A Soul Care Teaching And Discipling Model To Aid Millenial Youth In Developing Healthy Relationships With God, Self, And Others In The Nottingham Central Seventh-day Adventist Church

Georgina Miller
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ABSTRACT

A SOUL CARE TEACHING AND DISCIPLING MODEL TO AID MILLENNIAL YOUTH IN DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS IN THE NOTTINGHAM CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

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Adviser: Stanley Patterson
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A SOUL CARE TEACHING AND DISCIPLING MODEL TO AID MILLENNIAL YOUTH IN DEVELOPING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS IN THE NOTTINGHAM CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date completed: May 2015

Problem

A large proportion of youth and young adults classified as Millennials (also known as Generation Y) within the Adventist Church worldwide are hurting because of lack of acceptance, love, and healthy self-worth. This youth group has issues with trusting others, especially society at large and authority figures, due to negative experiences in their past, which has painfully scarred them. They have an unhealthy view of who God really is based on the dysfunctional role models they have grown up with and see around them.
The church’s limited ability to connect and relate with the postmodern culture, due to a lack of understanding, as well as a failure to model authentic Christ-like characteristics, has resulted in large number of Millennial youth and young adults leaving the Adventist Church worldwide.

Methodology

This biblically-based Soul Care process has been designed and developed with the intention to offer care and nurture for Millennial youth and young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church with an emphasis on youth across the United Kingdom and in the Nottingham Central Church. The process seeks to help the youth to develop and gain: (a) a healthy view of who God is, leading them to develop a healthy view of themselves, (b) a lasting Christian identity and deeper faith that will enable them to become mature Christian adults who remain in the church, and (c) foster healthy interpersonal relationships.

Expected Results

The Soul Care process will facilitate healing and restoration from past experiences that have caused deep wounds in the hearts and lives of these youth. The youth will connect to Christ through a healthy understanding of who God is by creating an environment that fosters a community spirit, interpersonal relationships that is both accepting and loving, as well as are intentionally consistent. A ministry model will be implemented that is Christocentric and spiritual, as opposed to traditional in ritual and ceremony. Training opportunities will be created to heighten awareness for adults in regards to learning how to interact with postmodern Millennial youth.
Conclusions

In order for a person to develop more positive perceptions of and relational experiences with God, as well as a healthy self-identity and interpersonal relationships, it is imperative that they form new relationships with people that are receptive and accessible, which enables the young person to feel loved. They need the support and guidance of mentors and counselors in their lives to facilitate healing and to redefine a healthy image of God and self in order to nurture their spiritual development.

The implementation of this project through the *Soul Care* process and the aid of the Holy Spirit is intended to have a lasting impact on the lives of Millennial youth that will not only foster healing, create a healthy God image, and facilitate spiritual growth in Millennial youth, but facilitate restoration and harmonious relationships on four distinct levels: with God, with self, with others, and with creation as God originally intended.
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A Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
de the Requirements for the Degree
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ultimate thanks and praise goes to my Heavenly Father, without You I would not be, I owe all I am and this achievement to You.

I am sincerely grateful to my adviser, Stanley Patterson, PhD, DMin, for his dedication, practical advice and support, as well as true caring and refreshing Whit that truly enhanced the process. Thank you for modeling servant leadership at its best.

Also to my second reader, Allan Walshe, DMin, who has been my professor, spiritual mentor, and friend. Grateful is too small of a word to describe my appreciation for the investment of time, energy, patience, practical support, wisdom, and advice you have poured into my life. Thank you for showing me the Father’s heart though your life, leading, and example; I am eternally grateful.

I am also thankful to Christon Arthur, Steve Nash, and Robert Benjamin for their advice, practical support, and caring.

Finally, unconditional love and thanks to my family and friends who have been with me on this journey and supported me every step of the way. I thank God daily for you.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence in the 21st century challenges the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the context of youth ministry to rethink how it supports young people in their self and Christian identity formation in order to develop a deeper faith. The diverse factors that adolescents cope with in this postmodern age make the development of a biblically based identity rather difficult. The challenge is to give guidance and support, as well as to model a Christocentric life based on love in assisting adolescents on their journey to becoming mature Christians. This begins with having a healthy relationship and understanding of who God is, which leads to a healthy perspective of self, and how to relate to others.

Having served as a youth minister for several years in the United Kingdom, it has become evident that ministry to youth and young adults of this generation needs to be intentional and authentic, spiritually based, as well as consistent if it is to have a transformational impact on their faith journey.

Statement of the Problem

Today’s youth and young adult culture, classified as Millennials (also known as Generation Y), is the generation of youth that was born between 1984 and 2002 (Barna, 2013).
These youth are in need of a considerable amount of care and nurture in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “Generation Y longs for the touch of God and the experience that verifies God’s real presence in the moment” (Gibbs, 2000, pp. 182-183). According to the extensive research of Dudley (2007) and the Valuegenesis study (Dudley, 1992, p. 69), a large proportion of youth within the Adventist Church worldwide are hurting because of a lack of acceptance, love, and healthy self-worth. Millennials have difficulty trusting others, especially society-at-large and authority figures, due to negative experiences in their past, which painfully scarred them. They have an unhealthy view of who God really is based on the dysfunctional role models they have grown up with and see around them.

The Church’s limited ability to connect and relate with the postmodern culture, due to a lack of understanding as well as a failure to model authentic Christ-like characteristics, has resulted in a large number of youth leaving the Adventist Church worldwide. Leaders throughout the Adventist organization state that the “reasons most frequently cited by persons who leave local Church fellowship are found in the realm of relationships, the absence of a sense of belonging, and the lack of meaningful engagement in the local congregation and its mission” (General Conference Seventh-day Adventist [GCSDA] Executive Committee, 2007, para. 3).

In reference to the Boomer generation and their involvement in creating the current condition of Millennial youth, Patterson (2013) states:

I would suggest that we, the predecessors of postmodernity, come to terms with our contextual role in creating it. We must face down the realities that our generation’s contribution to social and spiritual issues in the lives of our progeny give reasons to why they relate to authority as they do, to authenticity as they do, to truth as they do, to organized religion as they do and to social institutions as they do. . . . These are children whom the institutions of society and religion failed. (p. 55)
Statement of the Task

The aim of this project is to design and develop a biblically-based process that is intended to offer care and nurture for Millennial youth and young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church with emphasis on youth in the Nottingham Central Church and across the United Kingdom. The process will seek to help the youth develop and gain:
(a) a healthy view of who God is, leading them to develop a healthy view of themselves, (b) a lasting Christian identity and deeper faith that will enable them to become mature Christian adults who remain in the Church, and (c) to foster healthy interpersonal relationships. The implementation will include small groups, mentoring, workshops, and seminars to facilitate the healing process.

Justification of the Project

The named generation needs to experience and understand the love God has for them so that they can be healed from their past hurts, in order to receive the hope God is offering them in times of pain and distress.

The entire plan of redemption is for the restoration of broken relationships between God and humankind, which in turn will lead to a healthy self-identity and healthy interpersonal relationships. Scripture affirms that God is a God of relationships and that community makes a significant difference. This is the theological springboard from which the structure of this project will be based.

The future and message of the Adventist Church is dependent on the youth of today as they will be the ones to finish the spreading of the gospel; therefore, the aim of this project is to nurture and develop in the youth a lasting Christian identity that will
enable them to become mature Christian adults who are less likely to abandon their faith in the future, as their faith will be rooted at the core of their identity. The Advent message will continue to be proclaimed.

During their search for a deeper faith, and a healthy perception of themselves and others, the youth need faithful, committed leaders to nurture and affirm them on the journey. This vital connection between youth and adults serves as the foundation of a strong youth ministry and strong teaching.

**Expectations of the Project**

The youth will connect to Christ through a healthy understanding of who God is. This generation is predisposed to distrust organized religion. “Post-boomers have grown up in an incredibly cynical period. . . . They believe that most politicians are corrupt, that priests molest children, that evangelical pastors have affairs . . . and few can be trusted. . . . They distrust institutions of all sorts, including religious organizations” (Collins-Mayo, 2010, p. 11). This obstacle will, first of all, need to be overcome in order to rebuild trust and establish their identity in Christ as well as gain a healthy view of self-worth. The process will facilitate healing and restoration from past experiences that have caused deep wounds in the hearts and lives of these youth.

An environment will be created that fosters a community spirit and relational focus that is both accepting and loving, as well as intentionally consistent. A ministry model will be implemented that is Christocentric and spiritual as opposed to traditional in ritual and ceremony. Training opportunities will be created to heighten awareness for adults in regards to learning how to interact with postmodern youth.
This project will heighten my sensitivity and discernment of Millennials when interacting with them and will equip me to handle situations more effectively.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Project**

The research gathered and data analyzed extends beyond the amount required for this project; however, the research can be used for other initiatives outside of this project that will further benefit Christian discipleship in the area of Millennial youth.

Time and financial limitations will have a significant impact on the depth and length of the mentor-training execution of the mentoring process. However, the basic skills required will be taught to ensure adequate competency.

The training and teaching that will be delivered during the *Soul Care* process is intended to equip participants with the basic skills and understanding needed to facilitate the process; however, it will not provide the extensive professional training that may be required to further assist Millennial youth on their journey. Referrals will be made appropriately, as and when needed.

This project is intended to be a starting point for the process of facilitating Millennial youth on their faith journey. It will serve as a foundational building block that can subsequently be added to.

**Description of the Project Process**

This chapter (Chapter 1) gives an overview of the project by highlighting the problem, task, justification, expectations, delimitations and limitations, definitions, and a description of the project process.

The theological foundation for this project, as discussed in Chapter 2 will
(a) summarize God’s original plan for His created beings, His purpose for us, and how He intended us to live in healthy harmonious relationships on four distinct levels; (b) discuss the consequences and implications of the Fall that have affected these relationships causing spiritual, emotional, and physical brokenness; (c) explore the true image and nature of God through the study of Scripture, with emphasis on the value He places on His children; (e) highlight how we have been restored on all four levels of relationship through the plan of salvation; and (f) provide an in-depth discussion on how having true “self-identity” in Christ leads to healing and healthy functional relationships with others.

In Chapter 3 relevant contemporary literature will be reviewed that will contribute to an understanding of Millennial youth both globally and more specifically in the British context. The discussion will highlight: (a) their characteristics, (b) the developmental theory: the formation of self and spiritual identity, and (c) assessing the factors necessary to foster healing, having a healthy God image, and to facilitate spiritual growth through interpersonal relationships.

Chapter 4 is a detailed description of the three-phased program for the Soul Care process, which includes a pre- and a post-phase. The pre-phase describes how awareness of the project and its purpose will be created. It will (a) raise awareness in the Church setting, and (b) inform and equip members for ministry through seminars, workshops, and mentor training.

Phase one will identify the needs of the youth through active listening, assessments and inventories, and matching mentors to mentees.
Phase two is intended to build trust and administer the appropriate care and support through mentoring. This phase includes the use of The Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI) as well as using sections of the Growing Disciples Curriculum Framework, which are spiritual growth discovery tools (Bradfield, 2012). These assessments will be conducted with the Millennials to gain insight into their perspective and relationship with God, identify their spiritual development levels, as well as their interpersonal connections in order to inform curriculum planning. (See Definition of Terms for more details.)

Phase three is intended to foster Millennial youth on their faith journey and spiritual growth through small groups, discipling and modeling, and fostering interpersonal relationships.

The post-phase is intended to: (a) reflect on and evaluate the whole process; (b) conduct focus groups to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S.W.O.T) of the process, as well as the practical learning outcomes; and (c) highlight and inform modifications that will need to be made to the Soul Care curriculum and process for future use.

Chapter 5 gives a summary of Chapter 2 and 3 as well as an overall evaluation of the project and offers conclusions and recommendations that will encourage further growth and development of Millennials through the Soul Care process.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout this project dissertation.

*Soul Care Process*: Name given to define and describe the teaching model to be used for intervention.
Millennial Youth: The generation commonly known as the “Millennials” who were born approximately between 1984 and 2002 (Barna, 2013, para. 6). There are no precise dates for when this generation begins and ends, however, for the purpose of this project I have used the most common dates used by current scholars and demographers.

Postmodernism: Stanley Grenz has written his definition of postmodernism in his book A Primer of Postmodernism. Although it is general, it is appropriate for the purpose of this project:

Postmodernism refers to an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set. Postmodernity, in turn, refers to an emerging epoch, the era in which we are living, the time when the postmodern outlook increasingly shapes our society. Postmodernity is the era in which postmodern ideas, attitudes, and values reign – when postmodernism molds culture. It is the era of the postmodern society. (Grenz, 1996, pp. 12-13)

Spiritual Mentor: A spiritual and transformational leader that facilitates spiritual growth and development in the life of a young person. “Spiritual mentoring is coming alongside of and partnering with who the Holy Spirit is being in the life of another person and infusing truth into that person’s reality” (Parrott, 2009, p. 41).

Mentee: A Millennial youth or young adult individual that is under the guidance of a mentor. “The mentee is typically the recipient of . . . guidance from the more experienced mentor” (Loue, 2010, p. 199).

Growing Discipleship Inventory: The Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI) is an online spiritual growth assessment tool described by Bradfield (2012) as “a curriculum-aligned, self-assessment [tool] designed to facilitate Christian spiritual growth through Christian education in home, church, and school settings” (para. 1).

These online tools have been developed as a collaborative initiative by the Ministries Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the
Religious Education Program in the Seventh-day Adventists Theological Seminary, and the Department of Teaching, Learning & Curriculum in the School of Education at Andrews University. The aim of these tools is to help youth and young adults “in any Christian education setting to better understand their Christian spiritual development [and] provide Christian educators with information to improve teaching that nurtures faith” (Bradfield, 2012, para. 2).
CHAPTER 2

GOD’S ORIGINAL RELATIONAL PLAN FOR MAN

Introduction

And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

Dysfunctional and broken are by-words that can be used to describe the condition of the human race due to sin. Experiences and influences of imperfect relationships have had a serious affect. In particular, Millennials of this postmodern age have a level of distrust, particularly with the establishment and those persons of influence in their lives due to negative experiences in their past, which has had a detrimental impact on their lives. This has also contributed to an unhealthy view of who God really is, based on the dysfunctional role models they have experienced. This was not God’s intended plan for His children. God, who is love, intended us to live a life of love and wholeness in response to knowing Him and receiving His love. This was to be manifested in our love for Him, ourselves, our neighbor, and creation that He entrusted to our care.

This theological chapter will: (a) summarize God’s original plan for His created beings, His purpose for us and how He intended us to live in healthy harmonious relationships on four distinct levels; (b) discuss the consequences and implications of the Fall that have affected these relationships causing spiritual, emotional, and physical brokenness; (c) explore the true image and nature of God through the study of scripture,
with emphasis on the value He places on His children; (d) highlight how, through Christ and the plan of salvation, we have been restored on all four levels of relationship. The chapter will then conclude with an in-depth discussion on true *self-identity* in Christ as well as healing that leads to healthy, functional relationships with others.

**God and Man’s Relationship: Created**

Man was created to live in a secure, free, intimate fellowship with God. In all of God’s creation, nothing compared to man. Adam and Eve were the masterpiece of all of God’s creation. They were complete and perfectly made in the image of God.

Through man, God wanted to demonstrate His holiness (Ps 99:3-5); love and patience (1 Cor 13:4); forbearance (1 Cor 13:7); wisdom (Jas 3:13, 17); comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4); forgiveness (Heb 10:17); faithfulness (Ps 89:1, 2, 5, 8); and grace (Ps 111:4). Through His intellect, free will and emotions, man was to be the showcase of God’s glorious character. (McGee, 1990, p. 18)

**Relationship on Four Levels**

According to Rodin (2010) relationship on all four levels and our call as children of God can be defined as follows:

As God’s people, we are called to reflect the image of our Creator God through whole, redeemed relationships at four levels—with God, with our self, with our neighbor and with creation—bringing glory to God and practicing in each of the ongoing work of the faithful steward. (Rodin, 2010, p. 33)

The author highlights that this definition follows the central theme of scripture: the Creation, Fall and redemption of man, with the promise of final restoration. Simply put, our fourfold nature was created in perfection, lost in sin, and restored in Christ. Genesis 1-3 highlights that we were created for whole relationships on these four levels: with God, with self, with our neighbor, and with creation. The biblical account makes it clear that in the beginning, before sin, Adam and Eve lived out these four levels of relationship
while reflecting the image of God. This was God’s original intention.

I am indebted to the work of Rodin (2010) and the four-level framework that I will be referring to in this chapter, the first of which is relationship with God.

**Relationship With God**

The first level, relationship with God, is fundamental to our existence. Our life will only have true meaning when we are at one with God our Creator. On this subject Rodin (2010) emphasizes:

> The reality of our created nature is that we are shaped and formed for the distinct purpose of living in relationship with our Creator God. Without such a relationship we are set afloat to spend our lives searching for ways to find meaning. (p. 34)

To reaffirm this, Augustine (1900) in his confessions, states: “Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee” (p. 1). Because we are created for an intimate relationship with God, He gives us the ability to love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Our purpose is to love Him with our whole being. However, this intimacy is not something we ourselves can create; it is through the redemptive work and power of Jesus that we are reconciled and again restored to God. This relationship was bought with the blood of Christ, which is the highest possible price.

Intimacy also comes as a result of our acknowledgment and total surrender to God, which gives Him the permission to do something in and for us. God draws us with chords of love as we submit ourselves to Him.

**Relationship With Self**

The quality and health of this second level of relationship is in direct correlation with the depth and intimacy of the first level. Meaning on this level is found in a self-
awareness, self-acceptance, and self-understanding that are realistic, balanced, and authentic. This is in direct light of our first-level relationship with God as our Creator and Redeemer. Without this balance we are either drawn toward narcissism or self-abhorrence. Having an authentic and realistic self-perception gives us the foundational understanding that we, having a sinful nature, are prone to rebel. However, all power is given to us to live a life that is Holy through the restoring power of the Holy Spirit. Our purpose can be outlined as follows:

If we were created for relationship with our self, our purpose is to have absolute certainty of who we are, why we are here and what we are to do. This self-understanding was a part of God’s loving intent for us when He created humanity in His image. His purpose for us is found in the balance in our self-perception between the beloved child of God and the sinner saved by grace. (Rodin, 2010, p. 35)

**Relationship With our Neighbor**

On the third level of relationship, meaning is found as we invest in the lives of others. We are born to be relational beings; however, this can only authentically take place if levels one and two are sincerely achieved. As we relate to God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, this leads us to a healthy self-identity that enables us to find further meaning in our existence through community. As His “image bearers” He intends us to live in community, as He Himself lives in community. In the same light, when we value our relationships, they are then blessed with meaning that reflects the image of our triune God. This is how Adam and Eve lived; together in unity bearing and reflecting the image of God in community.

We were created to love and serve one another under God; unless we are doing this we will not feel satisfied with our life. . . . We are not meant to be alone, to be self-serving, or to hold on to the blessings God gives us. (Malkemes, 2007, pp. 147-148)
Relationship With Creation

On this fourth and final level of relationship, significance is attained from our role as caretakers of the earth and the things God has placed in our possession. This is evident from the creation story. Adam and Eve’s first role was to tend the garden given to them by God (Gen 1:28-30). Meaning is found on this level when we reflect the caring, nurturing love He gives to us by caring and nurturing His creation and the things He has entrusted to our care, such as the environment, the animals, our material possessions etc. This is the only way true significance can be found in a world that tries to manipulate our thinking to believe that it is found in the accumulation of possessions and resources alone.

God and Man’s Relationship: Lost

One of the tragic implications of the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God is that humanity lost its secure status with God and began to struggle with feelings of inadequacy and despair and yet had to wrestle with pride and arrogance, valuing the opinions of others over the truth of God. “This has robbed man of his true self-worth and has put him on a continual, but fruitless search for significance through his success and seeking the approval of others” (McGee, 1990, p. 23).

Since the fall, human beings have failed to turn to God for the truth about their selves. Instead they have looked to others to meet their inescapable need for self-worth. “Mankind now tends to seek his identity, to discover who he is, in terms of this fallen world rather than through relationship with God . . . fallen man’s sense of “self” is perverted and now seeks to gain honor from others” (Sewell, 2010, p. 51). Humanity’s performance orientation and need to please others so dominates their search for
significance that they have difficulty recognizing the distinction between their real
identity and the way they behave. This is a realization crucial to the understanding of a
person’s true worth.

When sin entered the earth through the fall of Adam and Eve, the relationship
between God and humankind was deeply distorted. It caused disconnection and
separation from God.

Since the first ungodly act of man . . . man’s sin has caused “separation” . . . between
God and mankind; separation being a temporal state that has the possibility of
restoration to oneness by the Mind-Glue Love of God . . . . God has developed a plan
of Salvation, through [the blood of Jesus Christ, by] which He made Reunion
possible. (Gibbs, 2006, p. 186)

Relationship Lost on all Four Levels

Not only did humanity experience loss of relationship on this first foundational
level with God but they also lost relationship on the remaining three levels: with self,
others, and creation. Keyes (1984) puts it this way.

The Fall affects man’s identity [as] . . . it breaks the relationship between man and
God. God becomes a threat and man dislikes Him. Second, it distorts the image of
God that man bears. He becomes unlike God. The moral likeness between God and
man is now distorted, for which man is guilty. Thirdly, the whole creation including
man groans under the abnormality of a world infected by sin and death. (p. 43)

Loss of Relation With Self

From the account in Genesis, it is clear to see that once the relationship was
broken by sin against God, Adam and Eve lost the central purpose for their existence in
life; namely, the ability to love and worship God in free open fellowship and communion
and the ability to love self and each other in order to tend the garden which God had
entrusted to them. From this time on, through the plan of redemption, the central purpose
of God’s plan for humanity was to reclaim what was lost: to be in relationship and
harmony with God and with human beings as well as at peace with creation. Since the Fall humanity has been searching to restore perfect intimacy with God, as well as finding with certainty meaning and purpose in life.

The repercussions of this loss have been catastrophic. Not only did human beings lose their guiding sense of purpose, but they then resorted to seeking approval, security, and identity from counterfeit places.

The world’s fundamental problem is that we don’t understand who we truly are . . . in Christ . . . instead [we] define ourselves by any number of things . . . and [try to fill] that void by placing our identity in pretty much anything else. Only by knowing our false identity apart from Christ in relation to our true identity in Him can we rightly deal with and overcome the issues in our lives. (Driscoll, 2013, p. 2)

What we believe to be true about our self is often reflected in our behavior (Prov 23:7). Our home environment plays a central role in forming our beliefs and emotions, and these can be a powerful impact on our outlook and behavior. Our parents’ were intended to be a model of the character of God. Our self-esteem and view of God are typically a reflection of how our parents treat(ed) us, and their attitude towards us (see Chapter 3). Those who have or have had parents who are loving and affirming are more likely to have a healthier self-concept with a greater ability to believe that God is loving. On the other hand, it is said that those with parents who have been neglectful, manipulative, or condemning, often seem to feel their self-worth is something to be earned (see Chapter 3). When the feeling of being loved and protected by a parent is absent, people not only tend to base their self-worth on how well they perform and please others, but also believe that God is distant, hard to please, and/or hard hearted. This is contrary to who God really is and what He says about humankind. “Our spiritual identity has power to transform all other identities from the inside out, far beyond the distorted
reflections of peers, parents, role-models and other significant adults” (Thomas, 2010, p. 74).

