. Sex: ___ Male  ___ Female

3. Age:  ___10-19  ___20-29;  ___30-39;  ___40-49;
   ___50-59;  ___60-69;  ___70-80 and over.

4. Occupation:
   ___ farmer
   ___ homemaker
   ___ businessman
   ___ skilled worker
   ___ employed professional
   ___ self-employed professional
   ___ other, please specify ____________________.

5. Marital status
   ___ married  ___ divorced
   ___ remarried  ___ widowed
   ___ separated  ___ single

6. Educational level completed.
   ___ Grades 1-6  ___ Grades 7-9  ___ Grades 10-12
   ___ Graduate School  ___ Professional School

7. Do you have Seventh-day Adventist relatives?  Y ___ N ___
   (If the answer is "yes", please state number and acquaintance.)
   Number ___  Acquaintance ______________

8. Have you been a member of another denomination?
   Yes ___  Which one ____________________  No ___

9. What is the church affiliation of your spouse?  _______

10. What denomination exerts the strongest influence in your family in general? ________________________

11. Please indicate if parents were Adventists at the time of your birth.
    ___ both  ___ father  ___ mother  ___ neither
12. When you decided to become a member of the Adventist Church, do you recall if it was your own decision or were you persuaded to make that decision?
   ___ My own decision. ___ Persuaded but I agreed.
   ___ Persuaded without strong desire.
   ___ To please parents, peers, or others.
   ___ Not sure.

13. Which person(s) or agencies influenced you the most to become an SDA?
   ___ parents  ___ sibling
   ___ spouse    ___ fiance
   ___ other relative ___ friend
   ___ neighbor   ___ co-worker
   ___ SDA radio program ___ SDA pastor
   ___ SDA evangelist ___ SDA literature
   ___ Bible instructor ___ SDA teacher
   ___ Bible correspondence school
   ___ other, please specify _________________________

14. Would you be willing to state the particular reason why you became an Adventist? Or would you be willing to respond to the following reasons?
   ___ Urged by the voice of God.
   ___ Convinced it was the truth.
   ___ Responding to the call of Jesus.
   ___ To find salvation.
   ___ Intellectual reasons.
   ___ Impressed by SDA beliefs.
   ___ Liked the preacher.
   ___ To please ____________.
   ___ Wanted to join a church.
   ___ Raised in SDA home.
   ___ Seeking friends and fellowship.
   ___ Result of personal crisis or sickness.
   ___ Other, please specify. _________________________

15. Were you instructed in all major beliefs and SDA principles of Christian living before baptism or did some come as surprises after you had joined the church? I was acquainted with all major beliefs before baptism:
   ___ Yes  ___ No  ___ Not sure.
16. During the period following your baptism, did you:
   experience instruction? ___Y___N
   active church involvement ___Y___N
   personal spiritual growth ___Y___N
   increase faith ___Y___N
   closeness to the Lord ___Y___N
   sense of commitment ___Y___N
   assurance of forgiveness ___Y___N
   peace of mind ___Y___N
   urge to tell others ___Y___N
   desire to help others ___Y___N
   longing for Second Coming ___Y___N
   other, please specify ___Y___N

17. What kind of fellowship did you find in the Adventist Church?1
   ___ aloof and reserved
   ___ warm and friendly
   ___ do not speak to you
   ___ understanding and forgiving
   ___ cold and unfriendly
   ___ trying to set you involved
   ___ critical of others
   ___ filled with Christian love
   ___ other, please specify

   1See other sampling questions in Nielsen, pp. 249-57.
BEGINNINGS IN THE SDA CHURCH

Circle one number. A low number means agreement, and a high number disagreement.

I feel good about being a member of the SDA Church:
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I feel a friendly atmosphere and caring fellowship in this church:
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I feel regular worship service is meeting my spiritual needs.
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

I would like to have a more active role in the work of the church.
1  2  3  4  5  6  7

How would you evaluate your present relationship with the church?

Answer the following questions:

My first interest in the Adventist Church came through ______

My decision to join the church was influenced by _____________

What impressed you most when you first attended the SDA Church?

What do you like best in the church?

Is there anything you dislike? If so, what? ________________

1Sources: Caslow, p. 46; Nielsen, pp. 138-9.
APPENDIX B

SOURCE MATERIAL
SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever discovered that the Bible does not say what you first thought it said? What was your reaction?

2. What is God like to you? Is God real to you or is He vague? When, if ever, did God become more than a word to you? If you had to use another word for God, what word would you use?

3. How would you describe the first stage of your Christian life between your baptism up to the present moment?

4. Would you describe your conversion as sudden or gradual? Who were the key people in your conversion experience? What feelings did you have when you were converted? What practices help you grow spiritually?¹

5. What is your description of a spiritual person? What do you see as being the responsibilities of a Christian?

6. Where do you see yourself spiritually? How would you describe your faith? What problems are you experiencing in your Christian pilgrimage? Can you identify some of your growth steps?

7. What are some of your life goals and dreams? How do these goals affect your faith life?

8. Share some blessings which you have received as a result of your being a Christian (Matt 19:27).

9. What is one thing which has helped your prayer life and one thing which has hindered your prayer life?

10. How would you describe the atmosphere of your local church?

11. What one quality in your Christian life do you want to be good at in five years?

12. What is one area where you would like to grow in your Christian faith?

¹C. Davis, pp. 83-115.
13. What prompted you to think about God today?
14. Write a letter to God.
15. Describe God using one word.
16. Share two reasons why you love God.
17 Who, excluding Jesus, is your favorite character?
18. What might be the first question you’ll ask Jesus when you’re in heaven?
19. Write all you can about Jesus in 40 words or less.
20. Share one area of your life in which you have experienced growth.
INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

1. Look for the relation of passage to its context.

2. Translate it into terms of ordinary speech and find its central point.

3. Place it in the context of the Christian message as a whole.

4. What specific message was it meant to convey? What is the contemporary meaning?

5. Look for the important and difficult words. (Difficult because we do not understand them or because we have heard them so often that they have lost their contemporary meaning for us). What is their contemporary meaning?

6. Relevance of passage for us personally, and as a church. How does it affect what we believe and do?1

INTERPRETING A PASSAGE

I. Examining the Content of the Passage.

1. What does the writer say?
2. What is the message of the passage?
3. To whom was the message directed?
4. What situation does the passage describes?

II. Finding Out the Meaning of the Passage

1. What does it mean?
2. Find out the meaning of words, metaphors, symbols, ...

III. Personal Application of the Passage

1. What does it mean to me?
2. What should I do?
3. How should I apply it to myself?
4. Ways in which I could practice it.

1Little, Learning Together, p. 71.
MEMBER'S REACTION ON GROUP MEETING

1. Personal participation in group discussion. I think I talked:
   ___ too much       ___ hardly at all
   ___ very much      ___ not at all
   ___ moderately     ___ very little
   ___ too little

2. In today's group discussion I felt:
   ___ bored             ___ sad
   ___ uneasy            ___ fearful
   ___ happy             ___ surprised
   ___ very interested  ___ out of the group
   ___ reluctant to say what I felt.

3. Mention one or more reasons for your answer above.

4. I think our discussion today was:
   ___ too personal      ___ not personal enough
   ___ helpful to the group ___ of little value
   ___ boring            ___ instructive
   ___ hard              ___ interesting

5. What did you learn about group members during the discussion today?

6. What spiritual insight did you get from group discussion today?

7. In what ways was the subject relevant to you?
SPANISH BIBLIOGRAPHY
ON SMALL GROUPS¹


¹To be enlarged as other books are published.
APPENDIX C

GROUP EXERCISES
SPIRITUAL SELF-ANALYSIS

There are three standards by which you are evaluated:

1. What you believe you are.
2. What others believe you are.
3. What God believes you are.

There is always a possibility of error in the first two; only the third is infallible. An honest self-analysis would help in finding areas in which your personal experience is weak and where it is strong. You can evaluate yourself by circling the number which you estimate represents in a scale 1-6 your present condition in each one of the fourteen items listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Optimum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My prayer life.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Church attendance</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Happy in church.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trust the church.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stewardship.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My witnessing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Willing service.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Family devotions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Happy home.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I and my children.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I and my parents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My fellow church.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My neighbors.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPIRITUAL SELF-ANALYSIS

Circle two words that best describe your spiritual life now:

___ slipping
___ stagnant
___ growing
___ stormy
___ okay, but, . . .
___ up and down
___ half time
___ better than yesterday.

I am being instrumental in bringing someone to the knowledge of Christ. Yes ___ No ___ Planning to ___

GOALS I WOULD LIKE TO SET FOR MYSELF

___ Develop some long-range goals for my life.
___ Understand what I believe.
___ Realize what are my spiritual gifts.
___ Work out a life-style that is consistent with my new spiritual values.
___ Deepen my devotional habits.
___ Change my priorities.
___ Experience a community of love.
___ Getting a clearer understanding of the doctrine of ______.
___ Becoming closer acquainted with my fellow church members.
___ Learn how to share my faith.
___ Learn to interpret the Bible.
___ Getting to know the discipline of the Adventist Church.
___ Learning Bible principles to raise my children.
___ Making my prayer life more vivid and meaningful.