Christ is the authentic source of our security; therefore Christ is the basis of our worth and the only One whose promises never fail. The transition from slavery and the compulsion of a “have-to” mentality, to the freedom and strength of a “want-to” motivation, is a process. Bondage connected to this type of thinking is usually deeply rooted in personality, patterns of behaviors, and ways of relating to others. These strongholds of the mind can only be changed over time with the recognition and acceptance of the truth about self, as well as the power of the Holy Spirit, application of the Bible to one’s life, reinforced by the encouragement of others (McGee, 1990, p. 30).

Self-deception is the root of the problem for loss of self from the Fall. Self-deception not only causes people to sin against God but to sin against themselves, as well as nullify the price that Jesus paid for all by His blood which sets people free from sin and death. Outside of a loving and gratifying relationship with God the Creator, self-deception causes people to be a victim of these lies.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were defined by being in right relationship on all four levels. There was no conceivable reason for self-definition outside of being in relation on all four levels or for self to be seen as detached from others. For Adam and Eve self-understanding was expressed by who they were and what they did.

After the Fall the sense of self-identity was lost. Their perspective had changed from viewing themselves as defined by being in relationship on all four levels, to being forced to consider themselves in isolation of all four levels. Despite this broken state, and loss of self-definition, humankind is still the centre of God’s attention and His beloved
creation. The problem with sin is that it blinds people from recognizing their true value in light of how God sees them in Jesus Christ. A person’s worth is cheapened and reduced by dysfunctional, damaged relationships at every level, which cyclically feeds back to them the false accusation that they are of no worth. The detriment continues to deepen as the choices a person makes to replace the loss of self-definition, is selected from the limitless number of counterfeit choices, which are more and more distant from the truth.

“Sinful identity, a life diminished by death, means living to discover that all our having is eventually and totally defeated . . . we are estranged from a quality of being that can fully experience ourselves and others” (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 299).

Therefore, at this second level of relationship, humankind’s self-definition must be carefully nurtured and maintained, so they are not deceived by false perceptions that distort their understanding of who they are in God’s eyes. “God is the One who sets the standard for [our] worth . . . not man” (Bevere, 2004, p. 17).

**Loss of Relation With Others**

A loss of relation with self as well as a distorted self-definition and perception has also brought enmity in relationships with others. The blaming of Eve by Adam, which ultimately led to the entrance of death through the killing of Abel by Cain, began a rapid spiraling of events that resulted in “man’s inhumanity against man.”

The replacement of adoration of the living God by worship of [self and] created things falsifies the relationships between individuals and brings with it various kinds of oppression. Culpable ignorance of God unleashes the passions, which are causes of imbalance and conflicts in the human heart. From this there inevitably come disorders which affect the sphere of family and society: sexual license, injustice and murder. (Witte & Alexander, 2007, p. 441)

Humanity has been given the simple command to love their neighbor as themselves, but the consequence of the Fall has made this an extremely difficult task. This is because
people have lost the ability to love themselves the way God loves them, as well as losing the intimacy with their Creator who is the originator of that love. Thus the domino effect continues.

The implications of the loss or distortion of the image of God resulting from disobedience are catastrophic for humanity. The forfeiture of humanity’s role as divine representative, the distortion of relationship with the rest of creation, and the deprivation of self-identity resulting from the loss of God as a mirror for self-understanding all bring into existence a dysfunctionality in the divine-human relationship that must be healed. . . . The attitudes and behaviors known as “sin” now characterize relationships. (Shelton, Sweet, & Hunter, 2006, p. 26)

Loss of Relationship With Creation

Loss of relationship on the first three levels has ultimately led to loss of relationship on this final level. Man was given “dominion over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Gen 1:26). However, as a result of the Fall “dominion” has been redefined as “domination” and instead of “ruling over” creation, humankind has sought to own and control, manipulate and exploit. “Communion and dominion had dissolved into domination” (Fincher, 2009, p. 88).

Before the Fall, man saw himself as under God, bearing God’s image and deriving his sense of identity and coherence from God. But now he identifies himself with creation instead of its Creator. His whole orientation is downward toward what is less than himself, rather than upward toward what is greater. This change of orientation has many psychological results. (Keyes, 1984, p. 62)

Because of a broken relationship with God, humankind has a distorted view of who God is. Unable to attain true self-identity from the only authentic Source, has not only caused people to have a distorted view of self but also of others. This has resulted in self-rising up to take control to fill the void. In an attempt to find meaning, humankind has opted to define themselves though actions that are self-serving, which has ultimately led to perfecting a self-serving nature that uses people and strives to rule over others as
lord and master. In turn this has led to a distorted view of the world, which too is used to serve people’s own purposes.

In order to counteract the devastating effects of sin on our relationships on all of the four levels, we must go back to our Creator to gain a true picture of who He is and who He says we are.

**Knowing the True Image and Nature of God**

Most people develop their concepts and feelings about God from their parents, and these are often distorted and confusing. “Our images of God are critically important to our spiritual well-being” (Ryan & Ryan, 1990, p. 13). It is only when we know with certainty the nature of our Creator God and the true image that we are called to bear as His children, can we know with equal certainty the purpose for our existence. This in turn enables us to live a meaningful and purposeful life, bearing and reflecting the image of God to those around us. To know God, as opposed to just knowing information about Him implies that an established relationship is essential (Bruinsma, 2000, p. 90). There are several ways in which a person can get to know God and gain a clearer understanding of who He is. The most prominent ways are through nature, prayer, Scripture and the life of Christ.

**Knowing God Through Nature**

God reveals Himself through nature. Romans 1:20 (NIV) states: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” In addition there are numerous passages in the book of Psalms that reinforce this notion. Chapter 19 is a well-known passage that highlights this. “The
heavens declare the glory of God” (v. 1), as well as Psalm 8, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place . . . O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth” (vv. 3, 8). Psalms 104 and 148 also affirm this revelation. The New Testament also affirms that God reveals Himself through nature. Paul, when admonishing the people of Lystra for their deficient understanding of spiritual things, states that God “has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:17). From this it is clear from scripture that nature points above and beyond itself to God who is higher and greater. Although excuses may be given for not understanding precisely what God has done for them through the life and death of Christ, it cannot be said that people do not have the sense of someone or something beyond.

Knowing God Through His Word

Not only does God reveal Himself through nature but also through the Bible, which allows all to know Him, although “in part” (1 Cor 13:9). Although there are many aspects of God that are and will remain a hidden mystery, the revelation that was given is adequate for people’s needs. People will never get to the point where they fully comprehend Him. Isaiah wrote that His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His ways. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:9). However, people can begin to develop in their understanding of the depth of His love for them, and the unique plan He has for their lives (Eph 3:17-19).
The Bible is laced with numerous descriptions of the attributes of God’s character that nourish and enhance our understanding of who and what He is. An exploration of some of these attributes will lay a deeper foundation to allow us to know God through His Word.

**Attributes of God**

The Bible emphasizes that God is Infinite.

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will have no end. (Ps 102:25-27)

“How great is our God—beyond our understanding. The number of His years is past finding out” (Job 36:26). Not only is He Infinite, He is Omniscient (Ps 139:2-6; Isa 40:13-14) and Omnipresent (Ps 139:7-12). The Creator of the universe is not bound by time and space. He is unlimited. Having a sound understanding of this foundational truth enables people to build on it and develop their understanding of who He is and what He is like.

**God is Love**

First John 4:8, 16 tells that “God is love . . . And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.” This is His very nature. “He does not just merely love He is love itself, and everything that God does flows from His love” (Elwell, 2000, p. 494). This is evident in the Greek. The word for ‘love’ in the phrase “God is love” is “agape.” It appears in the noun normative feminine singular common form and is written in the third person singular present tense, which reinforces that love is central to His character and the expression of His being. In this instance, it defines His personal nature (Johnson,
The same phrase also appears in verse 16. The underlying essence of *agape* is interpreted as a supremely self-sacrificing, selfless love and is also indicated in 1 Corinthians 13:4, 8, 13; 1 John 4:10, 18; 2 John 6. *Agape* appears 116 times in the New Testament and is derived from *agapeo*, which also means love. “In respect to God, *agapeo* refers to His love for the world (John 3:16); for His Son (John 3:35; 10:7; 17:24); and for His people in particular (John 17:24; Rom 8:37; Eph 2:4; 2 Thess 2:16; Heb 12:6; 1 John 4:10)” (Renn, 2005, p. 611).

The picture of God described in verse 16 in 1 John 4 is a unique affirmation. “Outside the pages of Scripture there is no comparable picture of God . . . no other Biblical writing makes this explicit assertion” (Yarbrough, 2008, pp. 236-237).

The divine love that God has for us should never be confused with the world’s definition of love. God’s love is personal and is not merely compassion, but infinite affection.

Unlike our English word “love,” *agape* is not used in the Bible to refer to romantic or sexual love. Nor does it refer to close friendship or brotherly love, for which the Greek word *philia* is used. Nor does *agape* mean charity, a term which the King James translators carried over from the Latin. *Agape* love is unique and is distinguished by its nature and character. (Houdmann, 2011, para. 1)

Because God is love and His love flows from His character, “it is not dependent on the loveliness of the loved, external of Himself” (Carson, 2000, p. 63). The world’s love can be characterized by being based on the desire to possess and enjoy. In contrast, *agape* love is distinguished by its readiness to serve unreservedly. The world loves by discovering and being attracted to that which has the greatest value, whereas *agape* love creates value and embraces the least worthy. The world’s love is a need-love whereas *agape* love is a gift-love. This love, that nothing can separate us from (Rom 8:38-39), is
the love God is calling us to freely receive from Him. One writer interprets Romans 8 in this way:

I have set my affection on you from before the foundation of the universe, not because you are wiser or better or stronger than others but because in grace I chose to love you. You are mine, and you will be transformed. Nothing in all creation will separate you from my love mediated through Jesus Christ. (Carson, 2000, p. 63)

**More Attributes**

Other Scriptures speak of God being Holy (Luke 1:49; John 17:11), Perfect (Matt 5:48), Righteous (John 17:25; 2 Tim 4:8), and full of compassion (Ps 111:4). Psalm 103:13 likens God as a tender Father, and Isaiah 66:13 as a protective, vigilant Mother, thus highlighting that His care goes beyond that of both parental capabilities. Psalm 27:10 highlights “when my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.”

He is called a Husband (Isa 54:5), a Father (Deut 32:6), a Judge, Lawgiver, and King (Isa 32:22), a Man of war (Exod 15:3), a Hero (Ps 78:65-66; Zeph 3:17), a Builder or Architect (Heb 11:10), a Husbandman (John 15:1), a Shepherd (Ps 23:1), a Physician (Exod 15:26), et cetera. These anthropomorphic expressions and illustrations enable us to understand better His character and relationship to us in the varied experiences of life. (Christensen, 1970, p. 64)

These are but a few examples of the vast array of attributes the Bible highlights. It is important to note that all of the attributes of God are as equally as important, however, each attribute is fueled and governed by love.

Each attribute . . . must stand on the same footing as His love, and be equally great and glorious. But by the same expression “God is love,” John evidently wishes to convey that love is the greatest motive power of the Divine being. Love is that which shapes and guides all His attributes; so that each is manifested under the working of love, and each directed to the securing of love. (Hastings, 1958, pp. 330-331)

On this same theme Lyman Abbott preached:

All God’s attributes are inflections or phases of love. Love is one of His attributes; it is all of them. His holiness is the wholeness of His love. His righteousness is the eternal conformity of His love. His justice is love looking out on the great mass of His creatures. His beneficence is love showing itself in deeds, which we recognize as
helpful. His pity is love towards the sorrowing. His mercy is love toward the sinful. But whether He be merciful or beneficent or just or righteous or holy, He is love. (E. Abbott, Abbott, Bellamy, & Mabie, 1897, p. 159)

Scripture reveals the attributes of God and His character, especially His love for humankind. Although people can have a level of understanding of who God is through nature and His Word, it can only be fully realized in the life that demonstrates it; the life of His Son Jesus Christ.

Knowing God Through Jesus Christ

Humanity can only know with certainty the heart and character of God and the love He has for them through God’s self-revelation to them in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said in John 14:9 “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” The beauty of the gospel of Jesus is that it is an invitation to be in relationship with Him, which gives all the full assurance of the knowledge of God that is enough to give people an identity and life full of meaning, joy, and freedom. Through the life and revelations of Jesus, each person is able to have a deeper understanding of the character and will of God for them (Col 1:15-20; John 12: 25-26; 14:6-7; 17:6-10).

Although the knowledge we have of God is fragmented and distorted and “but a poor reflection” (1 Cor 13:12) all the same, God is able and willing to deepen peoples’ understanding. As human beings are created in the image of God and are to reflect His character, it is critical and foundational for them to understand and know who He is by way of His revelations through Jesus Christ. Then people can embrace their call to reflect His character.

Christ came to the world to reveal the character of God, to make plain to us His paternal love toward His adopted children. We are not to estimate the character of God by the stupendous works of nature alone, but by the simple, lovely life of Jesus, who presented Jehovah as more merciful, more compassionate, more tender, than our
earthly parents. Jesus presented the Father as one to whom we could give our confidence and present our wants. . . . What you see revealed in Jesus of tenderness, compassion, and love, is the reflection of the attributes of the Father. The cross of Calvary reveals to man the love of God. Christ represents the Sovereign of the universe as a God of love. (White, 1892, para. 2)

Jesus was fully God and fully man. While He was here on earth, He expressed the heart of God through His human emotions. When there was a death of a loved one “Jesus wept (John 11:35), as He was moved with sympathy. He also wept over Jerusalem. This was God expressing His pain from the rejection of His people. When the multitude was hungry, He had compassion on them (Matt 15:32), because they were faint and scattered about like sheep without a Shepherd (Matt 9:35, 26; 14:14). These events reveal the very heart of God. In contrast, when the priests were defiling the Temple, Jesus overturned the tables and money changes and drove them all out (Matt 11:15-17; John 2:14-17). This too was the heart of God in action as moral evil arouses Holy anger in the heart of God. 

Jesus hated hypocrisy, but loved sincerity and earnestness. He hated pretense, but loved those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness. He hated pride, but loved meekness and humility. He hated severity but loved mercy. He loved justice but hated inequity. He loved purity but hated licentiousness. He hated oppression but loved those who were persecuted for righteousness’ sake. He loved truth but hated dishonesty and pronounced many a woe on pretenders and on those who turned truth into a lie and substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God. (Christensen, 1970, pp. 65-66)

In summary, the life of Christ offers an indelible portrait of the Sovereign God. It is through the life of Christ that God’s people fully see the depth of the love of God and His character. It is God’s intra-Trinitarian love that ensured the plan of redemption through the Son. It is God’s providential love that “protect us, feeds us, clothes us, and forebears to destroy us when mere justice could rightly write us off” (Carson, 2000, p. 83). It is God’s appealing love through Christ’s incomparable death on the Cross that compels His followers to no longer live to ourselves but for Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15). It is
God’s effective, elective love that permits us to see the absolute magnificence and power of Christ’s sacrifice through His death, which pays our debt and reconciles us to God.

Finally it is God’s continuous love that loves us,

not only with immutable love that ensures we are more than conquerors though Christ who loved us (Rom 8), but with the love of a Father for His children, telling them to remain in His love (Jude 21). . . . All this has transformed us, so that we in turn perceive the sheer rightness of the first command—to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength. (Carson, 2000, pp. 83-84)

God shows the depth of His Character and the strength of His love through His Son, not merely as a topic to be analyzed, discussed, and understood, but as something to be accepted, absorbed, and experienced, so that those who experience this can also love. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and we can be fully restored because of His love.

**God and Man’s Relationship: Restored**

All that sin destroyed, on all four levels of relationship, from the Fall of Adam and Eve may now be fully restored through the redemptive, healing, and reconciling work of Christ Jesus. Restoration would not have been achieved if left in human being’s control.

It is impossible for finite and guilty man to heal the breach in his relationship with GOD. The God of the Bible shows Himself not only to be the Creator, but also the Redeemer of His people. Their salvation is at His initiative. (Keyes, 1984, pp. 76-77)

The life of Christ while here on earth was the epitome of what it means to be in right relationship on all four levels— with God, our self, each other, and creation. Christ lived the life that humanity did not live by being faithful, obedient, and loving. Because His identity was in God, He knew who He was and what His purpose was. Ultimately He knew what His position was before God, among people, and in the world. All of this was
accomplished while He took on the form of humanity. Because He was obedient and faithful even to death, He fulfilled the requirements of God’s original plan for being in right relationship with God. Christ’s death is the most concrete and absolute evidence that anyone has of God’s love for them and it is through Christ that they are redeemed in the relationships that humanity lost at all four levels.

**Restored Relationship With Self**

Christ restored humanity’s relationship with self and allowed all to reestablish a holistic understanding of what it means to be children of God, with meaning, purpose, and self-worth, which was all lost as a result of the Fall.

By redeeming our relationship with God, Jesus offers us back our self-understanding. We can once again know who we are because we know whose we are. We can put aside the distortions that sin would inject into our self-awareness, and we can see ourselves—body, mind and spirit—as belonging to God who created us for fellowship and redeemed us in His Son. Jesus Christ bore our distorted self-image, our egocentricism, our self-hatred, our aimless quest for purpose and our self-delusion. (Rodin, 2010, p. 46)

**True Self-Identity**

Because of the work of Christ, who has reconciled those who believe in Him, God’s people are able to reestablish their true sense of identity from the One who created them. Because people are created in the image of God, and therefore made to reflect His character, their characters and true self-identities are fully realized. However, the only way that they can grow in the image of God is to identify those things they previously substituted for God. As they learn to separate from those things, they will become more mature and grow into a God-shaped self-identity. Ephesians 4:22-24 admonishes people to
put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul also admonishes that people “do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col 3:9-10).

**Right Thinking**

Most human beings are unaware of what they truly believe about God and about themselves. God’s Word is to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps 119:105). However, there can be an internal struggle in applying the scriptures in a person’s life because of the defenses people have put up for self-protection and as a result of the level of their brokenness. When used correctly, scripture will identify and attack these defense barriers, enabling each person to have a healthy, honest relationship with God. Hebrews 4:12-13 has something to say about the Word of God:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Because God sees and knows all, there is no need to hide anything from Him. Anyone can go to Him just as they are; believing that He will fully accept them. As stated above, there are two sides to having a true self-identity: self-acceptance and self-coherence, which are both rooted in God.

**Self-Acceptance**

True self-acceptance is grounded in the knowledge that God accepts everyone, even in an imperfect state, and that all are valued by Him. However, in order to fully
embrace this, people need to be honest about who they are and what they have done. These are both integral to the process of strengthening a person’s sense of self-worth.

True self-acceptance . . . does not survive honesty; it rests on it. Integrity thus is one of the main paths to identity. The Christian is not someone who is brave or thick skinned that he cannot face the truth about himself unafraid; rather he is a sinner who can face his sin because he has confidence that God has forgiven and accepted him in spite of it. The acceptance of God is the basis of self-worth. (Keyes, 1984, p. 97)

Thus, self-acceptance is deepened as the ability to confess and repent of sins develops, which in turn builds a peaceful integrity. “[Self] acceptance is always involved in forgiveness and repentance (Herz, 1998, p. 48). This extent of honesty before God “leads to life, joy and peace with God . . . [and] takes you from bondage to freedom” (Kendrick, Kendrick & Alcorn, 2011, p. 185).

**Self-Acceptance and Self Coherence**

When people are brutally honest before God, knowing that He accepts them and forgives them, this helps create the formation of self-coherence.

Self-acceptance is rooted in a reconciled relationship to the One who is beyond our identity. Self-acceptance is not achieved at the price of loss of coherence and integration . . . self-acceptance rooted in God’s acceptance includes honesty and openness that contributes to inner coherence . . . The Christian’s reason for self-acceptance lies in God’s attitude toward him. If you are a Christian, your final environment is a world whose Creator forgives, accepts, and loves you in all your uniqueness. God not only loves you in this way, but He wants you to be always aware of it. He wants you to have that confidence and to live in it. (Keyes, 1984, pp. 98-99)

Having this understanding and being able to live out this principle is the foundational step towards self-healing and restoration.

**Restoration and Healing**

Emotional, spiritual, and relational healing of the self is a process that does not happen overnight, but it can happen; however, there are key elements that are required for
this to take place. Some have previously been discussed; such as, God’s view of humanity, right thinking, and honesty. Alongside these elements, the Holy Spirit plays a key role in the process, as well as affirming relationships, strength, wisdom, and time. If any of these ingredients are missing it will hinder or even stifle the healing process (McGee, 1990, p. 32).

**Time**

This is essential for healing and restoration to take place, and just like seeds that are planted in the ground, the environment that individuals are placed in must be conducive for growth to take place. Everyone has different growth rates, which can be based on the depth of the wounds and experiences gone through. The quality of the environment they are in can either stifle or aid the healing process.

**The Holy Spirit and Healing**

In order for deep spiritual healing and restoration to take place, attention must be given to the spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational needs. The Holy Spirit communicates His love, light, forgiveness, and power to a sinner’s deepest needs as people allow Him to dwell within them. Because the spiritual life affects how people view God, which also largely determines the quality and degree of the health they experience in every other aspect of their life. Therefore, the spiritual aspect of healing must be a fundamental focus. Although the Holy Spirit allows all to experience His presence, and is drawing all people to God (John 14:16), He is also called the Comforter and Helper. As people struggle with the reality of pain, the Holy Spirit not only enables them to let go of the past hurts, but also helps them to move forward. Because the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, not the spirit of denial, He teaches all things and guides people into
all truth (John 16:13). He encourages honesty about self-identity, about the past, and
gives people the courage to accept who they are. This at times may be painful to bear. For
this reason He also is the Counselor (John 14:16, 26 NIV), giving wisdom, strength, and
encouragement by reminding people of Christ’s teaching through the Word (John 14:26),
as well as helping people in their weakness by interceding for them (Rom 8:26-27). As
the Holy Spirit lives within humanity (John 14:17), He enables people to experience each
element of the process of self-healing, assisting them towards a restored and transformed
life.

**Honesty**

Honesty not only plays a key role in developing true self-identity but also in the
healing process. Genuine healing can only take place if people are aware of their need
and totally honest about it. The more authentic a person is about her need, the more she
will seek to find permanent effective remedies. However, if people superficially assess
and admit their need, the more likely it is that superficial remedies will be administered.
The more honest people are about their painful situations and needs, getting to the core
deeper levels, the more they open themselves up to experience the power of deep,
authentic healing and restoration.

**Affirming Relationships**

Honesty and a sense of identity is enabled and strengthened by the affirming love
of those within their sphere of influence to be able to face the reality of any experience.
Through this love, honesty, and strength, they see tangible expressions of God’s
character.
While this is a key element to in the healing process, wisdom is needed in knowing how and what to share with others, as sharing is a responsibility.

It is only when self is restored and healed, can a person successfully progress to have healthy productive relationships with others. This leads to the third level of restoration.

Restored Relationship With our Neighbor

God’s people are to love their neighbors as themselves and live “in whole, healthy and productive relationships that reflect the image of God on all four levels. In each [level people] . . . find the purpose of [their] . . . lives as God’s new creation” (Rodin, 2010, p. 36).

Through the life of Christ, not only have people in the world been reconciled to God, but are called to be reconciled to their fellow human beings.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18-19)

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

The Great Commission of Matthew 28 and the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) mandates all to love others just as all love themselves, as Christ loves all. This can only be achieved properly as people establish their right relationship with God, for it is He who defines who each person is. As believers go through the process of nurturing, strengthening, and guarding the relationship they have at these three levels, through the power of the Holy Spirit, only are they then able to love others the way God intended them to do so.
Because Christ became flesh, He canceled the strife and enmity that was introduced onto the world at the Fall. Christ overcame this strife through His death, and His resurrection means that sinners can participate in the process of reconciliation.

Because of Christ, God’s people now have regained the ability to love themselves as God loves them, and have been able to reestablish intimacy with God who is the author of love, which was lost at the Fall. The once distorted self-image can now be replaced by a healthy understanding of who they have become in their relationship with God. This enables people to love themselves, to love others, and to establish healthy authentic relationships.

Once we agree that God’s love and acceptance will never diminish, we can relax in His divine approval . . . accepting ourselves just as God accepts us, we can [sequentially] turn to those around us and begin to accept them too . . . As we soak in God’s unconditional [love] . . . we can exude that same attitude toward others. (Farley, 2013, p. 125)

Restored Relationship With Creation

On the fourth and final level of relationship, through the redemptive and reconciling work of Christ and the restoring and transforming impact that it has in a relationship with the Creator, the person, and the neighbor, they are given back their original purpose to care for the things God has entrusted to them such as the environment, the animals, material possessions and resources etc. When done in right relationship at the previous three levels, will impact their time, talents, and treasures.

Conclusion

The restoration discussed in this chapter, which is central to the working of this project, is a restoration on all four levels of relationship.
Sin brought a breakdown of relationship on all four levels. As we have seen, restoration of these four levels begins with a restored image of God in our thinking, which can then be followed by self, neighbor, and creation.

As the true image of God can be seen at the first level, humanity will then be able to see themselves in a biblical light. As a clear image of God is gained, the second level of relationship with self can be restored, as people begin to see themselves as the beloved of God. People can now know who they are, and understand their true self-identity because they know whose they are. With a genuine understanding of the acceptance and love God has for all, people are able to accept themselves and experience self-worth and coherence in light of God’s love that heals them from their brokenness, allowing them to be whole again. When healing happens at that level, people are no longer led by self-deception and cease to be in competition with those around them. Now, at the third level, we can begin to “love our neighbor as ourselves” authentically because we are now able to love ourselves. We are now free to enjoy healthy, functional relationships that reflect the true character of God.

As the synergy of these relationships grow people are now ready for the fourth level, where they can cease to seek to dominate what God has entrusted to them, and instead selflessly exercise stewardship over nature, their possessions and resources.

The aim of this project is to bring about this kind of restoration in the lives of Millennial young men and women.
CHAPTER 3

MILLENNIAL YOUTH, POSTMODERN CULTURE, SPIRITUALITY AND IDENTITY

Introduction

Over the past decade (2004–2014) there has been a significant increase in research and literature published regarding postmodernism and youth culture. This is due to a paradigm shift from modernity to postmodernity that has been taking place. It is also causing societal disruption to established ideologies, worldview, and values. Because of this transition, one study (Long, 2004) found that the youth and young adults of this generation, known as Millennials, find it difficult to comprehend, relate, and connect to the generation in which their parents and grandparents were born.

Currently, the Adventist Church is made up of a mixture of generations such as Traditionalists: born 1925-1945, Baby Boomers: born 1946-1964, Generation X: born 1965-1980 and Millennials: born 1980-2000 (Marston, 2011). Although the current transition has and is impacting every aspect of society, previous generations have to some extent failed to respond positively to postmodernism and the youth culture. Postmodern cultures such as Generation X and Millennials have embraced the changes but differ on how best to respond to them.

Pastoral observation indicates that the church’s failure to respond to these changes appears to be one of the main factors causing youth and young adults (Millennials) to
disengage from the Church. Nel (2003) asks a challenging question: “Do we really understand the necessity of modeling by older Christians for facilitating development in a critical time of searching for and finding identity?” (p. 81).

In order for these issues to be addressed, it is essential to have deeper, well-informed understanding of the characteristics of this generation and the issues they face in order to provide the proper care and nurture they need.

A review and discussion of relevant, contemporary literature will contribute to an understanding of Millennial youth in general, with insight into Millennial youth in the British context, and focusing on Millennial youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The review will highlight: (a) their characteristics, (b) development theory: their self and spiritual formation/identity, and (c) how an understanding of attachment theory and God image can be used to facilitate healing, foster healthy interpersonal relationships, and nurture spiritual growth.

**Characteristics of the Postmodern Millennial Culture**

According to Burstein (2013b), currently there are approximately 1.7 billion Millennials worldwide, which is almost one third of the world’s population (p. xvi), making them the largest generation in history. They exhibit a unique set of characteristics that are predominantly repercussions of societal and cultural changes (Wang, Farmer, Parker, & Golubski, 2011, p. 154) that distinguish them from other generations. Burstein has also written that

Millennials are more global, more tolerant, more diverse, more educated, more connected, and bigger than any generation before them. They embrace change. They are the only generation to come of age with one foot in the old world of pre-internet, pre-Facebook, pre-computer, doing their first research projects in libraries, and
another foot in the digital era. They understand the best of the old world and the best of the new and are happily blending them together. They are defined by their willingness to try new things, to adapt, and to bootstrap—something they’ve had to learn in the wake of the recession. This nimble ability to adapt and move in our current fast future positions Millennials uniquely among generations. (Burstein, 2013a, para. 3)

Although there are a numerous traits that comprise this generation, following is a non-exhaustive list of the core characteristics. It must be noted that these are general traits, which may not be true of every Millennial person.

Rejection of Establishment

The Millennial generation (which have embraced a diversified global view) have issues with trusting others, especially authority due to experiencing hurt, abuse, and betrayal from existing power structures in society. This has led to a heightened level of skepticism, “no longer trusting bureaucracies and hierarchies to the point that there is a positive resistance to establishment’s way of doing and seeing things. They have rejected the . . . worldview of the establishment and are inventing their own” (Cowdell, 2004, p. 28). The rejection of the worldview of societal establishment has led them to make their own worldview, which incorporates the influence of those who have and are experiencing comparable situations and circumstances as their own; thus, a community is birthed.

This key characteristic is said to precipitate a number of other significant traits that characterize the Millennial generation.

From Individualism to Community

As highlighted above, a rejection of establishment and societal worldview is said to have been one of the most significant factors that have led Millennial youth to shift
from individualism to community. They place a high value on community over individualism.

Millennials broke away from the individualism of the Boomers and Gen Xers, focusing instead on the good of the group. While the Boomers sought to be the together individual (e.g., Fonzie from Happy Days), the Millennials seek to work together with others for the good of all (e.g., Harry Potter). (Mercandente, 2008, p. 5)

To reinforce this Long (2004) highlights that the shift from the Enlightenment/Modern era to the emerging/postmodern era has led to a social and cultural change. “Indications of a postmodern worldview suggest that . . . community with its emphasis on the interrelationship of all things and symbolic forms of communication, with an emphasis on the visual, are all central to the new way of thinking” (p. 59).

Special, Sheltered With a Sense of Entitlement

Millennials, are predominantly the children of the Baby Boomer generation and have a distrust of authority figures who have let them down in the past, contrary to this, they have been made to feel special by their parents and other Boomer authority figures, including colleges, universities, and any organization wishing to sell them a product or service. “They have been made to feel vital to their parents’ sense of purpose. . . . As children, they were given trophies for participation rather than victory” (Coomes & DeBard, 2011, p. 35). To reinforce this Mercandente (2008) states:

The old adage, “Children should be seen, but not heard” was sent hastily into retirement during the eighties. Children were not only seen and heard, but they were recorded and chronicled. Their video toting parents were present at all of their childhood events (often beginning at birth). The lens was always firmly focused on their “stars” and in some ways became a Millennial child’s metaphor for life. Not surprisingly, many Millennials have come to understand their parents’ purpose in life to be wrapped around their own well-being, education, and future success. (pp. 4-5)

This has led them to perceive themselves as special and have in turn become highly expectant.
One of the repercussions that have resulted from authority figures demonstrating how special Millennial youth are is sheltering them from harm’s way and overindulging them. This is evident in numerous ways from child safety rules, “baby on board” signs, and lockdown schools. To appease their guilt for neglecting their children and in an attempt to make up for the lack of time they spend with them due to their busy working lifestyles, parents of Millennials have endeavored to get their children the best that money can buy. “Their parents have given them so much without them requiring them to work for it . . . with added emphasis placed on their rights” (A. R. Walshe, personal communication, January 20, 2014).

It is said that the pre-occupation of their own worldview and the distraction to get money and achieve has led Baby Boomer parents to become overprotecting, overindulging, and has also fueled their attempt to structure and organize their children’s lives to give them what they never had.

Parents of Millennials have organized their children’s lives to give direction; this effort has been supported by day care options, after-school programs, recreational centers, music and dance lessons, and arts programs that have come to occupy an increasing amount of what was formerly free . . . time. (Coomes & DeBard, 2011, p. 35)

Although there are many benefits to this, there are also negative repercussions as Millennial youth have become dependent on their parents. They are said to be highly “ambitious but sometimes directionless” (Marston, 2011, p. 105). However, it must be mentioned that this has not compensated for or negated their distrust of the establishment and authority figures in general.

Values

Their values are based on experiential thoughts as opposed to mere rational
thoughts. They value the feelings their peers have of them over that of society and people in authority. This generation feels hurt and let down from their childhood and are vulnerable to stress because they live in a state of fluidity. Millennial youth place a high value on community over individualism and have a desire and yearning for God (Long, 2004).

To reinforce these findings, Paulien (2008) describes various characteristics of the postmodern generation that have come about as a result of the negative impact and influence of society and those in authority. One of those characteristics focuses on what affects them personally and predominantly investing in causes and experiences that have a direct impact on their life and well-being. Rossiter (2011) supports this description by stating: “They [are] . . . more concerned with what has an immediate bearing on their wellbeing: their looks and social acceptability, their friendships, entertainment, films, television, music, leisure and sport” (p. 13).

This understanding is congruent with the research of Dudley (2007), who outlines that most teenagers operate at the level described by Kohlberg and his theory regarding stages of moral development as instrumental-relativist orientation. This is the most conventional level. Motivation for behavior involves satisfying a person’s own needs and sometimes that of others if there is a reward in return. Therefore, the person needs to understand what benefits will be gained for adopting a particular behavior or set of principles. It has also been said that “having a social conscience is foundational to them. Helping others, making a difference . . . these are [some of] the values of the Millennials” (Goeglein & Rove, 2011, p. 181).
Seek Authenticity

As mentioned previously, Millennial youth find it difficult to trust the establishment because of the painful experiences they have encountered from the Boomer generation. They are asking for the “real person to please stand up” (Allan R. Walshe, personal communication, January 20, 2014). They are looking for small communities of authentic Christians who might show them the way. They are not necessarily looking for perfection; however, “they are looking for true integrity” (Matthewman, 2011, p. 21). Millennials want people who are down to earth and are able to admit their mistakes. They seek people who are authentically living life, who have some aspects of their lives that are worth modeling and can be of benefit to them through mentoring and coaching. (Allan R. Walshe, personal communication, January 20, 2014). Actions speak louder than words to this generation. For them “values need to be more than words. They want to see leaders deliver” (Matthewman, 2011, p. 21).

To reinforce this point Millman (2011) indicates, “Millennials . . . are embracing authenticity and genuineness. . . . Authenticity, roots, and honesty are fundamentally key to them” (p. 52). Not only do they seek authenticity in physical relationships, they also seek authenticity online. “They seek authenticity of relationships both online and offline with three quarters of them maintaining at least one social network profile. As a generation they are self-aware of the distinctiveness of their ever present connectedness” (Lindner, 2012, p. 18).

From this research it is evident that Millennial youth want to be engaged in authentic relationships that will enable them to build trust and connectedness.
Narrative/Experiential

Communicating through the use of storytelling is a very powerful method in today’s postmodern culture. Even though a large proportion of postmodern philosophers discard the use of metanarrative,

people are still searching for a story that will give meaning to life, . . . . The evidence of movies, songs, books and television, shows the power of stories. . . . Stories are capable of articulating the emotional angst, and giving release and purpose. Stories have the ability not just to reach the head but engage the heart and indeed the whole person. (Hill & Ford, 2013, p. 226)

Millennials “look for truth in . . . the telling of stories” (Paulien, 2008, p. 63). Narrative links them to their sense for desire and experience, as opposed to the more purely logical approach of previous generations (moderns).

Millennials are also experiential learners who prefer to learn through discovery or by doing, as opposed to being lectured or by reading. “Millennials share characteristics such as . . . being experiential and exploratory learners. They read less, tend to be digital natives, and are obsessed with gaming” (Smallwood & Clapp, 2011, p. 51).

Societal Violence

Today’s Millennial youth are predominantly more hardened in prejudice against minorities and those who do not appear to embrace lifestyle and belief systems similar to what they think is the norm. This is because they live in a world where they have reminders of global terrorism constantly. As a result of this, Rossiter (2011) writes, “In turn, this generates contrary antagonism on the part of minority groups. A positive valuing of multiculturalism and a multi-faith community has been diminished as the hopes for a peaceful and tolerant society recede” (p. 14). He goes on to emphasize that other concerns that contribute to the anxiety level of Millennials are: crime levels, high
levels of imprisonment, as well as stricter immigration and refugee controls fortified by tight surveillance and security measures.

**Political Values**

Because Millennial youth are generally wary of, and disillusioned with, political institutions and large corporations, they question authority and generally do not respect it. However, minimal efforts are made by them to challenge the status quo. This is because they realize that they have minimal political influence or power. They express their rebellious feelings and dissent through genres of music such as rap and hip-hop, which is often saturated with violent and lawless lyrics. They have learned how to be adaptable in areas such as employment due to the level of job insecurity.

**Decision Making—Change**

Reality as is known is a text open to a multitude of interpretations and meaning is put together by the self and is subject to constant change for the postmodern Millennials. Their minds are suspicious of history as a predictor and teacher of the present and future. Great hopes are challenged by the notion that chance rules the present and future. According to Barry and Harvey (2001) Christianity as a grand narrative that expresses one true meaning for existence is no longer able to converse with youth of this present age and their worldview. They claim that it is speaking to ears that have long ago been switched off and is viewed as an illusion, and that has been passed down from past generations.

Millennials are disenchanted with institutions, including churches; they see them as mere vendors of ideology. Their way of responding to questions of transcendence is by expressing it through various mediums such as, music, body art, and experiments with a
mix of “new age” practices. Atheism is one of the many responses to their quest for meaning.

In a postmodern world, Mackay (2000) points out that the mentality of the youth to “hang loose,” keep their options open, and wait and see, has come as a direct result of a myriad of alternatives they are presented with that are more complex than ever, coupled with the realization that they can manufacture their own realities.

That is why fashion trends are so hard to pick in the young. It is why so many students abandon one course, unfinished, and proceed to another. It is why dramatic changes of direction in employment are made without a backward glance. And it is why older people sometime question whether there's any loyalty, any capacity for commitment, in today's young adults. (p. 179)

In connection to cultural plurality Rossiter (2011) states:

Young people value the global aspects of popular culture with which they identify, especially clothing styles and music. But at the same time they are ambivalent about the extensive cultural plurality they experience in Western countries. They are puzzled about how to understand the extraordinary range of belief systems and behaviours in the culture. (p. 14)

The challenge in this postmodern world is to offer Millennial youth experiences that ease and counteract their disappointment, as well as helping them to make sense of a world of overlapping and interfacing realities.

**Their Views on Truth**

In the millennial culture there is a strong resistance to propositional statements mandated from those in authority that have to be accepted without examination and question (Gibbs, 2000). “Truth is not so much stated as experienced. . . . [Millennials] need to have truth lived out before them, not stated to them. Words, in and of themselves, mean little to them; image means everything” (Long, 2004, p. 47). On this subject Paulien (2008) suggests the following:
Postmoderns are suspicious of people with “all the answers.” They believe that any universal story about the world and its history from beginning to end claims much more than anyone can possibly know. Why? Because all meta-narratives most postmoderns know about have lost their credibility. The very idea of a grand narrative has lost credibility. They feel that since human minds are finite by definition, they are incapable of creating a narrative that takes in the full measure of the truth. . . . They are unlikely to be searching for one set of beliefs that explains everything, but they are open to local narratives—the stories that articulate the way people in local community experience the world. (p. 66)

However, it must also be mentioned that Millennials may not be totally against absolute truth, but they are opposed to the notion that truth cannot be questioned. “What postmodern people are rejecting is not so much the reality of absolute truth as the claim to absolute truth” (Paulien, 2008, p. 69). They are more likely to accept the truth if they are included in the conversation. (Allan R. Walshe, personal communication, January 20, 2014).

They need to be able to trust the people they are in community with. “If truth is based in community, then truth is relative to the community one is associated with” (Paulien, 2008, p. 66). The more they can see that they can trust you and are included in the conversation about truth, the more they are likely to go with it and believe it (Allan R. Walshe, personal communication, January 20, 2014).

Multicultural

Millennials welcome multiculturalism as opposed to cultural exceptions of previous generations. Because of the vast development in social media they have “utilized the internet to forge multicultural community networks transcending national boundaries of geography, distance, language, culture and time zones” (Matthewman, 2011, p. 22).

Gen Y is also the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in . . . history. . . . This generation is more likely to be bicultural or multicultural—not only in terms of
race and ethnicity, but also in terms of overall taste and lifestyle. This is a generation that grew up in a different . . . culture heavily influenced by their parents’ cultural heritage and identities, not to mention the friends and social groups that they belong to. . . . Unlike the ethnic groups in previous generations assimilating in the mainstream culture, Gen Y’s multicultural members take big prides in their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and are considered acculturated. (Wallace, 2012, p. 52)

This generation is open and accepting of people who are different from them and tend to be more broad-minded toward other ethnicities. They also have a larger quantity of multicultural friends than previous generations (Zaphir, 2010). “They have the most multicultural unions in society because they feel very comfortable choosing whomever they want to be with without worrying what others would say” (Robinson & MPA, 2013, p. 40).

Millennials are the most travelled generation to date in history. This has been encouraged by their parents and fueled by cheap flights. “It is this desire for diversity and adventure that stimulates the generation” (Matthewman, 2011, p. 21).

Global Mediavores With Vast Communication Ability

They have connections all over the world. Texting and talking, tweeting, Facebooking all at the same time. “We are literally surrounded by media. We consume it without thinking. We relax with it, entertain with it, aimlessly sift through it; and just about every time I meet with my students, I find a way to teach it” (Day, 2013, p. 8).

“They are called mediavores because theirs is both visual and an aural reality. . . . They are globally-directed and rights oriented. . . . They are a generation of iPhones, iPads, and endless texting” (Goeglein & Rove, 2011, p. 181).

Having being raised in the midst of a techno revolution, the Millennials are comfortable with digital technology and social media. As the first generation of “digital natives” they blog, email, text, download, upload and consume electronic messages at a rate and volume far in excess of any other cohort. (Lindner, 2012)
It is estimated Millennials spend approximately 15 hours a day using some form of digital media or communications (Matthewman, 2011, p. 20).

With all this being said however, their “ability to communicate verbally and physically and virtually is the catalyst for the rise of global nomad” (Matthewman, 2011, p. 22).

Pressured

Because they are mediavores they are pressured to do so much and be up to date. They live in dissonance as they have so many options. They can be out late Friday night and then get up and teach the Sabbath school lesson the next day. They can live with the dissonance.

Millennials are also “pushed to study hard, avoid personal risks, and take full advantage of the collective opportunities adults are offering them, Millennials feel a “trophy kid” pressure to excel” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 44). Although the majority of Millennials feel comfortable questioning the rules and requirements that are enforced on them, “many times the questioning and efforts to negotiate with authority come as a result of feeling pressured to perform” (Keengwe & Schnellert, 2014, p. 68).

Confident Optimistic Achievers

Millennials have been encouraged to believe in themselves, thus have come to expect good news and have gained a sense of optimism, which is directly related to a high degree of confidence (Coomes & DeBard, 2011).

Matthewman confirms that “they are supremely confident, expecting everything to fall into their laps, and hence massively overestimate their own abilities- they think they will make their mark immediately and will progress rapidly. . . .They are just a click
away from the answer” (Matthewman, 2011, p. 21). Their sense of optimism and level of confidence has been nurtured and can also be contributed to the numerous rewards and awards received from what has been deemed as “good behavior” by authority figures in their lives. They trust in this authority because it has worked to their benefit. They are willing to work hard to achieve their goals and serve others as long as they get the credit for it.

On this Coomes and DeBard (2011) declare Millennials are “confident of their ability to match the effort required to meet the expectations others place upon them and are motivated to do so as long as their own expectations of beneficial outcomes are met . . . [they] expect to be held accountable, if this accountability can be achieved through good behavior” (pp. 36-37). This characteristic of the need for achievement is heavily associated to Millennials. They are willing to invest in higher education and ways to advance themselves so long as those who have authority and influence of them also invest in them and support them.

Team Orientated

Millennials are placing an increasing importance on engaging in teams and collaborative work environments. This has been engrained in them from a very young age. “Surveys show that they see individualism as a serious social problem, and their experience with organized sports, school projects, and community service have taught them to work collaboratively” (Lambert, 2009, p. 157). Millennials have an affinity for congregating and tend to like collective action. “Part of the motivation for this is their desire to cooperate and be perceived as being cooperative by those who are in position to judge them” (Coomes & DeBard, 2011, p. 37). Millennials benefit from being part of a
team, which automatically lowers the pressure and level of responsibility that would be placed on any one individual working solo.

One disadvantage is that Millennials expect that whatever initiative or project they are working on needs “to be highly structured because they do not like to work without a net. . . . It has been suggested that, when they do encounter difficult people, they become uncomfortable and expect those in authority to protect them” (p. 37).

However with all this being said, noble causes are a high source of motivation for them, as long as they have the proper guidance from more mature mentors to ensure the cause is achievable.