GOD'S PROMISES AND CONDITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What He promises.</th>
<th>What He expects.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
GETTING ACQUAINTED GAMES

A name isn't just a name: Pieces of paper are distributed. People write each other's name and a new name each would give to another. Papers are given to correspondent people and reactions are offered.

Introducing yourself: People conceal their written names on themselves in such a way that anyone who wishes to read them has to make direct contact. If preferred, participants write their names and draw a picture of themselves on a piece of paper on the wall. Look for: the person's handwriting; which color do they use, etc.

Remembering people's names: The players sit in a circle; one gives her or his name; the neighbor on the left repeats the name and adds her or his own, and so forth. Also people could introduce partners on the basis of information each obtained from the other (name, nicknames, job, hobbies, place of birth, what would you do with $10,000.00, etc.).

A favorite thing: The leader ask each member to introduce himself to the group and then tell the group about "a favorite something" from his past (person, activity, relationship, hobby, etc.). When all have finished the leader ask the members to choose a partner whose "favorite something" they could meet easily identify with. Then they talk in pairs for a few minutes to get to know each other better.

Projecting: Based on questions like: Who would you want to be if you couldn't be you? How would you change your life if you could live it over?

Group memory: People try to remember the first impression of other members in the group. Then they read aloud and express how they view these persons now.

I am a rock: Objects are set in the middle of the circle. People concentrate on them thinking they are those objects. Then volunteers take the place of those objects and people react sharing feelings. (The goal is to cultivate sensitivity for people and not for objects).
Picture me: With paper and crayon, everyone draws a picture of himself, realistic or abstract. Then they show their portraits to the group and give verbal descriptions of them. (Goal: to encourage people to talk about themselves).

Trust test game: This game is to dramatize the psychological term "trust." The group is divided into pairs. Ask one person in each pair to close his or her eyes. The partner then leads the "blind" person for a few minutes. People sit back in a circle, and each person tells what was experienced as he or she led.

Telephone: (observation and perception). The group sits in a circle. One player begins by whispering something in her or his neighbor's ear. The neighbor repeats it to the next neighbor, and so on. When the whisper has gone all round the circle the final version is compared with the original.

Rumor game: One player sets a rumor in circulation; the next player takes it for the truth and adds further speculation to it. When all the players have taken a turn the final version of the rumor is compared with the original.

Group life bibliography: People write their group life experience and read it aloud. Encourage self-disclosure.¹

EXERCISES TO BUILD UP HUMAN RELATIONS

Disciples of Christ

If I were a disciple with Jesus I would probably be:
1. Like Andrew—supporting others who come to Christ.
2. Like Peter—ready to push forward and take risks.
3. Like Phillip—careful and considering all the factors.
4. Like John—majoring in encouraging love and respect.

This list could go on as people think in positive or negative behavior of the disciples of Christ they would like to imitate or avoid in order to keep unity through good relationships.

Qualities of a Peacemaker

How important for you are the following qualities of a peacemaker? Next to each put an "E" if you think it is essential; put "NI" if you think is not important; put "FI" if you think it is fairly important; put an "H" if you think it is harmful.

_____ Patience
_____ Openness
_____ Fairness
_____ Listening both sides.
_____ Use of intimidation.
_____ Peace at any cost.
_____ Speed; getting it done quickly.
_____ Belief that a good fight never hurts anyone.
_____ Belief that few situations are hopeless.
_____ Seeing the best in people.
_____ Belief that might makes right.
_____ Preserving the dignity of each side.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Doris Donnelly, Putting Forgiveness into Practice (Allen, TX: Argus Communications, 1982), p. 14.
"I" RELATIONSHIP EXERCISE

Complete the following sentences:

1. One thing I really like about myself is, . . .
2. I dislike people who, . . .
3. When people ignore me, I . . .
4. The way I express my generosity to others is, . . .
5. When someone praises me, I . . .
6. I am at my best with people when . . .
7. When I am in a group of strangers, I . . .
8. I feel lonely when . . .
9. The way I handle jealousy is, . . .
10. I think I have hurt others by . . .
11. The person who knows me best is, . . .
12. An important interpersonal value for me is, . . .
13. I get hurt when . . .
15. When someone confronts me, I . . .
16. I am at my best with people when . . .
17. What I feel most guilty about my relationship with others is, . . .
18. I like people who . . .
19. When someone gets angry with me, I . . .
20. When I am with a group of friends, I . . .
21. I get angry with another when . . .
22. That which holds me back in my relationship with others is, . . .