Open to Spirituality

Millennials are open to spirituality and religious influence and have been characterized as searching. Long (2004) has suggested that “part of the willingness to search comes from viewing the unhealthy choices made by the two generations before them” (p. 53).

Because Millennials are so open in their search for spirituality, there are numerous dangers because the devil has a whole menu of choices like New Age, Wicca, and many Eastern religions. They are often enticed by these different forms of religion and spirituality.

Millennials are open to the idea of God, but because of their acceptance of all points of view, they don’t really know which God they believe in or want to believe in. They tend to have a pick-and-mix approach to spirituality, not necessarily buying into the complicated systematic theologies or step-by-step discipleship plans of the other modern generations. They are willing to accept certain tenets or values of Christianity, but they see nothing inappropriate about pairing these with ideas culled from…other world religions. As postmoderns they don’t believe that any one group or religion has the corner on truth. They are looking for an authentic spirituality or faith, one that reflects their stories and experiences, and that works for their lives. (Beckwith, 2009, p. 33)
They are looking for people whose life exemplifies an authentic walk with God. They have a known or unknown search for something more.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, the characteristics discussed above are an overview of some of the significant traits that make up the Millennial generation.

**Religion in Britain**

Despite a decrease in numbers, Christianity remains the largest religion in England and Wales. According to the 2011 national census, 33.2 million people (59.3% of the people) categorize themselves as Christian. Islam is the next largest religion with two point four million people (4.8% of the population). Close to a quarter of the population (14.1 million) indicated that they had no religion. “Between 2001 and 2011 there has been a decrease in people who identify as Christian (from 71.7% to 59.3%) and an increase in those reporting no religion (from 14.8% to 25.1%” (Statistics, 2012, para. 4). Although the country has become increasingly secularized over the past decade, in general, there is still a strong affiliation with Christianity. Based on research from the 2001 UK consensus, Smith (2007) states: “The secularization of society in some parts of the West has led to a consistent underestimation and trivialization of the impact of religious beliefs among many people in the United Kingdom” (p. 119).

**Millennial Youth and Religion in Britain**

Although the research stated above gives a general overview of Religion in Britain, further research portrays the role and influence of religion among British youth. According to a poll of youth for the *Sun Newspaper* by YouGov, religion has a smaller than ever place in the lives of British youth. “The reputation of religion amongst young
people is actually more negative than neutral: 41% agree that ‘religion is more often the
cause of evil in the world’ and only 14% say it is a cause for good” (Dahlgreen, 2013,
Para. 4). Only 25% of those surveyed believe in God when asked. Nineteen percent
believe in a greater spiritual power that is non-Godlike and 38% believe that there is no
God or spiritual power. One report reveals that
today’s 18-24 years olds are probably the most irreligious generation . . . yet. It’s not
that today’s young adult are lacking in blind faith: . . . it’s just that they are not
looking to religion to give meaning to their lives or to shore up their values, which
remain in many ways quite traditional. (Jones, 2013, para. 1, 3)

Another reports describes it in another way:

They [generation Y] could be described as the first atheist generation, but this could
be unfair given that so few understand who God is. This is not a case of young adults
who have been to church and drifted away or actively rejected it; they have simply
had no experience of church or Christianity in any meaningful way… This trend is
only likely to continue as fewer and fewer children grow up in households with any
religious knowledge and involvement. (Scott, 2013, para. 2)

According to the findings of the YouGov poll, the influence of religious figures
on the lives of the surveyed British youth came at the bottom of the list with only 12%
indicating that they are influenced by religious figures. This followed the other
predominant influences of parents (82%), friends (77%), politicians (38%), brands (32%)
and celebrities (21%) (Dahlgreen, 2013). Those who describe themselves as religious and
who claim to frequently attend public worship services are significantly fewer than those
who describe themselves as belonging to a religion. The findings confirm that the
Millennial generation in Britain are the most irreligious of all British sectors in history.

Adventist Millennial Youth

Research conducted and presented in Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church:
Personal Stories from a 10-year Study by Dudley (2000) shows that
this generation of young adults is searching for sincerity, genuineness and intelligent meaning for their lives; meaning that makes a practical difference in their day to day affairs. . . . They are desperately seeking love, acceptance and spiritual depth, yet many are disappointed with the spiritual resources they have been offered. (p. 60)

From his research findings he sums up the answer to the question of why they are leaving as being more of a question: “How can Adventism be the truth it claims to be when what we experience is alienation, irrelevance, and self-righteous intolerance?” (Dudley, 2000, p. 61). These are some of the common factors that are continually being surfaced from the research of current scholars. This is congruent with the research of Martin (2008/2009) who adds, “Clearly the lack of mutually valued relationships that engender trust and shared support have left both parties, young adults and Seventh-day Adventism, at risk of going under” (p. 49).

**Valuegenesis Europe**

In 2007 the European Valuegenesis Survey (VGE) was conducted. This research project included approximately 6,000 Adventist young people in 17 European countries including Great Britain, which is the context of my project. The findings and report of the research, which were published in 2013, paints an extensive picture of the contemporary landscape of Adventist youth ministry in Europe. The project was predominantly launched due to what is now a universal concern in the evangelical context, and especially in the United States, that youth and young adults are leaving the Church at alarming rates.

The survey sought to measure the climate of the Church, which measures how friendly, accepting, and loving the Church is. This is described by the researchers as a warmth scale. According to the report, “the metaphor of the church as God’s family implies that it is a place to feel at home, for one is accepted among brothers and sisters—
a safe and supportive place to be” (Sigg, 2013a, p. 142).

The results reveal that 51.5% of youth feel that their Church is warm and 52.8% feel that the Church accepts people who are different. This indicates that approximately half the number of Adventist youth and young adults who currently go to Church feel that it is not warm or accepting. The Church should be

a friendly and accepting atmosphere opens a secure space for young people to actually ask questions and thus deepen and develop faith . . . [and] be a welcoming place for young people with positive, strong relationships between adults and young people, and provide a safe environment where they can open their hearts and minds. (Sigg, 2013a, p. 144)

According to the survey, when asked how they felt about relationships in the Church “85.2% of the youth said that to have good relationships with other Adventist young people is important to them. Less but still remarkably highly rated (68%) are relationships with adult members” (Sigg, 2013a, p. 157). According to the survey, parents are by far the most important factor in religious socialization and faith development . . . the pastor is next on the list mentioned by 47.4% of the youth . . . the VGE sample confirms that the impact a pastor has on youth and commitment to Jesus and the church, especially if he [or she] is able to relate to young people, should not be underestimated. . . . Adult members in the British Union seem to have the highest impact on young people’s decision to become Adventist. (Sigg, 2013a, pp. 157-158)

The report revealed the importance and need for youth to have “meaningful relationships with adults outside their family to supplement parental influence or sometimes even as a substitute . . . to experience the church as an extended family is crucial and the church is actually called to be ‘God’s family’” (Sigg, 2013a, p. 159).
Although the findings indicate that approximately 50% of churches are seen as warm and accepting, on the other hand 50% are described by the youth as not conducive in fostering spiritual growth and faith.
When asked if their spiritual needs were being met, only 36.7% of youth surveyed from the British Union indicated they were. This result is a clear indication that the overall quality of relationships, as well as the church experience, is not conducive to the fostering of spiritual nurture of the youth in the British Union.

When asked about their intention to remain in the Adventist Church for the next 30 years, the findings indicate that their decision to remain would be based on three top factors; namely, (a) how helpful preaching is for everyday life, (b) whether their spiritual needs are met in the church, and (c) whether the church is a supportive congregation or not.

Youth who generally experience the preaching in their church as helpful are eight times more likely to be an Adventist in twenty years than youth who generally experience the preaching as not being helpful and meaningful...A similar strong factor is the question of whether their spiritual needs are met in the church the young person attends. If so, the chance that he or she will still be in the church twenty years is five times higher than if the spiritual needs are not being met. The chances are two point six times greater if the if the young person attends a church with a supportive congregation. (Sigg, 2013b, p. 179)

These top three influential factors emphasize church alliance is not to be fostered through youth ministry alone but in relevant, supportive, and holistic church experience.

The writer of the report concludes with a powerful statement on the importance of church climate and relationships in the faith formation of Millennials.

Young people long to belong. They find access to the Christian faith first and foremost through relationships, particularly in changing postmodern times. It is vital that they can understand the Father as well as Adventist beliefs in relational terms in the church and not just in the realm of youth ministry. In fact, a friendly, loving and accepting congregation that supports and sustains the juvenile quest for identity and an “owned faith” is actually doing highly effective youth ministry . . . the youth long to feel that their spiritual needs are met . . . they value preaching and teaching much more that contemporary style of . . . worship . . . and although the family is the strongest factor in becoming an Adventist . . . when it comes to the question of remaining an Adventist, the experience of the local church is much more significant. A positive congregational climate . . . is crucial. Adventist youth do not need
specialized youth ministry as much as a more holistic and relevant Christian community, a spiritual home to which they feel they belong. (Sigg, 2013b, p. 181)

These findings are not dissimilar to that of the results of other worldwide Valuegenesis reports; thus reemphasizing the importance and need for healthy relationships in the Church.

**British Millennial Youth**

In line with worldwide findings, Black British youth are also leaving the church and in particular, the Adventist Church in considerable numbers, due to feeling that the Church is irrelevant, with a lack of authentic people, and not feeling like they belong. One writer states: “Caribbean youths in Britain are voting with their feet by choosing worshipping institutions that elevate them by giving them respect for their culture and history. This is their quest for community” (Nathan, 2000, p. 353).

Self-identity and the search for meaning is another factor that is playing an integral role in the way Black British youth are reacting to the Church and Christianity, as they feel that the Church does not adequately address their needs.

The issue of identity among Caribbean youth has become a major priority within their hierarchy of needs. The Black Christian community has not adequately addressed this need and in several cases does not even recognize it as an issue. They therefore continue to lose many of their young people from their worshipping communities. This attitude exacerbates the idea, which many young people hold, that the church is irrelevant to them and their needs, and that Christianity is a white man's religion. (Nathan, 2000, p. 349)

From the findings it is clearly evident that Black British youth concur with the views of Millennial youth in general and are leaving the Church for numerous reasons; the most common reason being: the lack of interpersonal meaningful relationships with mature church goers. The Church is seen as irrelevant and not able to meet the needs of the youth, and they do not feel a sense of belonging. If there is going to be a change in
this paradigm, it is paramount that the needs of the youth are appropriately addressed and adequately met. Black British Millennial youth face a barrage of social, economic, and political issues which has and is playing an integral part in shaping their identity and spirituality. The Church needs to appropriately understand and address these issues.

Through their experiences of racism and alienation in British society, these young people are calling for a church that would be responsive to their identity crises and social, economic and political needs. It should be noted that it is Black youths that are most vulnerable to racial injustice and its violent attacks. They are also the most volatile sector of our communities, and their reactions show it. (Nathan, 2000, p. 351)

Kelcourse (2004) also mentions the challenge of ethnicity.

During early stages of adolescence, the individual has to cope with the cultural diversity that is present in home, school and work communities. Each of these communities may have different degrees of acceptance as well as appreciation for differing cultural groups . . . if his ethnic group is devalued in the larger community—for instance, at school or work—then the task of this stage includes overcoming the devaluation in order to honor his own urges and aspirations. . . . Parents face the daunting challenge of conveying to adolescents a sense of possibility from a context in which they have experienced dehumanizing treatment. (p. 233)

Working alongside parents, it is imperative for the Church to also play an integral role in creating a supportive and accepting environment, conducive for healthy nurture and development if these Black British Millennials are to build a healthy self and spiritual identity with a solid faith that grows as they mature further into adulthood. Without this support system in place, these youth predominantly tend to develop their own strategy to compensate for this, which can have devastating effects. Kelcourse expounds on this by stating:

In the absence of strong communal support affirming the person, it is difficult for any individual to move forward into adulthood without the spirit’s being deeply damaged. And when the absence of support is based on ethnicity, race, or other physical reality, then the individual must develop a strategy to compensate for the devaluing projections. The strategy can involve an aggressive commitment to achievement in order to prove her value to the external world. An alternative strategy could involve a refusal to engage to the next developmental phase or . . . to be in exploding rebellion against all that the devaluing culture represents. . . . [However] the young person who
is supported in redirecting his response to racially motivated devaluation into positive
commitment to self-development is growing the emotional and spiritual muscle for
engaging life more fully in later stages. (Kelcourse, 2004, pp. 234-235)

These are some of the key struggles that Black British Millennial youth are facing
in their search for identity and belonging. Alongside addressing these issues, it is also
important to explore the counteractive factors that are currently consuming their time and
attention.

**Millennial Youth, Self-Identity and Spirituality**

Among the theories that developmental psychologists have constructed regarding
personality and identity development, stages five and six of Erik Erikson’s (1993) eight
stage personality development theory appropriately explains the personality development
that adolescents to young adults go through (see Appendix A for a table of these eight
stages).

Engebretsen (2003) references Erikson (1975) and states:

During the teenage years, the young person needs to establish and know himself or
herself as a specific individual, to maintain some connection with meaningful
elements of the past and to accept the values of the group. In the process of finding
themselves, adolescents must establish a sexual, moral, political, religious, and
vocational identity that is relatively stable, constant, and mature. This identity ushers
in adulthood. (pp. 16-17)

Erikson adds that in this process the young person will retain some of the goals and
values set by parents and society, reaccept some, and embrace new ones. He believes that
with identity achievement, adolescents will develop their own spiritual system, which is
often a broad-based blend of vocational goals and a variety of elements.

This is also congruent with the understanding of Good and Brohpey (1990) and
Snowman (2009) who indicate that “adolescents begin to question the value system,
beliefs, and attitudes they received from their parents (Good & Brohpey, 1990,
p. 100), and begin to form a new perception of self, an identity of their own” (Snowman, 2009, p. 27). Ormrod (2006) adds to this and states: “Identity comes from reactions from significant others, parents, respected teachers, and especially friends—as they experiment with various roles and behaviors” (p. 69). This is expounded further by Parsons, Hinson, and Sardo-Brown (2001) who emphasize:

Identity is also reinforced by the kind of role models adolescents choose for themselves. Adolescents experiment with fads, clothes, music, hairstyles and special code words to provide them an identity of their own, separate-but not yet independent of- their parents. (p. 91)

Identity Formation and the Rejection of Authority

There is common understanding in literature that there is a connection between identity development and the well-known tendency to reject authority among adolescents. Studies, such as that of Cowdell (2004), have reported that adolescents in their early teens usually become less accepting of authoritarianism and more condemning of various forms of institutional authority. Not only is this rejection a result of experiencing hurt, abuse, and betrayal from existing power structures in society, but this in part can also be contributed to what Erikson (1993) calls “role confusion.” Alexander (2006) suggests that this is reflected in the adolescent’s “sense of confusion about the future, worries about what they will become, what they’ll do, who they’ll marry, it is a basic uncertainty about who they are” (p. 50). Young “adults who do not resolve this stage, lack confidence and tend to reject authority” (Yount, 2010, p. 62).

Implications of Stage Five and Six of Erikson’s Personality Development Theory

Establishing a satisfying sense of personal identity and direction is the goal of Erikson’s stage five. Establishing and maintaining meaningful, reciprocal relationships
with others without losing a sense of identity is the goal of stage six. The means of achieving these goals are “social acceptance and recognition . . . [and] personal confidence, openness to others, and rewarding experiences with significant others” (Dembo, 1994, p. 439). According to Snowman (2009) those who positively resolve stage five “are less self-conscious, more open to others, more logical in decision-making and able to work effectively under stress as well as establish close interpersonal relationships” (p. 31). However, those who do not successfully work through this stage “lack confidence and tend to reject authority. They doubt their own sex role” (Hamachek, 1990, p. 49), and can easily change their ideas about career, gender roles, and values through feedback (Snowman, 2009, p. 31). According to Yount (2010), “The former leads to identity and purpose, while the latter leads to confusion and aimlessness” (p. 64).

In the case of stage six, Yount adds that those who positively resolve this stage will establish “long term, reciprocal, mutually trusting relationships with each other” (p. 61). However, young adults who fail to resolve this stage and “are unable to form such reciprocal relationships will, in time, develop a sense of isolation from others” (Snowman, 2009, p. 27). According to Eggen and Kauchak (1994) the consequence of this is that these “young adults become emotionally isolated, unable to give or receive love freely” (p. 75). Yount summarizes this by stating:

Young adults will either learn to give themselves to one another (as in marriage), or select a group of personal friends (as in intimate, mutual, trusting, and sacrificial friendships), or they will pull away from others and become increasingly isolated. The former leads to generativity, while the latter leads to stagnation. (Yount, 2010, p. 61)

From the research it is apparent that in the developmental stages (five and six), Millennial youth and young adults need to be provided with an opportunity to develop a sense of ability and self-worth through the influence of role models; role models that will
enhance their identity development, as well as facilitate them in entering into mutually beneficial, strong relationships with a carefully chosen group of people. It is also imperative for these youths to be surrounded by “firm, caring adults who understand them and listen to them while providing security by enforcing limits of acceptable behavior” (Yount, 2010, p. 62). It must also be mentioned that the choices made in each prior stage has a domino effect and crucial ramifications on the probability of a positive outcome of the succeeding stage, that is, stage five is impacted by the outcome of stage four, stage six is impacted by stage five, etc. Therefore, in order for youth and young adults to have a healthy self-image and identity, the process must begin from stage one.

**Criticisms of Erikson’s Theory**

Although this theory has been validated by research from other psychologists over the years, there are those who have criticized Erikson’s theory for being subjective, repetitive, and male orientated. In regards to being subjective, Snowman (2009) states, “there have been limited checks on Erikson’s tendency to generalize from limited personal experiences” (p. 32).

Some scholars also believe that Erikson’s theory is repetitious with similarity of stages as well as being male orientated. Research conducted by Gilligan (1982) revealed that females achieve identity differently to males. However, more recent research indicates a narrowing of gender differences and that it has diminished over the years. From his research, Archer (1992) found no differences in identity across gender by religion, vocation, sex role, values, and dating.

Erikson’s theory does, however, elucidate significant characteristics of human development.
The Adventist Church and Nurturing Millennials to Obtain a Healthy Self-Identity

Based on the positive characteristics of stages five and six of Erikson’s theory, it is evident to see that this ideal has clearly not been attained with Millennials within the Adventist Church. Paulien (2008, p. 87) recommends a way in which God’s hand can still be found amid the messed up condition and dysfunctional state. Postmoderns have a deep sense of brokenness and a deep need for inner healing. Therefore, he makes the profound statement that brokenness is closely related to the loss of personal identity and that postmoderns tend toward identity crisis. Their love of movies may have a strong connection with this factor, as this allows people to observe a variety of “identities” in action that they then role-play in their mind. Often these identities are unrealistic and leave postmoderns unsatisfied and unable to build an identity that will actually work for them. Paulien reveals the positive implication of this by stating:

This state of affairs leaves an opening for the kind of positive identity that can come from knowing that one has been bought with a price. The gospel provides a stable sense of worth that will never leave us nor forsake us. A well-rounded Christian faith helps people know why they are here, where they have come from, and where they are going. The scripture rightly understood and presented, provide the kind of identity Postmoderns are looking for. (p. 59)

To add to this Parsons (1987) emphasizes:

Relationship and the resulting sense of “connectedness” and social bonding have long been considered to be essential elements of one’s psychological well-being. While such is true for all human beings, the significance of relationships is clearly highlighted during the period of adolescence. Every important social relationship undergoes change during adolescence. Changes in the adolescence relationships with family and friends as well as new relationships with teachers, employers and other members of the community, require a development of new strategies for interpersonal relating. (Parsons, 1987, p. 117)
It is for this reason that being connected to a healthy mature person in the form of a mentor, teacher, counselor, pastor, etc. will help youth and young adults navigate through the pivotal stages in their faith journey and self-development.

A personal relationship to a mentor-teacher, pastor . . . therapist, spiritual director . . . and the like can be pivotal for the young adult at this phase. . . . The ability to connect to a mentor or mentors can serve a bridge between immersion in family worldviews and greater self-definition. The mentor relationship can represent a developmental achievement that holds spiritual potential in the transference of wisdom and the offering of respect between generations. (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 240)

**Implications for Ministry**

In ministering to Millennial youth who are undergoing stage five of the developmental stages, Yount (2010) outlines that “adolescents struggle to form a unified self-identity from (1) a complex array of changes and choices from prior stages, (2) parental expectations, and (3) a variety of role models” (p. 80). Woolfolk (2004) suggests that churches can help “deal with identity issues by providing a variety of positive, mature role models” (p. 70). Along with role models such as pastors, counselors, and youth ministers, “these role models can be . . . college students, young adults in the church, parents, and senior adults. Teachers work with parents to help [youth] find resources for working out their personal problems” (p. 70). Teachers can play an instrumental role in this developmental stage. Yount (2010) emphasizes this and states:

Adolescents are susceptible to fads, trying out one role and then another, rebelling against church and family values, acting out their exaggerated desire for independence and freedom. Such behavior calls for teacher’s highest commitment of self-giving love, listening heart, flexibility of approach and eagerness to help. Teachers provide strong support for personal experimentation as they tolerate teenage fads. . . . Teachers can help teenagers realistically evaluate their behaviors as they give feedback and focus on the consequences of their choices. . . . In these ways, teachers provide teenagers reassurance in their search for their identity as a Christian in the face of conflicting role models and ideologies. (Yount, 2010, p. 80)
In helping youth and young adults navigate their way through stage six of the developmental stages where developing significant meaningful relationships is the focus, churches can assist by incorporating a small group model for discussing issues and fostering strong relationships. Yount expresses that “through discussing issues, sharing experiences, asking and answering questions and solving problems . . . [small] classes of ten to fifteen members permit better interaction . . . [as well as] social events and team-based ministry projects outside of class deepen meaningful relationships” (p. 80).

If the Church is going to help Millennials have a grounded personality through developing a healthy self-identity, it has to first recognize the potential dangers these youth face and adapt them in ways that are appropriate and relevant to their protracted state of cognitive and behavioral stage. The Church needs to be the place where Millennials are grounded in their true identity. “Many young adults have gotten past questions of morality and now need answers from the Church about Christian identity, how to follow their calling no matter the challenge, and how to have a positive impact on the world” (“Who do you think you are,” 2009, p. 19). Yount (2010) emphasizes that “church leaders and lay teachers will teach and preach more effectively if they use these insights to heal past neglect and prepare for future success” (p. 82).