1An understanding of the character of new converts may be helpful to assist them grow in the church. Since relationships develops on the level of character (how one character relates to another), reviews like the one above may help to know new converts better and how they relate to other people.

## HOW I RELATE MYSELF TO OTHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Some</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have good sense of humor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am enjoyable to be with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am open to new ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't let others know me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am impulsive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am objective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel close to people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel distant to people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am thrilled with life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confused with life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am frank with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I withhold my feelings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answer the following questions:

1. How do you respond to people who disagree with you?
2. What three things you like about your father or mother?
3. What one characteristic that your father or mother has (had, if dead) do you desire in your own life?

---

1People do not have to answer this self-sharing sheet if they don't want to. They should be told that it is for enhancing personal relationships in the group.
SELF-APPRAISAL INVENTORY
(To detect needs on interpersonal relations.)

How true is this of you?

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am contented.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am relaxed and nothing bothers me</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I usually like people.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have something to give others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am a responsible person.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel emotionally mature.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I long for deeper relationships.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am optimistic.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I have initiative.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I express my emotions freely.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am open and honest with others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel worthles.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I make up my mind and stick to it.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I am using and developing my gifts.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I just can't get along with people.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I understand myself.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I am impulsive.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I really enjoy life.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am dominated by &quot;shoulds.&quot;</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have a warm relationship with others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I feel insecure within myself.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I am easily hurt by others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I usually know what I want.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I am self-reliant.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I am sensitive and responsive to others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I find it easy to forgive others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pick out five items on which you now most strongly want to change.

---

1Smith, pp. 110-11.
RELATIONAL BIBLE STUDY  
(Luke 10:38-42)  

Compare these two ladies and rate yourself between them by circling the appropriate number on each line.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Martha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thinker</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Doer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hungry</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reflective</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Accepting</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Listener</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Talker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Calm</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Jittery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Patient</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Humble</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Image conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Optimistic</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Fretful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peace- maker</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td>Quarrel- some</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Christian Life

1. Which person of the Bible would you like to be like besides Christ? Who do you admire most? Why?

2. Name three traits of character of the person you admire most in the Bible besides Christ.

¹Palmer, p. 150.
Purposes of exercise:

1. To identify how we can feel with others.
2. To try and understand what it must be like to be another person.
3. To see the world through the eyes of another person.
4. To realize and celebrate the fact that each person is unique, a person who is a particular child of God.

Directions:

1. Each member of the group is given a lemon (oranges or something else similar may be used). Lemons can be in a bag and each person selects his own.
2. Tell each person to look at his lemon very carefully. Get acquainted out your lemon--its position, likes, dislikes, etc.
3. Put all the lemons in a pile or a box. Mix them up.
4. Have each person, one at a time, go to the pile and pick out his own lemon.
5. Have each person share his feelings about what just happened. Ask, "How were you able to pick out your lemon?" What does the exercise say about our ability to "be in the shoes" of "another person? Are we all alike? How can we use this experience to know each other better as individuals rather than by labels?"¹

¹Smith, p. 58.
THE VOCABULARY OF FORGIVENESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude of Forgiveness</th>
<th>Attitude of Unforgiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm sorry.</td>
<td>I'm not sorry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's make up</td>
<td>It will never be the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn't mean to hurt you.</td>
<td>You don't deserve an apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's be friends again</td>
<td>I don't need you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's forgive and forget</td>
<td>It's too hard to forgive you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's start over again.</td>
<td>It won't work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love you.</td>
<td>Good-bye.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHY ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS IS DIFFICULT

Situations that involve the need for forgiveness are often messy and painful, so much so, that our resolve to forgive is often side tracked. Four of the most unpleasant aspects of forgiveness are:

1. The hardest thing about forgiveness is remembering. Remembering the hurt . . . the people . . . the event(s).

2. The worst part of asking for forgiveness is admitting that I was wrong. It's confessing guilt, saying that I made a mistake!

3. Asking forgiveness is a humiliation. My pride and the image I have of myself have difficulty with asking someone's forgiveness.

4. I am afraid that the person from whom I ask forgiveness will say, "No, I don't forgive you. You don't deserve forgiveness."