Millennial Youth and Spirituality

The spirituality of young people of this present age tends to be very different to that of previous generations. Crawford and Rossiter (1993) give some characteristics:

They are at a high water mark of secularization; they tend to forge meaning and purpose in ways that are different from those used by older generations; the focus of their spirituality is different; they relate to traditions and traditional religion in different ways; they have a different approach to understanding and forming identity and religious identity in particular. (p. 2)
Within the last decade, a number of research studies of youth spirituality have been conducted by some leading contributors: de Souza, Cartwright, and McGilp, 2004; Francis and Robbins, 2005; Smith and Denton, 2005; Crawford and Rossiter, 2006; Engebretson, 2007; Fisher, 2010. The research reveals that although there are Millennials who are religious and view their church involvement as a significant aspect of their life, for a majority this remains in the distant background. Their foreground is preoccupied with other issues such as lifestyle, self-image and appearance, feeling good, creating and enjoying new experiences, and predominantly trying to be happy.

This reinforces the research of Rossiter (2011) who believes these issues are “lifestyle, getting ahead, being wealthy, attractive and happy, and in constant search of new ‘authentic’ experience. Being free and an individual are of paramount importance” (p. 12). He further explains that if these findings are “taken for granted,” because they are relatively invisible, they are in essence potentially more influential in shaping Millennial’s spirituality simply because they are not openly identified and critically evaluated. To reinforce this Crawford and Rossiter (2006) state,

In particular, the complex of marketing/advertising/media constantly offer orchestrated imaginations of what life should be like that are in all likelihood effective in suggesting what people should come to expect of life . . . hence they are potentially significant for shaping people’s spirituality. (pp. 349-350)

Until there is a holistic understanding of these influences on the action of youth, the way in which Christians minister to them will be misinformed and therefore not as encompassing. Gaining insight and addressing the issues, experiences, and preoccupations of youth at their level will facilitate the upward movement of adolescents through the moral stages and stimulate growth as they search for meaning.

For young people experience is central in the search for meaning. They are not ideological in that they do not choose one religious system to follow, but they search
for meaningful personal experiences that speak to them of the spiritual life. 
(Engebretson, 2003, p. 12)

Rossiter (2011) also proposes that in “ideals as regards to direction for living, young people look for guidance in clear statements of ideas and ideals about life and its management” (p. 13). Hill (2001) reinforces the idea that adults must liberate young people in their search for meaning by authentically seeking to “enter into their experience and to travel with them in the religious issues that are arising in their lives” (p. 108).

**Spiritual, Not Religious**

Traditionally, spirituality was equivalent to religiosity. The common understanding in countries with European cultural origins was that spirituality was identical with being religious in a Christian context. For Millennials there is a separation between the spiritual and the religious, such that “some would see themselves as ‘spiritual’ but not necessarily ‘religious’” (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 176). According to Maddix (2010), “the term is used in secular and sacred settings as a way to reflect the human hunger for the transcendent or to make meaning out of life” (p. 238). Millennial youth, referred to in the research literature as ‘spiritual but not religious,’ “actively seek out spiritual ideas and practices in constructing a spirituality that consciously excludes religion” (Rossiter, 2011, p. 11).

Paulien makes a significant point that reinforces this, which also consolidates the research of Dudley (2007) and Walshe (2009) who is the Chair of the Discipleship and Religious Education Department at the Seventh-day Adventists Theological Seminary.

Postmoderns are intensely interested in faith and Spirituality, but most are decidedly uninterested in “religion” . . . the structures the institutes and the rituals through which believers in God have organized what they understand to be His work on earth. (Paulien, 2008, p. 70)
A large proportion of Millennial youth are hypersensitive to anything they view as trying to influence them, hence their resistance to religion and rituals that are legalistic. They value autonomy and view themselves as mediators or arbitrators of all outside influences, ensuring that they themselves are the ones who finally influence their lives. Millennials filter, process, and assimilate the information that institutions and other people provide and based on their conclusions of this information they move forward in making decisions for themselves. According to Dudley the rejection of faith and religion of their parents is not unusual among the youth upon reaching adolescence.

These youth share in common an alienation from religion, a sense of estrangement. They feel that while Christianity may serve some purpose for their elders or even certain of their peers, it has nothing for them. They do not see its value as relevant to their present concerns and needs. They do not find in it any power to meet daily problems successfully. (Dudley, 2000, p. 8)

If they are interested in religion . . . [they] will need to appear personalised, and not too prescriptive as regards to morality and beliefs. The feeling of being accepted and comfortable within a local faith community is crucial; they need to feel that their needs and interests are being attended to, and they want to have a say in religious affairs. Many youth have little or no interest in organised religion. (Rossiter, 2011, p. 13)

Severing the connection to one’s faith of origin serves only as a means of reactively distancing from one’s family of origin serves only to intensify unresolved emotional sensitivities and yearnings. Such attempts not only fail to accomplish the task of differentiation but can also result in bankruptcy of spirit, blocking access to the rich reserves of resilience that faith can offer. (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 240)

Kinnaman (2011) adds to the above based on his research on Millennial youth, and writes: “Despite their previous religious experience, twenty-somethings are the least likely to say that they are confident that Jesus Christ speaks to them in a way that is personal and relevant to their circumstances” (p. 24).
Contemporary Spirituality for Millennials: Individualistic or Communal

A common form of contemporary spirituality is said to be individualistic (rather than communal), eclectic in the way it pieces together various elements from different sources (often little may be drawn from the religious tradition), subjective in that it is private and personal without much communal identification, and secular in that it has little or no overlay of religious cultural meanings. (Rossiter, 2011, p. 11)

On this theory Eckersley (2005) suggests that this sort of spirituality is either constructed personally or selected from a range of readily available options as opposed to accepting religious beliefs of any given culture. In 2006 Crawford and Rossiter wrote that young people draw from varied sources in constructing their spirituality: family, friends, personal mentors, their own religion, other religions, secular movements. Their values can be modeled on prominent people, heroes/heroines and celebrities. Their eclectic spirituality can be affected by magazines, film, television and music. They tend not to see any so-called division between the secular and the religious. (cited in Rossiter, 2011, p. 11)

It is for this reason that Galli wrote that “the church needs to reaffirm regularly in its teaching, preaching and example that loyalty to God and identity in Christ leave all other allegiances in the dust” (2009, p. 19).

Based on the research of Rymarz (2001) of youth and their spiritual development, Engebretson (2003) recommends that the first major aspect of spiritual culture of the youth that religious educators and ministers must take into consideration is that “it is privatized, individualized, eclectic, but searching for meaningful personal experiences” (p. 12). “Many young people . . . have a more individualistic, subjective, eclectic, secular spirituality” (Rossiter, 2011, p. 9).

Not all researchers agree with the notion that youth have a privatization of belief, and concur that Millennials have a deep desire to be in community and longing for connectedness. de Souza (2006) emphasizes the words of Harris and Morgan (1998):
A vital element in spirituality of young people is its connectedness, its relational and communal character, which is in contrast to a privatised and individualistic spirituality. The impulse towards connectedness places the practice of justice in a special and privileged place, with justice understood as fidelity to the demands of all our relations. (de Souza, 2006, pp. 46-47)

Based on the research and experience, I agree with this view. Although there are some Millennial youth who indeed need to have a privatized and individualistic spirituality, I believe that the larger majority have been shaped and influenced by spirituality that is relational and connected. “God is experienced through the medium of authentic relationship—to oneself, to others, to the continuity of all life” (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 239).

To gain further insight into how youth mature in their moral and faith development, it is important to discuss the work of key theorists within this area.

Human Development

In mid to late adolescence the development of the youth’s conceptual reasoning allows them to critically and logically evaluate their thoughts and that of others. “For adolescents, the qualities ascribed to God are a derivative of how they understand the self in relation to the significant others in their life” (Kelcourse, 2004, p. 231). This reinforces the view of de Souza (2006), as mentioned previously, that the development of spirituality takes place within the context of relationship. Based on this understanding Kelcourse (2004) states:

The religious beliefs of a relative or friend with whom they felt really loved and understood may be the source of their faith. Conversely, those caretakers who were emotionally abusive to them may result in a rejection of all things religious. Early prolonged periods of inconsistent care may be internalized to the point where it is inconceivable that anything not tangible and concrete can be trusted. Their understanding of faith and morality emerges from the cumulative body of meaning derived from the overall pattern of relational experiences encountered on their developmental path. (p. 231)
This is congruent to Erikson’s understanding of human development. Kelcourse (2004) summarizes it:

Through the resolution crises in each of the developmental stages preceding adolescence the young person has internalized the meaning that he or she has for the external world. These meanings can provide clear categories of right and wrong. These categories can then reinforce the person’s ability to know who and what he or she is to be about. (p. 231)

**Faith Development Theory**

Since the 1960s and 1970s the theory of James Fowler has been the predominant model for faith development studies. Although his work provided helpful means for understanding the emergence of religious faith, giving essential insights into people’s understanding of how faith is developed, his theory has come under scrutiny. Some scholars today now recognize that development does not always proceed according to stages and is not always straightforward (Lerner, 2002). Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005) also suggest that “postmodern sensibilities have highlighted the need for more complex and less reductionistic theories that emphasize the influence of systems, person-context interaction and nonlinear development” (p. 272). This is one of the reasons why Fowler’s theory is not relevant for the purpose of this literature review and will not be included (see Appendix B for further explanation).

Having done extensive reading at the time of writing this literature review, limited research has been conducted beyond that of Fowler and a few others who have contributed to the understanding of faith development. However, the contributions of Loder (1989, 1998), Loder and Neidhardt (1992), Balswick et al. (2005), and Jones and Wilder (2010) all have enhanced and expanded an understanding of faith development from a theological perspective. For the purpose of this review, I have discussed the key
aspects of their theories and proposed models of faith development that I feel are congruent with Scripture and the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As faith development is an extensive topic, I have only highlighted the most significant areas of research that are relevant for this project.

**Differentiated Faith**

Balswick et al. (2005) believe that from a Trinitarian theological standpoint “the purpose in life is to be in reciprocating relationship with God and others” (p. 275). They define faith as being differentiated, highlighting that “differentiated faith incorporates both spiritual and religious expression that allows for a reciprocating relationship with God that emphasizes both unity and uniqueness” (p. 275). This is congruent with the understanding of Loder (1989) who attests that the goal religious and spiritual development is to experience intimacy with God without forgoing the uniqueness of the individual.

Unlike Fowler, Loder argues that faith is not about reason, understanding or meaning, but it is relational. He takes the emphasis off the rational and places it on the relational (Loder, 1989). Although I believe that faith development is very much relational, I also agree that it incorporates both the relational and elements of the rational. It incorporates the spiritual and religious development of any given person. In the context of differentiated faith Balswick et al. (2005) argue that it

…incorporates both the spiritual and the religious, recognizing that (1) spiritual development emphasizes the experience of transcendence and that (2) religious development emphasizes the institution and traditions of a particular religion—both resulting in greater intimacy with God (and others) and motivating individuals to respond [to] God’s love…differentiated faith is not solely about being spiritual and being in touch or having a profound relationship with God. Nor is it merely about being religious and believing all the correct doctrines or performing the right religious practices …both spiritual and religious development are necessary for differentiated
faith. Both draw us into intimacy with God and…move us to…a response to a loving encounter with God. (p. 276)

Another aspect of differentiated faith is that it identifies the possible supernatural, biological and psychological influences that might take place within this development. Loder (1998) proposes that faith development may take place independently of other aspects of human development; however, I agree with the understanding of Balswick et al. (2005) who argue:

Although differentiated faith is nonreductionistic and allows from the presence and action of God in the process of formation, it can be influenced by other aspects of human functioning…identity, cognitive abilities, emotions and social skills can play a significant role in spiritual and religious development… spiritual and religious development are not simply a process of “unfolding of an entity” but is the interaction of biological, social, cultural and spiritual factors in which multiple domains and functions develop to promote differentiated faith. (pp. 275-277)

The authors recognize that development takes place “in the interactions between the person and their multiple contexts” (p. 277), and from an ecological perspective contend that differentiated faith develops when both spiritual and religious faith, as well as aspects of human functioning, are being nurtured. Unlike Fowler, Loder (1998) and Balswick et al. (2005) do not discuss faith development as having linear stages. “Development is not linear but is multidimensional and multidirectional… [and takes place through] interactions of a person and context over time” (p. 277). This approach is less concerned with identifying what stage a person is at, and focuses more on knowing how a person’s interaction with his or her surroundings fosters growth.

The authors believe that along with contexts such as family, peers, school, culture etc. religious environments plays a significant role in the development of differentiated faith.

Religions ability to provide a clear and consistent set of beliefs and values enables people to grow in their ability to make sense of the world, find meaning and have
faith…[it] offers a spiritual environment that enables youth to transcend their daily concerns and encounter [God] and a faith community in a meaningful way that nurtures…growth. Often spiritual experiences (e.g., answered prayer, corporate worship) call individuals’ attention beyond themselves, inspiring them to commit to something greater than themselves. (Balswick et al., 2005, pp. 278-279)

This is congruent to the understanding of King (2003) who states, “Religion has the potential to provide opportunities for religious development and commitment through ideological, social and spiritual contexts” (p 204).

The development of differentiated faith is also affected by human development in the context of emotional, social, spiritual etc. Emotions and reasoning have an influential impact on faith development. “Emotions such as love, love awe and joy often are a motivating factor that propels individuals toward religious conversion, commitment and ongoing devotion,” Keltner and Haidt (2003). This is also congruent with the understanding of James (1902) who states, “profound doctrinal understanding does not often predicate a religious conversion, but experiencing a profound sense of love or gratitude often does” (p. 303).

As mentioned previously social development also impacts faith development as a person’s capacity to be in interpersonal relationships has an influential effect on a person’s faith development. Balswick et al. (2005) reinforce this and state:

The relationship between a baby and its mother is thought to influence the way an infant can distinguish between itself and others, whether God or another person. The amount of trust experienced in these early relationships might also affect the degree to which the individual will experience relationships with god and other people. (p. 281)

On the topic of spiritual development Balswick et al. (2005) argue that it is “a central part of human development and is central to [faith] development…spiritual experiences motivate individuals to internalize religious beliefs and moral principles as
well as inspire devotion and commitment” (p. 282). This is congruent to the understanding of Smith (2003) who stated that:

people do not usually make a lifetime commitment to a set of rules by memorizing them. However, if they have an experience of answered prayer or a meaningful encounter with God, they may be more apt to follow... [and believe] and feel a deep sense of commitment… (Smith, 2003, p.18)

I agree with the thoughts of these scholars based on human development’s influence on faith development, as the spiritual affects the physical and vice versa. Therefore whatever we do on a physical level, whether good or bad, will affect is spiritually. This is true of whatever we do on the spiritual level.

Finally, it is important to understand that differentiated faith is impacted in the suffering and painful experiences a person goes through in life. On this Jones and Wilder (2010) outline:

Faith is also formed through suffering…and through these momentary afflictions, becomes steadfast and complete... every tribulation provides an opportunity for the believer to experience greater fullness of faith, and the community of faith provides a primary context for the cultivation of growing faith. (pp. 197-198)

This aspect of faith development has often been down played or is seldom discussed in its significant role, but it no doubt has its place in the process and should not be ignored.

In summary, differentiated faith includes: a) Transcendence - connecting and relating to God in a meaningful and intimate way through spiritual development. b) The belief and doctrines of one’s faith. c) The capacity to grow and participate in the community of faith, i.e. religious development, in a way that enhances healthy interpersonal relationships with God and others. d) Human development – Differentiated faith is affected as Millennial youth interact and are impacted by the many contexts of Human Development. e) Finding meaning for the painful experiences they face and have faced in life.
Differentiated faith and its development is a vast topic. However, the significant research presented in this section of the literature review is relevant and conducive for the purpose of this project.

**Moral Development Theory**

Faith development also includes moral development. The work of Kohlberg and his moral reasoning theory is the most advanced and the most acknowledged theory based on moral development. His theory outlines the different stages humans go through as they mature in cognitive moral reasoning. It consists of three levels, namely, pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. There are six stages in total as each of these levels includes two stages of development. Some Christian scholars such as Downs (1994), Shepherds (1994), and Gibson (2004) affirm Kohlberg’s theory and see parallels between his theory and the Bible’s teaching on morality. Some however, including evangelicals, are cautious about Kohlberg’s approach to moral development.

Although a substantial amount of insight can be gained into moral development from Kohlberg’s theory, it will not be included for the purpose of this literature review (see Appendix C for further explanation).

While Kohlberg’s theory takes a cognitive approach and exclusively focuses on reasoning without including feelings and behaviors, according to Estep (2010) “morality is not a monodimensional concept but rather is multidimensional” (p. 136). On this basis, as well as incorporating the insights of theological and scientific scholars, current Christian educators have presented morality as having three interrelated aspects; namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Estep (2010) asserts that “the Holy Spirit is indeed involved in bringing about the conviction for change, affirmation of life values, as well as
guidance and direction for the journey” (p. 136). The moral reasoning aspect of moral development, that is, judgments, choices, and decisions are referenced as cognitive moral reasoning. Kohlberg, and Piaget’s models fall under this category. However, the second dimension of moral development is moral affect. This refers to the sense of valuing and character formation. Cooper (1987) points out that moral formation is not only a matter of forming thought, but is also a matter of forming affect, or forming feeling among community of persons, of forming ourselves in accordance with a vision of God, who, in Jesus, has made us friends. (p. 283) Theorists such as Carol Gilligan and Robert Coles also advocate this aspect of moral development.

Finally, moral development incorporates moral action, that is, the ethical behavior of any given person. This is said to be the most popular concept of moral development. On this aspect Stonehouse (2002) stated: “An individual’s strong character gives the power to do what one believes is right” (p. 488). Therefore, according to Estep (2010) “behavior is the exhibitor of both moral reasoning and moral affect” (p. 137).

I concur with the three dimensional concept of moral development, as it supports a comprehensive model of morality that incorporates ethical cognition, affect, as well as scripturally sound behavior. Estep says that “moral development in almost every theory . . . has a common theme: It is a shift from egocentrism to other-centrism to principle-centered and ultimately toward a God-centered view of life” (p. 146).

Ministry Implications

It is within the broader context of Christian development that moral development occurs. This is not something that comes naturally or is formed instantaneously.

Moral formation is not naturally occurring. It requires intentional engagement within the faith community, the Church. The Church, the ministry of Christian education,
and the Christian educator are tasked with engaging in more than doctrinal indoctrination but moral discourse, deliberation, discernment, memory-remembering teaching. (Verhey, 2005, p. 155)

With this understanding, Estep (2010) highlights that the implications for moral development can be arranged into three categories: (a) the general approach to the ministry of the church, (b) the impact of ministry through teaching, and (c) how this applies to and impacts the church community (p. 146).

In regards to moral development and an approach to the ministry of the Church Scharf (1978) identifies three methods for facilitating development; namely, through: indoctrination, values clarification, and developmental education. (See Appendix D for a summary of these approaches.) “The combination of these three approaches within a Christian context is perhaps the most comprehensive and promising means of facilitating moral [development] within the church” (Estep, 2010, p. 148).

In regards to the impact of moral development through teaching, Estep asserts, [it] involves an instructor who engages students in their real-life situations and experiences—not just in artificial discussions on political hot topics or sociocultural issues. They create a sense of dissonance by raising the inconsistencies between their lives and the espoused morals. Once the dissonance is inescapable, the instructor can guide the student to God's Truth as a means of assessing their morals and life situation, endeavoring to restore the harmony and balance. Hence, teaching for moral formation is a cycle of interaction between the student's morals, their actual life, and Scripture. (p. 151)

This approach would need to be adapted to the context of the Millennials being ministered to.

Finally, in regards to moral development and how it relates to the community of faith, moral development can be fostered and nurtured in this context of faith community through “relationships, instruction, service, and worship [by] individuals can be presented [as] a moral vision or image . . . so as to promote moral [development]” (Estep, 2010,
This approach seems a good fit, as this gives youth the examples they need to see moral behavior not just in word but also in action. It is what is needed within the Church. Millennials have been hurt through relationships and so they need to be healed through relationships authentically modeling the love and character of God.

Although more could be discussed on this topic, due to the limitations of this literature review, the most relevant points have been outlined.

**Spiritual Development**

Spiritual development is central to faith development. Bowe (2003) writes on this topic:

Christian spirituality describes a particular way of responding to the Spirit of God-mediated to the world and ultimately known through Jesus Christ. Christian spirituality focuses on the progressive transformation of the human person into the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is the result of the cooperation of our whole lives with the power and presence of Christ’s spirit who is alive and working within the whole person-body and soul, thoughts and feeling, emotions and passions, hopes and fears and dreams. (p. 234)

From this it can be said that spiritual development begins with an emphasis on being formed and transformed.

Although theologians and scholars have presented personal definitions of how spiritual development can be classified, Maddix (2010) outlines four aspects that are inclusive of, but not exclusive of, spiritual development that must be briefly discussed before a concluding definition is given.

Maddix (2010) argues that spiritual development first begins with a focus on being “formed and transformed” (p. 240). This is congruent with the work of Tracy (1993) who states that spiritual development in reference to Galatians 4:19 can be defined as “the whole person in relationship with God, within the community of believers,
growing in Christlikeness, reflected in a Spirit-directed, disciplined lifestyle, and demonstrated in redemptive action in our world” (Tracy, 1993, p. 12). Willard (2006) reinforces the notion of transformation by defining spiritual development in Christ as “the process whereby the in most being of the individual (the heart, will, [and] spirit) takes on the quality of Jesus Himself” (p. 53).

The second aspect of spiritual development focuses on “our human participation and obedience to Jesus Christ” (Maddix, 2010, p. 242). As people participate with the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives they are transformed. Willhoit (2008) supports this by stating that spiritual development “is the intentional communal process of growing in relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit” (p. 23). This is also nurtured through what Maddix notes as “certain disciplines, devotional skills and practices, and acts of Christian service [that] keep us in the presence of Christ where the Holy Spirit has an opportunity to go on transforming us” (2010, p. 242).

Third, spiritual development “is a lifelong process that takes place in the context of community . . . the Christian life is best lived in community where worship, fellowship, small groups, and service are practiced. In this context, spiritual [development] takes place in and through community” (p. 242). Willhoit (2008) also supports this and states that spiritual development “is communal and takes place in the context of the life of the Church” (p. 23).

Finally, spiritual development includes the nurturing of self and relationship to others. . . . God’s intention for human development is to be intertwined with the understanding and care of self, our relationship with God and one another. When we live in the reality, we become more fully human and bear the image of the triune God. (Maddix, 2010, p. 244)
This is congruent with the opinion of Balswick et al. (2005) who state, “Our understanding of God’s intention for human development is for us to become particular beings in relationship with the Divine and the human other. In mutually reciprocating relationships we encounter the other and ourselves most fully” (p. 49).

Based on these four aspects of spiritual development the following is a working definition that incorporates these focus points:

Spiritual development includes a focus on the inner transformation of the human person into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This transformation takes place as humans participate in avenues of God’s grace such as worship, prayer, Bible study, devotional practices, communion, and acts of service. These intentional practices provide a “channel” for participation and communion with the Triune God. Finally, spiritual development takes place as humans care for their “selves” relate to others in Christian community, and serve others. (Maddix, 2010, p. 244)

This working definition is suitable in relation to understanding spiritual development for Millennial youth in the Adventist Church.