If you were to rank these deterrents in order of unpleasantness, which would come first? second? last?

1Donnelly, p. 18.

2Ibid., p. 44.
SELF-STUDY IN FORGIVENESS

Are you a person who: (circle one)

1. will initiate forgiveness? Y N M
2. demands an apology before forgiving? Y N M
3. frequently angry with someone? Y N M
4. starts arguments between people? Y N M
5. thinks some deeds are unforgivable? Y N M
6. thinks it's harder for men to forgive? Y N M
7. hold grudges? Y N M
8. gets angry easily? Y N M
9. loves a good fight? Y N M
10. avoids conflicts Y N M
11. believe in capital punishment? Y N M
12. thinks admitting faults is for losers only? Y N M
13. pretends everything is O.K. when it isn't? Y N M
14. provokes conflict? Y N M
15. is merciful and compassionate? Y N M
16. believes in an eye for an eye? Y N M
17. has experienced being forgiven? Y N M
18. thinks governments should be hard? Y N M
19. equates strength with non-forgiveness? Y N M

---

*Donnelly, p. 16. Ask people to share their feelings when they experienced being forgiven by someone.*
RANK-ORDERING

Select the value you consider most important to you; write 1 on the parallel blank. Think of the next in importance, then rate it as 2, and so on until you have ranked all 18 items.2

Instrumental Values

1. A world of peace
2. Family security
3. Freedom
4. Happiness
5. Self-respect
6. Wisdom
7. Equality
8. National security
9. Accomplishment
10. A comfortable life
11. Salvation
12. True friendship
13. Inner harmony
14. Mature love
15. A world of beauty
16. Social recognition
17. Pleasure
18. An exciting life

Instrumental Values

Honest
Peace
Responsible
Courageous
Courteous
Helpful
Broadminded
Clean
Capable
Sel-controlled
Loving
Cheerful
Polite
Independent
Intellectual
Logical
Obedient
Imaginative


2People should "reflect on the source of their value system whether it is based on their own inner likes and dislikes, or emanates from the norms dictated by an outside source" (Saulinier and Simard, p. 145).
FORGIVENESS--WOUNDS/HEALING

List the ways in which people experience being wounded or offended. Then, have them mention healing elements which they think may help them get over their hurts. Read over the list asking participants which wounds they have experienced and which they are aware exist in others of their acquaintance. Get from Scripture healing passages dealing with forgiveness.

PEARLS OF GREAT PRICE

Right now, what are the most important things in your life, outside of your faith in Christ? (Circle three)¹

Materially

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>house</th>
<th>school</th>
<th>success</th>
<th>friends</th>
<th>job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>money</td>
<td>church</td>
<td>children</td>
<td>club/team</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hobby</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>goofing off</td>
<td>don't know</td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Morally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>love</th>
<th>patience</th>
<th>frugality</th>
<th>self-denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faith</td>
<td>kindness</td>
<td>tolerance</td>
<td>self-control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purity</td>
<td>humbleness</td>
<td>integrity</td>
<td>long suffering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spiritually

My key Scripture passages are:

1. ___________ Why? __________________________
2. ___________ Why? __________________________

The two Bible promises I love most:

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________

Why are these promises particularly precious to you?

¹Coleman, Faith at Work, August 1980, p. 41.
INVENTORY OF YOUR VALUES

What are your life goals? Rank the following list from 1 to 14 for your life right now.

- pleasures/fun
- contentment/inner peace
- recognition/achievement
- freedom/opportunity
- self-respect/integrity
- marriage/fulfillment
- personal satisfaction
- money/all comforts of life
- deep relationships
- good health
- security/guaranteed income

HOME RELIGION

If you were to design a crest for your family with the following symbols because of their significance, what would you pick?

1. Color that best describe your family.
2. Animal to describe your family.
3. Tree to describe your family.
4. Two strengths you see in your family.

What word would best describe your relationships at home (or where you are living) last week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stormy</th>
<th>Mostly fair</th>
<th>Sunny and clear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idyllic</td>
<td>Patches of fog</td>
<td>Tornado warning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilly cold</td>
<td>Partly cloudy</td>
<td>Sorry you asked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1Coleman, Faith at Work, August 1980, p. 41.
3Ibid.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


______. *Saved and Kept.* London: Morgan & Scott, 1897.


Scales, W. C. "Ten Tips on How to Stay in the Church." Miami: Ministerial Assn. of Inter-American Division, 1980, [10 pp.].