**Spiritual Development and Human Development**

Spiritual development does not take place as an isolated compartmentalized aspect of a given individual, but rather in conjunction with the physical, emotional, social, mental, and moral development of a person. The work of Ward (1995) explains how spiritual development occurs by comparing the ecological system of human development. He claims that five experiential components of human development, namely, the (a) physical, (b) intellectual, (c) emotional, (d) social, and (e) the moral, all play an integral part in developing the spiritual core of an individual. Ward states: “Ecology refers to the interdependence of each component in the creation with respect to each other component” (p. 14). Ward, using the illustration of the human hand (see Appendix E), portrays the six components that represent the human person.
The thumb on the hand represents the physical dimension with particular attention to the human body with all that it entails. The index finger represents the emotional dimension or effect. The middle finger represents social dimension and our ability to communicate and interact with others in a variety of social settings . . . the ring finger represents the intellectual dimension, or cognitive functions, that enable us to think. The little finger represents the moral dimension where matters of morality and ethics are entertained and considered. The palm represents the spiritual dimension that is made alive through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ . . . the hand illustrates a holistic approach…God works through our natural aspects or personalities to form us into the image of Christ. Spiritual [development] includes the individual aspects of each person, but it is impossible to separate one aspect from another . . . the fact that we place the spiritual dimension in the palm of the hand is purposeful. It cannot be separated from the rest of the hand and treated as though it was operating in a different universe with different laws of growth . . . Within this model, we then are led to think about spiritual development as the central integrating dimension of human personhood - nesting among other developmental capacities. (Maddix, 2010, pp. 263-264)

Although the evidence for Ward’s hypothesis is incomplete, Roehlkepartain (2006) reinforces his notion.

Spiritual development is a dimension of human life and experience [is] as significant as cognitive development, emotional development, or social development. All of these dimensions of development are interrelated it is the spiritual dimension that is most involved in a person’s effort to integrate the many aspects of development. (p. 9)

**Implications for Ministry**

In order to have a holistic approach to the spiritual development of Millennial youth within the Adventist Church, it is imperative that this includes the physical, emotional, social, mental, moral, and spiritual aspects of human development. All six must be included and cannot be ignored or neglected if these youth are to be authentically transformed into the likeness of Christ. Maddix reinforces this.

If a person stops growing intellectually, it impacts his/her spiritual [development]. If a person decides against developing relationships within the body of Christ, he/she ceases to grow. Thus, the five aspects of the human person must be nurtured in order for a person to grow toward a spiritual maturity . . . . When we nurture and give attention to these six aspects of the human person, we become closer to . . . being formed into the image and likeness of Christ. God works through the natural aspects
of the human person in order for us to be spiritually formed and shaped . . .
[therefore] effective spiritual . . . [development] requires the development of all
aspects of the human person. (Maddix, 2010, p. 265)

In a recent study conducted by the Barna Group (see Appendix F for background
information on the Barna Group) when asked, “What has helped your faith to grow?” the
top five answers that Millennials stated that helped their spiritual growth “are prayer,
family and friends, the Bible, having children, and their relationship with Jesus” (2013,
para. 7). This suggests that healthy spiritual growth is more likely to occur when both
doctrinal and relational elements are incorporated.

**Attachment Theory and Bonding**

Having discussed the key characteristics of Millennial youth along with key
aspects of human development and establishing the essential role that interpersonal
relationships play on the spiritual development of youth and young adults, this chapter
will conclude with a brief discussion on literature based on attachment theory and God
image in order to assess the factors necessary to foster healing, a healthy God image, and
facilitate spiritual growth in Millennial youth.

The first arena where there is a disciple-making gap is relationships. [Millennials] are
highly relational in many aspects (especially when it comes to peers) . . . at the same
time twentysomethings frequently feel isolated from their parents and other older
adults don’t understand their doubts and concerns, a prerequisite to rich mentoring
friendships. (Kinnaman, 2011, p. 29)

He points out, “to generalize, they are extraordinary relational and, at the same
time remarkably self-centered. . . . They want to be mentored and they want to make it on
their own” (p. 29). As written at the beginning of the chapter, Millennials love be in
community but are very much skeptical about authority figures due to the level of hurt
and disappointment they have experienced in the past. However, the God of most
Christian traditions aligns directly to the notion of a secure attachment figure. This is also true of youth and young adults. “Generation Y longs for the touch of God and the experience that verifies God’s real presence in the moment” (Gibbs, 2000, pp. 182-183).

Researchers continue to find evidence that there are strong links between spiritual belief, religious practice, and psychological well-being. Grimes (2014) writes, “knowledge gained from research of the God image can guide therapeutic interventions in order to move individuals toward . . . spiritual wholeness” (p. 12). The God image and its understanding is multi-dimensional. Although there are numerous aspects of the God image and how it is formed; this section of the literature review will predominantly focus on how the God image is affected by self-worth, parental dynamics, and vice versa.

There has been an increasing amount of research done in the past decade that has examined attachment theory as a preliminary model for understanding the constitution of a person’s God image and God concept. In regards to the God image and God concept Grimes (2014) asserts, “the God image as a psychological construct is concerned with how an individual feels toward God and how they feel God feels about them . . . the God concept, as a distinct construct, refers to an individual’s cognitive understanding of God” (p. 12). This is reinforced by Hoffman (2005) who indicates that the God image is complex, emotional, experiential, and largely unconscious in nature. This is in contrast to the God concept, which is largely conscious, rational, and stems from what an individual is taught about god through influences such as parents, scripture, religious leaders, etc.

Self-Esteem and God Image

A person’s self-esteem and self-concept is also known to be affected by a person’s God image.
If one believes God views them as unworthy and miserable sinners their self-concept will tend to be more negative. In the same vein, individuals who view themselves in a depreciating and unworthy manner would tend to have similar views of others and God. On the other hand, if one perceives that God views them as unconditionally acceptable and accepted it would be anticipated that their self-concept would tend to be more positive in nature. (Grimes, 2014, p. 17)

This notion consolidates the earlier findings of Francis, Gibson, and Robbins (2001) whose research confirmed that if one has a positive self-image, then one’s God image will be that of a loving and forgiving God, and if one has a negative self-worth, one’s God image will be that of a cruel and punishing God.

**Parental Dynamics and God Image**

Research reveals a strong relationship between one’s God image and parental dynamics, and is said to be one of the most extensively researched variables with regard to God image. As mentioned earlier, attachment theory has been researched as a means of understanding the nature of a person’s God image. According to Noffke and Hall (2014), “individuals’ images of and relational patterns with God are considerably influenced by the internalization of early attachment experiences with emotionally significant others” (p. 59). Grimes (2014) writes that much of the research carried out on the different variables in God image fit well within the context of attachment theory.

The adjectives that individuals use to describe their experience of God correspond closely with the notion of secure attachment . . . research findings on the link between parent-child relationships and the God image have been consistent with attachment theory (Nelson, 1971; Strunk, 1959). Also, the reported positive association between God images and self-concept or self-esteem (Benson & Spilka, 1973) is consistent with attachment theory’s understanding of models of self and models of attachment figures. Individuals who experience their attachment figures as loving and caring tend to view their self as lovable and worthy of being cared for and vice versa. (p. 21)

The compensation theory and the correspondence theory are the two main theories that have emerged in regards to behavioral attachment, with evidence to support
both models (see Appendix G). However, Granqvist and Hagekull (1999) proposed a revised correspondence model, which suggests that children who are securely attached obtain religious beliefs and conduct through socialization (pp. 254-273). Grimes (2014) affirms this: “Children who have developed a secure attachment to their caregivers are more likely to be successfully socialized into their attachment figure's system of religious attitudes and behavior, and this would account for the strong correspondence in God image” (p. 23). Herthel and Donahue (1995) assess the notion that the God image of parents’ has a direct influence on their parenting style, which in turn has an influential impact on their children’s God image. Their research revealed that

Youth’s images of parents were predictive of the youth’s God image, and parents’ God images were predictive of the youth’s God images. Additionally, parents’ image of God as loving was a strong predictor of their children’s image of parents as loving, suggesting that parents who experience God as loving parent their children in a loving manner thus conveying this loving God image to the child. (Grimes, 2014, p. 24)

Their findings also reveal that the mothers’ God image influenced the children’s God image, more than that of the fathers. This is congruent with the major theories of attachment, and indicates that mothers continue to be the dominant socializer and primary attachment figure in families.

All three models have an appropriate place of application and are congruent with the multi-dimensional construct of the God image. The model that relates to an individual is governed by the nature of the individual’s past experience.

Although this section of the literature review only highlights two of the many factors that influence a person’s God image, the research does emphasize that an individual’s God image and relational experiences of God are significantly influenced by the internalization of the early experiences with significant others of whom they have
become emotionally attached. This has critical ramifications on a person’s ability to connect with God.

**Implications for Ministry**

Although a person may want to experience interpersonal safety and responsiveness from God or the Church, it is often hindered because these experiences are understood through the filter of previous negative attachments.

In order for a person to develop more positive perceptions of and relational experiences with God, it is imperative that they form new relationships with people that are receptive, accessible, and with whom they feel loved. The work of Bucci (2003) describes the therapeutic action that is necessary to bring about such change, which is predominantly achieved through counseling therapy. Noffke and Hall (2014) assert, an attachment bond must be facilitated between the therapist and client so that the relationship is ascribed sufficient significance to elicit the negative implicit relational representations and to be internalized as an attachment object . . . subsymbolic knowledge can only be modified as a result of experiencing new information presented in the same code. In other words, implicit relational representations are transformed only when adaptive interpersonal information connects with individuals’ subsymbolic experience. (p. 67)

The two authors feel the use of therapeutic interventions can lead to transformation of relational attachment figures, and relate to a person’s subsymbolic affective core in one of two ways:

indirectly, through affectively-laden verbal communication and directly, through novel subsymbolic experience . . . the indirect reconstruction of attachment models through the articulation of unsymbolized experience . . . connects individuals’ unsymbolized sense of danger to the context in which their attachment assumptions were established, providing clients with the means to make sense of their emotional reactions towards others and to differentiate them from the current relationship with the therapist and God. (2014, p. 67)

This concept re-emphasizes and reinforces the writings of Bucci (2003). Irrespective of
the method, whether through the use of indirect verbal interventions or direct

subsymbolic experience Noffke and Hall (2014) propose,

the development of adaptive, attachment-related neural networks largely occurs as a result of drawing clients’ attention to their experiences that are felt to be dangerous and are, thus, avoided. In helping clients to experience their unsymbolized emotions, the therapist interrupts the dissociation and provides the insecurely attached with the novel experience of receiving contingent emotional responses to their emotions. Such emotional synchrony establishes neural networks corresponding to an experience of attunement to difficult feelings and consequently the expectation that others, including God, will be available during distress. As a result, believers begin to consolidate images of themselves as lovable and/or of God as loving. The association of attunement and soothing with the experience of difficult emotion is also the foundation of clients' abilities to auto regulate and, thus, decreases their need for defensive self-sufficiency or interpersonal affect-regulation to achieve a sense of felt security. With an internalized sense of themselves as safe and loved in the presence of God, believers are able to pursue a relationship with God vulnerably and for its own sake. (p. 68)

In order for therapy to achieve optimum lasting results, Noffke and Hall assert that

therapists use the

power of emotion, metaphor, and the therapeutic bond to access client’s subsymbolic experience of God. Providing more accurate explicit theological beliefs, in and of itself, will not lead to lasting change in clients’ experiences of, and relational patterns with God. (p. 69)

Finally, with this being said, it must be brought out that although reparative exercises can be used to facilitate healing, if a person continues to experience insecure attachment dynamics, this may obstruct the development of a secure attachment with God. In this case it is imperative that support is given through other interpersonal relationships to counteract the negative experience(s).

Indeed, imagery- based inner healing exercises or intense spiritual experiences elicited through worship, for instance, can connect with believers’ maladaptive implicit representations of God and provide reparative experiences that then transform general models of relating. Given the implicit experience based formation of implicit relational representations, however, the absence of physical interactions with God may impede the development of a secure attachment with Him when insecure attachment dynamics continue to operate within the individuals. Therefore, it seems likely that the development of a secure attachment to God, in the midst of
continued operation of insecure relational representations, is mediated at least to some extent by affiliative human relationships with a therapist, members of one’s spiritual community, and spiritual leaders. (Noffke & Hall, 2014, p. 69)

These concepts have implications for ministry. If applied through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they can have a healing and transformational impact on the lives of Millennial youth. Thus leading them to have a renewed healthy image of God, a realistic and healthy self-image as well as foster healthy interpersonal relationships.

**Conclusion**

The research discussed in this literature review reveals that although Millennial youth are highly relational, they find it difficult to trust the establishment because of the deep wounds they have incurred from past experiences and the Boomer generation in particular. This has led to a heightened level of skepticism, and a rejection of the worldview of societal establishment. The rejection of the worldview of societal establishment has led them to make their own worldview, which incorporates the influence of those whom have and are experiencing comparable situations and circumstances as their own; thus a community is birthed. This key characteristic is said to precipitate a number of the other significant traits that characterize the Millennial generation. While they have rational thoughts, their values are primarily based on experiential thoughts. Millennials are open to spirituality and religious influence and have been characterized as searching as they struggle to form a unified self-identity.

In helping youth and young adults navigate their way through the sixth of the developmental stages where developing significant meaningful relationships is the focus, churches can assist by incorporating a small group model for discussing issues and fostering strong relationships. Being connected to a healthy mature person in the form of
a mentor, teacher, counselor, pastor, etc., can also help youth and young adults navigate through the pivotal stages in their faith journey and self-development.

In order to facilitate spiritual growth, differentiated faith needs to be developed that allows Millennials to connect and relate to God in a meaningful way, through spiritual development. Differentiated faith also incorporates the belief and doctrines of one’s faith and the capacity to grow and participate in the community of faith, that is, religious development, in a way that enhances healthy interpersonal relationships with God and others. All of this is also affected as Millennials interact and are impacted by the many contexts of human development. Meaning is also found in the painful experiences they face in life. It provides the sufferer an opportunity to experience greater fullness of faith and strengthen their dependence on God as they work through their pain.

Moral development can be facilitated through indoctrination, values clarification, and developmental education. The combination of these three approaches within a Christian context is possibly the most effective process to facilitate faith development within the Church.

Spiritual development is central to faith development, and as discussed in the literature, spiritual growth is more likely to occur when both doctrinal and relational elements incorporated. In order to have a holistic approach to the spiritual development of Millennial youth within the Adventist Church it is imperative that the process includes and address all six of the natural aspects of human development; namely, the physical, emotional, social, mental, moral, and spiritual.

In regards to having a healthy God image and self, in order for a person to develop more positive perceptions of and relational experiences with God, it is
imperative to create new impartial networks of people that foster a receptive and accessible posture, which enables the young person to feel loved. They need the support and guidance of mentors and counselors in their lives to facilitate healing, redefine a healthy image of God and self, in order to nurture their spiritual development.
CHAPTER 4

TEACHING THE SOUL CARE COURSE TO MILLENNIAL YOUTH THROUGH THE DISCIPLING METHOD

Introduction

The Problem Outlined

Millennials are hurting because of painful experiences encountered by the Boomer generation. They are craving healthy, trusting relationships and are struggling to establish them in the Church.

According to his longitudinal study of Adventist adolescents, Dudley (2000) of the Institute of Church Ministry stated: “It is reasonable to believe that at least 40 to 50 percent of Seventh-day Adventist teenagers . . . are leaving the Church by their mid-20s. This figure may well be higher” (p. 35). This hemorrhaging within the Church is not exclusive to Adventism. Christian demographer George Barna reveals that over the Christian spectrum “the most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twentysomethings—61% of today’s young adults—have been churched at one time during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending Church, reading the Bible, or praying)” (2006, para. 6).

The Millennial youth want to be cared for, especially by the church community, but most of all they are in need of a deep and meaningful relationship with Jesus. “This generation of young adults is searching for security, genuineness, and intelligent meaning for their lives. . . . They are desperately seeking love, acceptance and spiritual depth, yet
many are disappointed with the spiritual resources they have been offered” (Dudley, 2000, p. 60). They need to learn for themselves and see that a strong relationship with Christ is the only answer to their needs; however, they are not experiencing or seeing Christ-centered authentic relationships adequately modeled in the church, which is in turn causing them to become disengaged.

They are confused by the tension between the truth of Adventism and the way they see it being lived out by the older members of their congregation. They place a high amount of credibility on relationships and action . . . they are not satisfied with the talk of Adventism. They want to see the walk. (Dudley, 2000, p. 61)

Ministry Context and Overview

The Nottingham Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is located in the United Kingdom, was founded in 1975. With a membership of approximately 306, it is situated in the very heart of Nottingham city, and is one of four churches in the Nottingham area. It is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist North England Conference.

I relocated to Nottingham in 1999 to further my university education and joined this congregation. In 2005 I became the Youth Minister for the Church where I served until 2008.

The current multicultural congregation is made up of West Indians who migrated to the country, Africans who have also migrated in more frequently over the past 20 to 30 years, and Caucasian, Black, and bi-racial British citizens, a large proportion of which are of the postmodern generations.

Approximately 40% of the Church’s adult members are pre-Boomers that are traditionalist in their approach, and Boomers who also have a traditional sense of values,
with a modernistic way of thinking, and who are loyal to Seventh-day Adventist values and principles.

There is a large number of multicultural postmodern Millennials, as well as Generation Xs. Both generations have issues with trusting others, especially authority. Their values are based on experiential thoughts as opposed to rational thoughts. They value the feelings their peers have of them, over that of society and people in authority. Both generations bear painful scars from childhood relational trauma brought on by divorce, abandonment, etc. They both are vulnerable to stress because they live in a state of fluidity, and so do the up and coming generation Y.

These are the different generations who make up the Church body.

What Needs to Take Place

The youth need support through spiritual mentoring and modeling. They need to see that having a personal relationship with Christ makes a difference in one’s life. “When . . . we model what it means to live in relationships, we best help the youth to build solid components into their personal value systems and thus grow towards faith maturity” (Dudley, 2007, p. 73).

When parents, teachers, and church leaders demonstrate such vertical and horizontal relationships, youth will have an excellent probability of developing abstract-universal values constructing authentic Christian value systems. They simply do not choose them intellectually; but they prize them emotionally, realizing that they have found something worth keeping. (p. 99)

To reinforce this Gardner (as cited in Dudley, 2007) states:

Young people acquire values not by studying ethical principles, but by emulating ethical models. Youth do not begin by analyzing or listing the attributes they wish to develop. Rather, they identify with people they admire who reveal those characteristics in their daily lives. That is why it is so crucial to provide young people with authentic models. (p. 99)
However, the reality is that many feel judged and misunderstood by adults, causing them to feel resentment, bitterness, and fear. In regards to this reality experienced by many Millennials, Maran (2000) states, “Satan will employ any methods, including the use of Church members, to tear us away from our loving Father” (para. 23). As discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, a large proportion of Millennial youth have a distorted view of who God is based on the dysfunctional family relationships and influences from authority figures in their lives that have let them down. This in turn has impaired their sense of self-worth and the way they relate to others and the world around them.

It is clear that in order for adults to effectively minister to the Millennial generation and nurture them as they seek to truly know God and to develop a healthier God image through being in relationship with Him, there has to be the formation of healthy, authentic relationships. It is vital that the characteristics of this generation, as discussed in the literature review, be clearly understood, as well as intentional efforts made to build rapport and meet their needs if they are to be reached.

I think the best thing that church leaders can do for the youth of our church is get acquainted. Too often, church leaders sit on their high horses and judge our youth without having the slightest idea of what they are going through. (“Let’s talk,” 2007) Very much has been lost to the cause of truth by a lack of attention to the spiritual needs of the young. Ministers of the gospel should form a happy acquaintance with the youth of their congregations. Many are reluctant to do this, but their neglect is a sin in the sight of Heaven. (White, 1915b, p. 207)

By taking time to listen to this generation, people will gain greater insights into how they function and understand them better. Trust takes time to develop. This generation needs a community to belong to and call home. Both the heart and the mind have to be involved in the spiritual journey and the Church needs to provide appropriate,
practical assistance through nurturing, mentoring, teaching, and leading in order to help this generation to get over their past hurts and strengthen their faith.

The youth need more than a casual notice, more than an occasional word of encouragement. They need painstaking, prayerful, careful labour. He only whose heart is filled with love and sympathy will be able to reach those youth who are apparently careless and indifferent. Not all can be helped in the same way. God deals with each according to his temperament and character, and we must cooperate with Him. Often those whom we pass by with indifference, because we judge them from outward appearance, have in them the best material for workers, and will repay all the efforts bestowed on them. There must be more study given to the problem of how to deal with the youth, more earnest prayer for the wisdom that is needed in dealing with minds. (White, 1915b, p. 207)

It is evident from the current situation that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is facing regarding youth and young adult retention, that not enough of study and prayer is taking place. As Kinnaman (2011) aptly states: “The drop out problem is, at its core, a faith-development problem . . . it’s a disciple-making problem. The Church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture” (p. 21).

It must be clearly stated that mentoring is not a new concept. Numerous examples of mentor and mentee relationships are provided in scripture, indicating that it is essential for every generation and should be applied. However, the effectiveness of the mentoring process is largely determined by how well it is informed, structured and appropriately packaged to meet the needs of the specified generation.

This course has been formulated based on the research discussed in the literature review and the reasons stated above. It is tailored to Millennial Youth in order to address some of the issues they face, to begin to meet their needs, win their confidence, and bid them to follow Christ, through establishing authentic Christocentric relationships.
Structure of the Course

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this course and the process it incorporates will seek to help Millennial youth develop: (a) a healthy God image, leading them to gain a healthy view of themselves, (b) a lasting Christian identity and deeper faith that will enable them to become mature Christian adults who remain in the Church, and (c) acquire healthy Christocentric interpersonal relationships that facilitate healing and growth.

This course is a three-part ministry that is fundamentally based on the model Christ used while He was on earth. Christ’s ministry focused on building authentic relationship with the people. This began with identifying and meeting their felt needs. This led to winning the confidence of the people through building trust, which resulted in ministering to their spiritual needs by bidding them to follow Him through discipling.

The end result of this course will produce a Soul Care package for any youth educator or minister to use to address the needs of the youth. The material is also designed and compiled in such a way that it may be tailored to any individual person of any age or groups of people to assist them on their own faith journey.

Course Outline

Table 1 is an overview of the course outlining the phases involved and what will take place in each phase. Following is a detailed description of each phase and what will be carried out.
### Table 1

**Soul care Course Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Process/resources</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-phase</td>
<td>Raise awareness in the church setting</td>
<td>Inform/equip members for youth ministry</td>
<td>Seminars/workshops</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify felt needs of youth</td>
<td>Identify, assess and administer appropriate care and support</td>
<td>Mentor training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Active listening</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey/inventories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigning and matching mentors to mentees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Win confidence and build trust</td>
<td>Foster Christocentric interpersonal relationships to facilitate healing</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Build authentic relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Build community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Discipling: Bid them follow</td>
<td>Nurture faith journey and spiritual growth</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>10-week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach devotional habits</td>
<td>cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discipling/Modeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fostering interpersonal relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post phase</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>S.W.O.T</td>
<td>Focus group(s)</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-phase: Raising Awareness in the Setting**

In order for the *Soul Care* ministry to successfully implemented and accomplished, a pre-phase is vital for the church body to be fully aware of it and for them to have a solid understanding of the Millennial culture and the challenges they face. This whole ministry is based on healing and restoring relationships. Therefore, understanding must precede and inform action.
Seminars/Workshops

A series of seminars/sermons and workshops will be conducted within the local church setting in order to inform and educate the members as to the characteristics of the Millennial generation. As the greater majority of members come out on Sabbath morning and Sabbath afternoon, the seminars will be strategically divided throughout the 12-week quarter between the Divine Hour service, mid-week sessions, and Sunday workshops. During this phase there will be a recruitment period for those willing to be trained to serve the youth as mentors.

Mentor Training

Besides informing and educating the members, the main emphasis of this phase is youth mentor training. A detailed description and overview of mentoring and its benefits will be discussed further on in the chapter. Table 2 is an overview of the process and what it entails.
Table 2

*Mentor Training: Overview of the Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Action/ task</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Source mentoring/training options in the area and make contact</td>
<td>Training guides</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact Conference possibility for assistance</td>
<td>Prices guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet-based searches</td>
<td>Specialist Websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phonebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and recruiting</td>
<td>Create awareness/advertize the ministry</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentations</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribute adult application forms</td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal record checks must be completed and returned successfully</td>
<td>E-mailing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appeal to youth and their parents</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult application forms</td>
<td>Social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child Protection Policy</td>
<td>Posters, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Training</td>
<td>Mentor training phase</td>
<td>Adult application forms for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child Protection Policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist guest speakers</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training manual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Required textbooks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Printed or electronic handouts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Certificates on completion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed in Chapter 3, mentoring initiatives are vitally important in this postmodern age in order to connect the youth and save them from self-destructive behavior. Therefore the training and implementation of this will provide a vehicle through which the Holy Spirit can work, enabling youth and adults to flourish as Christians who follow Jesus and empower the lives of others. Adequate training is crucial in order to provide the best environment and situation for growth and development of the youth.
**Research**

Secondary research through the use of scholarly books, journals, online and electronic sources will be carried out before and during this process as well as primary research through frequent discussions with the youth will be conducted to ensure the information shared about the Millennial generation and culture is current and relevant. With this ongoing compilation of research being generated it will form a database of resources and suggestions for ministry in this area of need.

**Phase Two: Identifying the Felt Needs of the Youth**

This phase is of vital importance and must be thoroughly executed in order to make the *Soul Care* course relevant and appropriately tailored to each young person that participates. Christ modeled the ability to come in touch with the people through sympathy in order to understand them and meet their needs. This approach is to be emulated. In order to be of most benefit to the Millennial youth, they need to be understood and this can only take place though coming in touch with them in sympathy.

It is true of men and women, and how much more of youth and children, that only as we come in touch though sympathy can we understand them; and we need to understand them in order most effectively to benefit. (White, 1915a, p. 212)

In order for this to take place the following course of action will be taken.

**Active Listening**

A series of sessions will be conducted with the youth over a two-week span in order to give them the opportunity to share and express their current concerns/struggles, etc. These sessions will take place in a non-threatening environment away from the church setting, where the youth are comfortable and feel free to open up. Key questions
will be asked in order to gain insight into the feelings of the youth. The five listening skills Unser (2001) uses are (a) attending, (b) clarifying, (c) reflecting content, (d) reflecting feelings, and (e) paraphrasing and will be utilized by the facilitator(s) in order to deepen the level of communication among the youth and young adults. Appropriate venues will be chosen at the time of implementation.

The sessions will incorporate those who have successfully completed the Mentor Training program as they will have the current training in active listening that will be of benefit to the process. Active listening is highly important as it helps the person who is speaking feel that they are being heard and accepted. By giving the youth undivided attention through attentive posture, good eye contact, as well as strategically repeating what has been heard, the young person will feel more obliged and confident to open up.

These sessions will be recorded with permission from the youth involved to ensure that all information shared is accurately interpreted during the analysis and evaluation process. The findings from the discussions will be carefully analyzed to inform the next course of action, and put into an electronic database to create individual profiles of the youth, that will inform future ministry.

**Personal Assessments, Surveys, and Inventories**

Assessments will be carried out among the youth to identify their spiritual development level and to gain insight into their perspective and relationship with God, as well as their interpersonal connections in order to inform curriculum planning for phase three. This will be done using the Growing Disciples Inventory (Bradfield, 2012), as well as using sections of the Growing Disciples Curriculum Framework (Bradfield, 2012), which are online spiritual growth discovery tools. The aim of these tools are to help youth
and young adults “in any Christian education setting to better understand their Christian
spiritual development [and] provide Christian educators with information to improve
teaching that nurtures faith” (Bradfield, 2012, para. 2).

This assessment will also be used in conjunction with the moral development
inventory, which is also part of the online assessment that will take place. This will be
given to assess each individual youth’s moral development stage. It will be instrumental
in identifying the level of moral reasoning that the young person is applying. This will
give further insight into the motivations behind their actions, which will in turn inform
how to appeal to them and speak to them at their level.

When attempting to help youth, we need to be able to address them at their own level
. . . parents, teachers, and others interested adults have a responsibility to facilitate the
upward movement of adolescents through the moral stages. While we accept children,
youth, and adults at any stage of their development, we do not leave them there. We
want to stimulate growth. (Dudley, 2007, p. 49)

Elements of various spiritual assessment tools such as: the inventory designed by
Schwarz (2009), the spirituality measures and assessments techniques designed by
Thayer (2006), and the spiritual styles assessment designed by Csinos (2010), will also be
incorporated to gain more in-depth understanding and build a profile of these youth.

It becomes imperative that those working with [the youth] . . . gain an understanding
of the four spiritual styles, come to see what styles might dominate their spiritual
lives, and nurture the faith formation of [young people] in environments characterized
by a balance tension between all four styles. (Csinos, 2010, p. 4)

The results from all will be carefully analyzed to inform the next course of action and
inform the Soul Care curriculum planning.
Matching and Assigning Mentors to Mentees

Based on the information and research collected from the assessments, the youth will be carefully assigned to mentors. The main purpose of the mentoring relationship is to help the young person develop character, build trust, and foster healing. This special one-to-one relationship will not only provide guidance, advice, and support, but will also help the mentees gain knowledge, and/or help to shape positive attitudes, beliefs, or feelings.

White wrote much on reaching the youth and meeting their needs. In the book *Gospel Workers* she said:

We should seek to enter into the feelings of the youth, sympathizing with them in their joys and sorrows, their conflicts and victories. Jesus . . . came down to this world, that He might become acquainted with the weakness, the suffering, and the temptations of the fallen race. He reached us where we were, that He might lift us up. In our work of the youth, we must meet them where they are, if we would help them.

(1915b, p. 209)

Table 3 is an overview of what will take place during this process.
As discussed in Chapter 3, it is during the mentoring stage that the environment conducive for emotional, spiritual, and relational healing will be created. As emphasized in Chapter 2, this is a process that does not happen overnight. However, the mentor/mentee relationship provides the key atmosphere that is required for this to take
place. The spiritual mentor is able to nurture the mentee and facilitate their understanding of how God views them, which in turn will assist in nullifying their previous false beliefs. Over time as trust is built, the mentee’s ability to share authentically and honestly will be increased. Alongside these elements, the Holy Spirit plays a key role in the process, as this affirming relationship will need to be bathed with Divine strength and wisdom, all of which takes and needs time. All of these ingredients are needed so as not to hinder or even stifle the healing process (McGee, 1990, p. 32).

During this stage, an assessment will be made to determine whether the young person being mentored needs to be referred for further care through professional Christian counseling. As described in Chapter 3, in order for a person to gain a healthy God image, it is imperative that they form new relationships with people that are receptive, accessible, and with whom they feel loved. Mentoring can only facilitate this process so far. The use of therapeutic interventions can lead to transformation of relational attachment figures. A network of local Christian counseling therapists will be sourced and utilized as and when needed during this process.

**Phase Three: Discipling—Bid Them Follow**

Phase three is a culmination of the previous phases, during which the youth will be nurtured into fostering a deeper transformational relationship with God and others. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the Millennial generation are relationally orientated and desire authenticity in their interpersonal relationships. They also gravitate to being in community as opposed to individualism, which is an integral character shift of the postmodernism culture. The research presented in Chapter 3 also revealed that Millennial youth are very much open to spirituality and are fully aware of the presence of God, with
a longing to know Him more. This phase is designed in order for them “not just to know about God, but to know God at a deep and personal level” (Dudley & University, 2009, p. 182).

Community, authenticity, and spirituality are three characteristics of the postmodern culture that provide the ideal opportunity to minister to youth and young adults with the potential to bring about transformation.

In order to disciple the youth and deepen their relationship with God, a sense of community will be created through the use of small groups. “Community can occur most completely only in small groups” (Neighbour, 2000, p. 113). In contrast to the conventional, information based, small group models used in the past, this small group model is relationship-based.

The kind of community that post modern youth and young adults want is not built by sharing information, even from Scripture, as important as that is. Scripture should be always used in a small group, but, if other components are missing, community will not be experienced. (Dudley & University, 2009, p. 182)

To reinforce this notion, Neighbour (2000) writes, “the essential elements of community include interpersonal commitments and a sense of belonging. Community takes place when there is a shared life” (p. 63). A postmodern community, where each participant is able to be real with themselves and others, is the only environment conducive to develop authenticity that is valued by Millennial youth and young adults. The spiritual element of this small group will be the thread that holds the group together. The leader of the small group will disciple the youth by facilitating the community building and spiritual development of the group.

The small group model that I will utilize in this phase is a ministry model developed by Allan Walshe (personal communication, 2012), Chair of the Discipleship
and Religious Education Department at Andrews University. The conceptual framework applied from page 105 to page 118 inclusive is presented with my comments but is the intellectual property all from Dr. Allan Walshe and is used and applied in this study with his permission though he retains all rights thereto. He states: “An effective way to provide transformational ministry is through ‘God connections,’ a radically different model of small group which focuses on community building, authenticity and [spirituality]” (cited in Dudley & University, 2009, p. 182). The following is a description of this small group ministry model.

**The Model**

The unique characteristics of this small group model are intended to accelerate spiritual growth, build trust, and generate authenticity through community. It provides biblical spirituality that is distinct to what the world offers and creates an environment where Millennial youth can experience genuine models of Christianity in action. Content is that which deals with the topics, themes, and tasks given to the group, and process is that which deals with the interaction of the group members. Content and process are part of the significant characteristics of the group. Alongside building community, teaching devotional habits will be an integral focus.

In order to (a) nurture group members on their journey to wholeness, (b) cultivate transformation, that (c), leads to bonding and authentic interpersonal relationships within the group, four factors will be incorporated into the model, facilitated by the leader through intentional activities. These factors are (a) interpersonal skills, (b) intrapersonal skills, (c) spirituality, and (d) other practical skills. These factors and the methods to be applied to foster them are illustrated in Table 4.
Table 4

*Holistic Development Overview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Interpersonal skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>B. Intrapersonal skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship – mixing with peers</td>
<td>Communication skills — listening to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship – taken to the next level</td>
<td>Authenticity – developing trust, being vulnerable, stepping out of the comfort zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonding – connecting, relating, sharing, deepening the level of intimacy</td>
<td>Sharing personal stories – background and history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community – experiencing a sense of belonging and togetherness</td>
<td>Personal growth – increase of self-esteem, decrease of shyness, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Forming the Group**

The formation and structure of the group will be as follows:

The first small group will be comprised of eight to 10 young people that are chosen by the group leader. As this model of ministry will be developed by the training of process-orientated small group leaders, it is important that these initial individuals display maturity, a committed character, as well as a passionate love for God, to ensure
that they in turn will grow to one day facilitate community building groups for themselves.

The group will meet once a week for the duration of 10 weeks. As Millennial youth tend to retract from long-term commitments, this is a suitable length of time for them to commit to without it seeming overbearing. The first two weeks of the group session is what is called the *shake down* period. During this time the youth can attend obligation free. This is the initial trial period where no commitments are made. The group is open and the youth are free to change their mind about committing if they so feel. The two weeks are intended to create a non-embarrassing way out.

After this period, beginning in week three, the group will become a closed group for the remaining eight weeks, where no new members will join. After this time, the group will become open again, where the option will be given to allow others to join and/or to create a new group. It is essential that the group is closed after the *shake down* period to ensure levels of trust is adequately built amongst group members. It takes about four weeks to build levels of trust, which is a crucial factor within the process. It is important that this is nurtured and not diminished. Constantly adding new people will result in altering the group dynamic, causing levels of trust to have to be built up again: (a) to create an environment like that of a green-house for spiritual accelerated growth to occur, (b) to develop a close-knit community, (c) to foster authenticity, and (d) to generate a cycle of trust. As group members share honestly with the rest of the group and are valued for doing so, confidence is being built up in each person, who in turn feels open to share, and thus confidentiality is built among the members. As confidence builds
and is esteemed, trust is developed and bonding takes place, the more sharing takes place. Thus the cycle continues. This trust cycle entails six stages as illustrated in Figure 1.

1. Tentative exploration. Testing of the waters. Vulnerability is modeled by the leader. Encouraged to share honestly.

2. Honesty is honored. Individuals are listened to and heard.

3. Confidentiality is built and maintained. Individuals feel valued.

4. Trust is developed.

5. Bonding takes place.

6. Authenticity increases. More information is shared.

Figure 1. Focused group trust cycle.

With the trust cycle in place the group, issues of faith can be contended with. The youth will feel more at liberty to speak and ask questions that could never be dealt with in any other manner, thus resulting in spiritual growth. Although the group is very much a place to share matters of a spiritual nature openly and authentically, it will be emphasized that this small group is not a therapy group, therefore it not the appropriate place to
disclose intimate information. Sensitive information will be encouraged to be shared during their personal mentoring or counseling sessions, as outlined above in phase two.

After the 10-week period has ended, the group will then have a break for two weeks. After this time the group will become open again for those who want to join or for members of the initial group to start their own small group independently. The small group closed/open 10-week cycle is illustrated in Figure 6.

![Diagram of closed/open group 10-week cycle]

*Figure 2. Closed/open group 10-week cycle.*

**The Contract**

After the two-week *shake down* period, a contract will be given to the members who have made a commitment to the group. This is essential in order to enhance the success of the ministry. Following is an outline of the contract with terms and conditions.

*Contract Period:* The group will meet once a week for 10 weeks.

*Weekly Time Length:* The group can decide—ideally one and a half hours is a suitable time frame. Once the time frame is decided on, this will be a firm agreement and must be adhered to. Time management must be maintained in order to increase the success of the group.
Commitment: Each member of the group is asked to show a high level of commitment. Attendance is mandatory unless there is an emergency. This stipulation helps to guard against a plethora of excuses that the youth may present to pardon them from attending as the weeks go by.

Reading: Each group member is asked to agree to do the devotional reading that will be assigned to him or her each week. This is of paramount importance as this is where the spiritual growth and transformation of the person will be concentrated. Failure to do so will result in stunted spiritual growth and disconnect from the other members, causing the community of the group to be unbalanced. Getting into the discipline and practice of these devotional habits are not only intended for the 10-week duration, but for life. Once the youth begin to deepen their relationship with God and the Holy Spirit works to transform them, these habits will no longer be seen as just an activity but a way of life.

Confidentiality: The youth will be encouraged to be confidential, as this will be absolutely essential for growth of the group and a sense of community to develop. Trust can only be built when the environment created is safe enough to do so. “Without confidentiality the group will suffocate . . . if a group does not adopt the value of confidentiality . . . [nothing] less than a surface level of communication is possible” (Unser, 2001, p. 14). With this in mind, it is also important to stress that this group setting is not the appropriate place to offload and dump information of a highly personal nature that may be going on in a member’s life. While such discussion will be essential in the right setting as highlighted previously; the purpose of this group setting is predominantly the place where each member’s journey with God is discussed.
Concern: Genuine inquiries and concern must be shown by the leader/facilitator about issues other group members may be going through. Each group member will also show genuine concern for each other and play an active part in offering any assistance if needed until the issues are resolved. Building a community that is willing to bear one another’s burdens is essential.

The Format of the Group

The structure of each weekly 90-minute session will be comprised of three parts: namely, (a) Transition Exercises, (b) Personal Spiritual Growth - Devotional Habits, (c) Seven Scriptures and Conversational Prayer. The group will meet in the same location each week. The format is outlined as follows:

Transition Exercises: The first part of the session will focus on activities designed to help the members feel comfortable and begin to break down barriers. It is also intended to create an environment that allows each person to transition from the activities of their day into an atmosphere conducive for the Holy Spirit to move on their heart and mind. During this session relevant icebreaker activities will be carried out, as well as exercises that encourage the members to share some history about him/her. Sharing will take place in varied group sizes, for example, sharing in two’s, after which, joining with another pair to share and building to groups of six, then possibly eight, and so forth. This will all depend on the nature of the activity being conducted. These activities are intended to be a non-threatening way of allowing the youth to get to know each other, and allow for inter- and intra-personal growth to take place.
After the first few weeks as the group begins to become familiar with each other, debriefing from assigned weekly reading and other tasks will also take place during this first part of the session. This section will last approximately 30 minutes.

**Personal Growth - Devotional Habits:** This is the heart of the session. During this section high priority will be given to the spiritual development of the group, as it is where discipling will be manifested, with devotional habits being taught, modeled, and explored together as a group. A fundamental reason for this section is to provide opportunity for youth and young adults to learn, to experience and to practice the . . . (spiritual disciplines) that will lead them into a transforming relationship with God. The devotional habits/disciplines are about positioning ourselves so that God can gain access to our minds and hearts. (Dudley & University, 2009, p. 183)

The devotional habits are divided into two sections, namely, habits of disengagement (unplugging and getting alone with God), and habits of engagement (reflecting on scripture, attributes of praise, conversational prayer). Each week the group will be introduced to one of these devotional habits and encouraged to use them during the session and in their personal devotion time during the week. “The Bible will be used to enrich relationships and community rather than to merely gain information” (Dudley & University, 2009, p. 183). Adequate time will be given each week for the group to share their personal and spiritual growth experiences. The duration of this section will be approximately 30 minutes.

**Seven Scriptures and Conversational Prayer:** The final section of the meeting will be devoted to assigning the group with seven verses or short passages of scripture which they are to read and reflect upon one verse or passage per day. This is given in addition to the devotional habit they will learn during the session. This will encourage the continuation and practice of what they have been taught and enable them to be more
independent in their time with God. The youth will be given the opportunity to share their experiences of what God has been saying to them about their personal life and relationships in this section during the following week, before being assigned a new set of verses. The session will end with conversational prayer. This type of prayer is conversational in nature, as the youth will be free to pray spontaneously in short sentences, in order to collectively have a conversation with God. This type of prayer prevents any one person from dominating the prayer and allows this dynamic to be a natural expression of the group as they join their heart to God and reflect on the praises, concerns, requests, and commitments made during the group session that they would like God to help them to honor. Just as the previous two sections, this section will also last for approximately 30 minutes.

After this prayer time, the group is then dismissed and encouraged to disperse so as to honor the time commitment of the group.

Figure 3 illustrates how the 90-minute session will be divided and what each section will entail.
The group leader will spend adequate time at the end of each weekly session to assess how the meeting went, in order to plan effectively for the next session. Unser (2001, pp. 124-125) gives a list of possible questions that can be utilized by the group leader in order to evaluate each session sufficiently.

As stated in Chapter 3, Millennial youth are very much seeking to be more spiritual. They are not necessarily seeking to be religious but spiritual, and are very open to spiritual things. Spirituality needs to be modeled by an authentic person. It needs to be caught not taught. This process has to begin with the leader/facilitator and it is vital that the leader’s overall relationship with God and devotional life are maintained in order for an authentic character to be modeled. This is needed to gain the confidence and the trust of the group. “As we train group leaders to facilitate these groups we will see young

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**Figure 3.** 90-minute session organization and content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30 Minutes</th>
<th>30 Minutes</th>
<th>30 Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitional Exercises</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Growth</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 Scriptures and Conversational Prayer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icebreaker activities</td>
<td>Devotional Habits Disengagement and Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Habits of Disengagement**

- Unplugging
- Getting alone with God

**Habits of Engagement**

- Reflecting on Scripture
- Attributes of Praise
- Conversational Prayer

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peoples’ lives being transformed as they participate, experience true community, authenticity, and spiritual growth” (Dudley & University, 2009, p. 183).

Post Phase: Evaluation of the Soul Care Process

A reflection on and evaluation of the whole Soul Care process will be conducted through a post phase session. Focus groups will be carried out after the 12-week process to assess the practical learning outcomes using the S.W.O.T (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) evaluation process and inform modifications that need to be made to the Soul Care curriculum and process for further use. This focused time of evaluation will last approximately two weeks at the end of the whole process. This will be the culmination of an ongoing evaluation that will take place at strategic times throughout the duration of the Soul Care course.
CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to design and develop a biblically-based Soul Care process for Millennial youth and young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which seeks to help them develop and gain: (a) a healthy view of who God is, leading them to develop a healthy view of themselves, (b) a lasting Christian identity and deeper faith that will enable them to become mature Christian adults who remain in the church, (c) as well as facilitating the cultivation of healthy interpersonal relationships. The following is a summary of the theological, theoretical, and practical interventions that will be conducted in order to successfully fulfill the expected outcomes of this project.

Summary

The theological chapter (Chapter 2) sets the foundation for the project by highlighting God’s original plan for His created beings, His purpose for us, and how He intended us to live in healthy, harmonious relationships on four distinct levels: with God, with self, with others, and with creation. Despite the “Fall” of man, when these harmonious relationships were diminished because of the consequences of sin, God, through the plan of salvation and redemption, made it possible for us to be fully restored. However, the repercussions of sin are still prevalent today and humankind is still striving to be in right relationship with God, self, and others.
The effects of sin have so marred the heart and mind of humankind from fully knowing who God really is. The deceptive lies of Satan—who predominantly uses human agents and detrimental life experiences to manipulate and control people—have so penetrated the mind of humankind that these lies are believed as truth. It has negatively shaped human being’s understanding of God and His love, which in turn has corrupted their understanding of self and where his/her identity lies; leading to a dysfunctional ability to relate to others. Brokenness is a byword of society especially among Millennial Seventh-day Adventist youth and young adults. This is one of the fundamental reasons that this project has been formulated in order to foster spiritual, emotional and relational healing, and restoration of relationships on all levels.

Chapter 2 also discusses and expounds on the environment that is vital to facilitate the healing process, namely, having a healthy God picture, right thinking, time, the Holy Spirit, honesty, and affirming relationships.

Chapter 3 builds on this theological foundational understanding by reviewing and specifically discussing the relevant scholarly literature that contributes to an understanding of Millennials. It examines: (a) their characteristics, (b) development theory: their self and spiritual formation/identity, and (c) how an understanding of attachment theory and God image can be used to facilitate healing, foster healthy interpersonal relationships, and nurture spiritual growth. The chapter also extends this exploration of Millennials in society to a contextualization, in light of this project, to Millennials in the Seventh-day Adventist setting and more specifically in Britain.

The findings from this chapter (Chapter 3), as well as the theological discourse of Chapter 2, have played a vital role in informing and shaping the core aims, objectives,
and strategies for the implementation of this project. Having a deeper understanding of the Millennial generation, self-identity, spiritual development, attachment theory, as well as God image, has been integral in developing the *Soul Care* process.

**Summary of Implementation**

Chapter 4 details the three-phased stages for the *Soul Care* process. The course begins with a pre-phase that describes how awareness of the *Soul Care* process and its purpose will be created. The success of this whole process is dependent on the cooperation and involvement of the whole Church family. The intended outcome of the 12-week pre-phase process of seminars, workshops, and training programs is that the church family will be informed, educated, and equipped to engage in the restorative, transformational, and healing process of building healthy relationships. This is not only intended to assist Millennial youth on their journey, but is also intended to nurture the participating church members in their personal relationship with God, self, and others.

The content of the seminar, workshops, and training sessions will predominantly be based on the theological implications and principles of Chapter 2, as well as the research and findings from Chapter 3 that outlines:

1. The characteristics of Millennial youth culture, including the factors that are contending for their time and energy and what affect they are having.

2. Various demographic results that examine the patterns, trends, backgrounds and family circumstances that affect the development of the youth, who are currently attending church.

3. Self-identity, spiritual identity formation and development, and how the church family can facilitate the process.
4. Healing and restoration of a healthy God image.

5. Nurture relationship on all four levels (see Chapter 2).

6. Mentor training.

Due to the limitations of this project, the pre-phase will cover and include only basic information, resources, and training needed to conduct the *Soul Care* process; however, it must be stressed that the more awareness that is created the more educating and equipping of the church family, the more successful and transformational the outcome will be (see recommendations).

The focus of phase one of this three-phase process is to identify the felt needs of the Millennial youth. This phase will follow the pre-phase and will last approximately six weeks. The interventions used will be: active listening, personal assessments, surveys and inventories, as well as assessing, profiling, and suitably pairing trained mentors to the mentees. The Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI) (Bradfield, 2012) as well as using sections of the Growing Disciples Curriculum Framework (Bradfield, 2012), which are spiritual growth discovery tools, alongside elements from the inventories mentioned in Chapter 4, are the primary assessments tools to be used to inform teaching and discipling to help nurture faith.

The findings presented in Chapter 3 and the introduction of Chapter 4 affirm that the Millennial generation want to be heard, accepted, and cared for. The Church teachings (White, 1915a) emphasize the importance of taking time to listen and relate to the youth in order to benefit them the most. The intended outcome is that the information gathered will not only inform curriculum planning for phase three of the process, but will also be foundational in creating an environment conducive for healing. Authentic
relationships will also be established through developing trust, and demonstrating true caring, which will be further facilitated and nurtured in phase two of the process.

The implementation of the mentoring program, which is the main focus of phase two, will build a sense of community, with the intent of winning the confidence of the youth. Based on the theological principles outlined in Chapter 2 that are required for healing and restoration, the intended outcome is to create an environment for the youth where they are affirmed, free to be open and honest, guided in the process of right thinking, and facilitated in the process of developing a healthy God picture. Quality time and the aid of the Holy Spirit are keys. This in turn will increase the prospect of building an authentic relationship with God, developing a lasting Christian identity and deeper faith that will enable them to become mature Christian adults who remain in the Church.

Again it must be emphasized that mentoring is not a new concept and is essential for every generation. The effectiveness of the mentoring process will largely be determined by how well it is informed, structured and appropriately packaged to meet the needs of the specified generation.

This phase will last approximately six months to a year, with each individual partnership being assessed and evaluated strategically to ensure the process is continuing to be a valid and beneficial experience for the mentee. This phase will begin and run simultaneously with phase three. Also during this phase, assessments will be made to determine whether any of the mentees need to be referred for professional Christian counseling. Although the mentor training gives a foundational level of skill, it is not adequate to administer the professional therapeutic interventions that may be required. A network of local Christian counseling therapists will be sourced and utilized as and when
needed during this process. All mentors will be informed on how to assess their mentee and make the referral if necessary.

Phase three will subsequently begin 12 weeks into phase two. A thorough description of the mentoring training and mentorship process that will take place has been clearly explained in Chapter 4.

Based on the findings of phase one, and the implementation of the mentoring process in phase two, phase three will be implemented. Phase three is an introductory 12-week *Soul Care* curriculum with the aim of discipleship and bidding the youth to follow Christ. This phase will be conducted primarily through the use of small groups, which will include retreats, workshops, workbooks, and seminars. The intended outcome is to assist the youth and young adults in restoring relationship on all of the four levels (as outlined in Chapter 2). This can only be attained successfully if each level, beginning with level one, is sequentially worked through and fulfilled: (a) God—nurturing a healthy God picture and deepening understanding of who God is, will lead to (b) developing a healthy self and spiritual identity that strengthens faith. This in turn will promote (c) healthy and authentic interpersonal relationships. All of this will encourage (d) proper caretaking over the things that God has placed in our possession.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the inclusion of doctrinal as well as relational experiences that are conducive for modeling and teaching will help create the environment needed for faith and spiritual development to take place.

A reflection and evaluation of the whole *Soul Care* process will be conducted through a post-phase session. Focus groups will be carried out after the 12-week process to assess the practical learning outcomes (S.W.O.T) and inform modifications that need
to be made to the *Soul Care* curriculum and process for further use. This focused time of evaluation will last approximately two weeks at the end of whole process and will be a time to accumulate the ongoing evaluation that will take place at strategic times throughout the duration of the *Soul Care* course as well as be the final culmination of the whole process.

**Conclusion**

God’s original plan for His created beings was to live in healthy, harmonious relationships on four distinct levels: with God, with self, with others, and with creation. The effects of sin have so tainted and marred the heart and mind of human beings that the wounds produced are more than skin deep, which is evident in the lives of Millennial youth and young adults.

As brought out in Chapter 3, Millennials are highly relational; however, they find it difficult to trust the establishment because of the painful experiences they have encountered from their past. This has led to a heightened level of skepticism, and a rejection of the worldview of the establishment. Literature indicates that this key characteristic precipitates a number of the other significant traits that characterize the Millennial generation.

Their values are based on experiential thoughts as opposed to rational thoughts. Millennials are open to spirituality and religious influence and have been characterized as searching, as they struggle to form a unified self-identity. These key factors verifies the importance of intentional and well-informed ministry initiatives needed to facilitate healing, spiritual growth, and discipleship.

An environment conducive for (a) developing interpersonal relationships,
(b) building trust, and (c) experiencing modeling needs to be created. This will help youth and young adults navigate their way through identity formation, and stage six of the developmental stages (where developing significant meaningful relationships is the focus). For this very purpose, phase three of the Soul Care process incorporates a small group model for discussing relevant issues, modeling devotional habits, and fostering strong relationships.

In order to facilitate spiritual growth, differentiated faith needs to be developed that allows Millennials to connect and relate to God in a meaningful way through spiritual development. Differentiated faith also incorporates the belief and doctrines of one’s faith and the capacity to grow and participate in the community of faith, that is, religious development in a way that enhances healthy interpersonal relationships with God and others. All of this is also affected as Millennial youth interact and are impacted by the many contexts of human development as well as try to find meaning in the painful experiences they face in life. Being connected to a healthy mature person in the form of a mentor and/or counselor, during phase two of the Soul Care process is intended to help youth and young adults navigate through the pivotal stages in their faith journey and self-development, leading to a healthy God image and defined self-identity.

Phase two and three are intended to nurture moral development, which is facilitated through indoctrination, values clarification, and developmental education. The combination of these three approaches within a Christian context is possibly the most inclusive process to facilitate faith development.

Spiritual development is central to faith development, and as indicated, spiritual growth is more likely to occur when there are both doctrinal and relational elements
incorporated. In order to have a holistic approach to the spiritual development of Millennial youth within the Seventh-day Adventist Church it is imperative that this includes all six of the natural aspects of human development. The results from the research conducted in phase one is intended to inform the content and context that phase two and three will incorporate.

Finally, in regards to having a healthy self and God image, in order for a person to develop more positive perceptions of and relational experiences with God, it is imperative to form new relationships with people that are receptive and accessible, that enables the young person to feel loved. Phase two will provide the support and guidance of mentors and/or counselors to facilitate healing, redefine a healthy image of God and self in order to nurture their spiritual development.

The implementation of these methodologies through the Soul Care process and the aid of the Holy Spirit are intended to have a lasting impact on the lives of Millennial youth that will not only foster healing, a healthy God image, and facilitate spiritual growth in Millennial youth, but facilitate restoration and harmonious relationships on four distinct levels: with God, with self, with others, and with creation as God originally intended.

**Recommendations**

The following headings reflect the recommendations that have emerged from the theoretical development of this project.

**Faith-based Mentoring**

As a result of my study it has been made apparent that having an in-depth understanding of faith-based mentoring and discipleship, with a coherent understanding
of the key elements it entails is imperative for any practitioner/minister, parent, or person engaging in the process of mentoring youth and young adults.

Although the Bible does not use the word mentor or mentoring, I recommend that an in-depth study of the numerous biblical mentee/mentor relationships should be conducted as an initial starting point. Insight can be gained from successful mentoring relationships such as existed between Jethro and Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Naomi and Ruth, Deborah and Barak, Elizabeth and Mary (the mother of Jesus), and of course Jesus and His disciples. These mentoring relationships that are mentioned before the time of Christ were partnerships that often had a singular goal or narrow focus. In contrast, the discipling methods of Jesus offer a more comprehensive model, which incorporated instruction, demonstration, and assessment to meet needs, win confidence, and invite people to follow Him, and also go out and disciple others (Matt 28:18-28). Having a solid understanding of these models will be of great benefit for the practical application and implementation of mentoring.

Human Development and Spirituality

In order to inform ministry and curriculum planning, and increase the possibility for successful outcomes, further study is required into the various aspects of human development; namely, physical, emotional, social, mental, and moral stages of development. Although the literature review discusses spiritual, moral, and faith development, due to the limitation of this project, only the key aspects of these developmental models were included. Further in-depth study should be done to ensure that Millennials are being engaged at their respective level of development and that their developmental needs are being met and nurtured.
Ministry Tools and Inventories

The incorporation of a ministry tool in the form of a computerized inventory/planner, which combines spiritual development, spiritual gifting with the incorporation of developmental stages theory would be highly beneficial to any Educator/Minister. The selected inventory would need to be designed in such a way that, based on the information received of any given person, it is able to suggest and map out a personalized course of action/action plan that might be used to facilitate and guide the person as they develop and mature on their personal faith journey.

Parental/Guardian Education

Parental/guardian education of the current issues of Millennial youth is something that will need to be conducted on a continual basis. The success of the interventions of this project will heavily be dependent on the transformation that takes place within the whole church body, including the parents, once awareness has been created and equipping is underway. The more the church family is educated and equipped, the greater the impact and prospect a transformational ministry.

Holistic Church Ministry

In order to bring about greater transformation and the restoration of relationships, it is recommended that the whole church family be engaged in the process of fostering a deeper and healthier relationship with God, self, and others. This can be achieved by tailoring phase one and three of the Soul Care process to meet the needs of the adult community, and could be run prior to or simultaneously alongside the Soul Care process, though small groups, retreats, and seminars.
Resources Within the Local Community

It is recommended that research be done within the local area to ensure that there is a solid bank of resources that may be made available and ready to be used, especially during the mentoring phase, if any youth need to be referred to specialists such as Christian counselors.

Database of Specialists

It is recommended that a database of accessible and available specialists that can assist in the delivery of certain topics to be covered throughout the *Soul Care* process be compiled, as this will be of great benefit to enhance the experience and allow the a rich wealth of knowledge and expertise to be shared.

Shadowing and Pilot Schemes

It would be of great benefit to investigate to determine if any churches in the local area have in the past or are currently engaged in a program or pilot scheme that is similar or shares aspects of the *Soul Care* process in order to gain insight and experience the best practice. This could prove to be valuable in informing curriculum planning and implementation of the *Soul Care* process. Shadowing of these ministries is an option that should be investigated.

Further Theological Studies

The attributes of God is a topic for further in-depth theoretical study that will be of benefit to phase three of the process for developing devotional habits with the youth.

Additionally, further research into the variety of other factors that impact the God image is recommended and would be highly beneficial to aid both phase two and three of
the *Soul Care* process. These factors include the God concept or cognitions about God, gender, culture, and further research into therapy.
### APPENDIX A

**ERIKSON’S STAGES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Basic Conflict</th>
<th>Important Events</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Infancy (birth to 18 months)</td>
<td>Trust vs. Mistrust</td>
<td>Feeding</td>
<td>Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care, and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Early Childhood (2 to 3 years)</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt</td>
<td>Toilet Training</td>
<td>Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feelings of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preschool (3 to 5 years)</td>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this stage leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. School Age (6 to 11 years)</td>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Adolescence (12 to 18 years)</td>
<td>Identity vs. Role Confusion</td>
<td>Social Relationships</td>
<td>Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Young Adulthood (19 to 40 years)</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Middle Adulthood (40 to 65 years)</td>
<td>Generativity vs. Stagnation</td>
<td>Work and Parenthood</td>
<td>Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Maturity (65 to death)</td>
<td>Ego Integrity vs. Despair</td>
<td>Reflection on Life</td>
<td>Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfillment. Success at this stage leads to feelings of wisdom, while failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure A1. Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages of Human Development
APPENDIX B
FO WLER’S THEORY

In his definition of faith, James W. Fowler “sought a perspective on faith that transcended any specific content or beliefs” (Jones & Wilder, 2010, p. 166). Fowler defined faith as “a person’s or group’s way of responding to transcendent value and power as grasped through forms of the cumulative tradition” (Fowler, 1995, p. 9). The phenomenon on which Fowler defines “faith” is classed as generic. Jones & Wilder (2010) reinforces this and stated:

The potential for the phenomenon that Fowler has defined as “faith” results neither from divine action nor primarily from any human choice…Fowler excluded content from the essential nature of faith, arising primarily from his reliance on the research of W.C. Smith. (p. 167)

It is common knowledge that Fowler’s theories relied on the research of Smith. In a number of his writings Smith argued that in the pre-modern world, to have faith or to believe did not indicate the acceptance of specific matter as true. Instead these expressions meant to esteem another person with “a certain ultimate loyalty” and to desire a relationship with that person. (Smith, 1998, pp. 5-6, 108)

Jones and Wilder (2010) emphasize that Smith claimed that “belief” and “faith” could not “connote assent to any specific claims about God at the times when these documents were written…Faith was personal loyalty that required no intellectual assent to any specific concepts or propositions” (pp. 167-168). Fowler (1995) confirmed his belief of this view and stated: “for the ancient Jew or Christian to have said, ‘I believe there is a God,’ or ‘I believe God exists,’ would have been a strange circumlocution. The being or existence of God was taken for granted” (p. 12). He argued for a “cultural linguistic” perspective on faith. According to Jones and Wilder (2010) “such a
perspective treats doctrines not as declarations of truth but as “grammatical rules” that govern the language of a particular set of religious convictions” (p. 168).

With this being said it is clear that the foundation of Fowler’s theory is not from a biblical or theological perspective. There have been numerous scholars and theologians who have found fault with Fowler’s theory and, according to Jones and Wilder (2010), have posed the following questions:

(1) Was Fowler's original sample sufficient to provide foundations for a universal model for faith development? (2) Given that faith seems to unfold within a complex and continuing life narrative, is it even possible for a traditional stage-development theory to describe faith development accurately? (3) From a biblical and theological perspective, is the reality to which Fowler referred as "faith" actually faith at all? (p. 176)

Having carried out a deeper investigation, this is just a small sample of the criticism Fowler’s theory has created. Due to the limitations of this project time does not permit me to discuss all faults found with Fowler’s theory. However, the harshest criticisms have arisen from scholars who have found Fowler’s theory to be deficient with a “content-empty” understanding of faith. I fully agree with Jones and Wilder (2010) who stated: “The concept of content-empty faith is unavoidably problematic for Christians who emphasize the regulative authority of Holy Scripture and who, because of this high view of Scripture, understand faith to require assent to specific content” (p. 179).

It is for this reason Fowler’s theory of faith development has been incorporated or supported in this literature review.
One of the main critiques amongst many of Kohlberg’s theory is that it is not comprehensive and is limited in the sense that it exclusively focuses on reasoning without including feeling and behaviors. On this topic Estep (2010) argues that:

While all morality may reflect moral decision, there is more to morality than cognition. If Kohlberg’s definition is limited or even incomplete, then his entire approach is similarly limited in its ability to address the subject of moral development comprehensively…moral formation cannot be conceived as consisting of just a process of cognitive mental reasoning but must include moral affect and behavior…Kohlberg’s basis for moral decisions is incomplete for the Christian educator. (pp. 134-135)

This critique not only emerges from theologians but also from social science scholars. Cully (1979) argues that “the Christian could not affirm with level [stage] five thinking, that the social contract is an ultimate form of morality since Christian convictions are often countercultural and reflect a higher allegiance” (p. 86).

A second critique is that Kohlberg’s theory is said to be based on ideological assumption as opposed to empirical evidence. According to Lee (1980) “Kohlberg’s rejection of religion as a positive influence on moral development was not done on the basis of empirical evidence or social science precedent but philosophical bias against it” (pp. 333-336).

Thirdly, Kohlberg himself admitted that his theory was impractical and not feasible in community conditions. In 1978 he stated:

Some years of active involvement with the practice of moral education at Cluster School have led me to realize that my notion that moral stages were the basis for moral education, rather than a partial guide to the moral educator, was mistaken. . . . It is not a sufficient guide to the moral educator who deals with the moral concrete in a school world in which value content as well as structure, behavior as well as reasoning, must be dealt with. In this context, the educator must be a socializer,
teaching value content and behavior, and not only a Socratic or Rogerian process-facilitator of development. In becoming a socializer and an advocate, the teacher moves into "indoctrination," a step I originally believed to be philosophically invalid. I believe that the concepts guiding moral education must be partly “indoctrinative.” (Kohlberg, 1978, pp. 13-15)

Although there are more criticisms of Kohlberg’s theory, I have mentioned the most relevant for the purpose of this literature review.
APPENDIX D
VALUES CLARIFICATION

According to Estep (2010)

Indoctrination calls for the instruction of individuals to the ethical norms that already have been determined by the society or culture or, in our case, the church. These are best learned through repetition, association, modeling, reward, and example… When done correctly, individuals acknowledge Scripture has a moral dimension that can form the basis for Christian ethics. (p. 147)

However, with this being stated, it must also be noted that knowing the content of scripture is not the equivalent of moral development. Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different matters.

Secondly, Values Clarification takes place after a phase of indoctrination. This stage stimulates the individual to make certain moral choices. In regards to ministry Estep (2010) asserts that:

Values Clarification in the church is accomplished through reflection on alternative value premises—through self-analysis and awareness of implications of value choices within the bounds of faith. The use of values clarification also could be used as a means of assessing the current level of moral [development] in individuals so as to better understand them and move forward. One could incorporate Scripture or theological insights into the moral determination. Hence, the individuals are reasoning through moral issues from a Christian perspective, not simply their own. (p. 147)

I agree with this approach, and feel this would also need to be carefully tailored appropriately to the context and nature of youth being ministered to.

Finally, moral education is said to be the “capstone” method to fostering moral development. This phase follows the indoctrination and Value Clarification phases and is said to be expressed through “philosophical rightness.” In regards to implications for ministry:

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Generally, such principles are derived through periods of divergence of opinion, dialog within the community, role-taking, and moral interchange. This approach actually calls individuals into the process of determining the norms and connecting the dots and then moving beyond them to a statement of principles. (Estep, 2010, p. 148)
APPENDIX E

SIX ASPECTS OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Figure E1. Six Aspects of the Human Person

Ward in (Maddix, 2010, p. 263)
APPENDIX F
THE BARNA GROUP

Barna Group is a visionary research and resource company located in Ventura, California. Started in 1984, the firm is widely considered to be a leading research organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture…Barna Group offers a range of customized research, resources and training to serve churches, non-profits, businesses and leaders. The company provides primary research; diagnostic tools; print and digital resources; leadership development; training and keynote talks; and organizational enhancement. (Barna, 2004, para. 1, 3)

Barna Group’s researchers have been examining Millennials’ faith development since the generation was in its teen years—that is, for about a decade. During that time, the firm has conducted 27,140 interviews with members of the Millennial generation in more than 200 studies. (Barna, 2013, para. 3)
APPENDIX G

GOD IMAGE MODELS

The Compensation Model

This model proposes that “God can become a substitute attachment figure and the individual’s God image compensates for needs of security and availability not fulfilled in the childhood parental relationships” (Grimes, 2014, p. 21). The research and findings of Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) confirmed that adults that had been raised by fairly non-religious mothers were prone to report a God image that was loving, protective and benevolent in character. Those reporting avoidant attachments with their mothers rated the highest in religiosity and also had the highest mean result on the scale that measured God as loving. According to Grimes (2014) these findings “lend support for the compensation hypothesis, suggesting that an individual’s God image may serve as a substitute attachment figure and may develop in part out of needs to compensate for lack of secure attachment with parents” (pp. 21-22). Further evidence that a person’s God image can change as they mature is found in research of Cheston, Piedmont, Eanes, and Lavin (2003). These researchers found a significant correlation between personal growth and affirmative adjustments in the God image. However, there is also research to support the correspondence model.

The Correspondence Model

The correspondence model highlights that “an individual’s God image corresponds to their other interpersonal relationships” (Grimes, 2014, p. 22). For example, a person who has a secure attachment source is more likely to possess a God
image that is loving and accessible in nature. The research and findings of Kirkpatrick (1992) highlighted that “individuals with a secure attachment style had a more loving and less distant God image compared to individuals with insecure attachment styles, suggesting a correspondence between personal relationships and religious beliefs” (Grimes, 2014, p. 22)

Although there is research to support both models, which seems almost contradictory, according to Kirkpatrick (1997) both models are congruent with different aspects of attachment theory; when dynamics of attachment, and the likelihood of change over time occurring as once insecure individuals find surrogate attachments, are taken into consideration. The research and findings of Dickie et al. (1997) provide support for both of these models.
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VITA

Georgina Miller

Education


Professional