Equipping And Mobilizing The Laity In The New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-Day Adventist Church

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING AND MOBILIZING THE LAITY OF THE NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Gerson P. Santos

Adviser: Ricardo Norton
Problem

The New York Luso-Brazilian congregation was organized on October 23, 1971, with approximately ten members. By December 2005, its membership was 329, including two new congregations formed recently.

In spite of the growth during the first two or three decades, this church has not experienced much growth in the last ten years. Many members are not committed to the Great Commission. Only ten percent participate in some kind of outreach.

Analyzing the profile of this church, it was verified that the growth came mainly through immigration. One of the main challenges, therefore, is to involve the laity in missionary work. There is a need to develop a more effective, intensive, and intentional equipping program; this church needs to have more training that puts the members to
work for evangelism. The pre-survey revealed that the great majority of the members (84-86 percent) would like to have more evangelistic programs and be trained to participate in outreach.

Method

The equipping cycle starts with a leadership retreat that will inform and orient the leaders of the church. A series of sermons will be used to educate and motivate the members; and a series of twelve seminars geared to equip the laity for ministry will follow. The church will have an ongoing program in an effort to establish a center for training and evangelism.

A series of nine Bible studies was developed to provide updated resource material for Bible studies. Visitation, literature distribution, small groups, and evangelistic meetings were planned to offer opportunity for member participation.

Results

The church as a training school for Christian workers will equip the laity to fulfill their mission. The hands-on training will give opportunity for practical learning and outreach. As a result, the church will accomplish both objectives, equipping the laity and reaching the world.

This equipping program enables the laity and the pastor to coordinate training and outreach activities. By observing the church in action, it was obvious that changes were made. The intentional evangelistic approach in several church activities was evident, even in those that traditionally were focusing on retaining instead of outreach, such as week of prayer or spiritual retreat.
The survey reports a number of new members participating actively. More participants affirmed spending more time on personal prayer, giving Bible studies, and a tremendous increase in the number of members participating in outreach activities.

The majority of members insisted that the church should provide more evangelistic programs, and that they would be willing to participate in lay training to develop their skills to better serve the church and the community.

**Conclusions**

The equipping program gave the church a new desire to fulfill the mission and reach out to the community. It also increased membership participation and involvement in all church activities, especially those related to evangelism. Some baptisms came as a result of the program, and most of those baptized were new people coming from the community. The church is aware of a new way to coordinate and promote their activities. The annual calendar is prepared looking for creative means to reach out to the community. The present experience, the training material, and evangelistic tools will provide indispensable resources for the next year cycle.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

EQUIPPING AND MOBILIZING THE LAITY IN THE NEW YORK
LUSO-BRAZILIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

by
Gerson P. Santos
June 2007
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30 June 2007
Date approved
DEDICATION

To my wife Leila and to our children Anne Elise and Jefferson, for their support.

To my parents, Augusto and Maryland, and my sister Sibele.

Above all, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

the reason for everything.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>SDABC</td>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh-day Adventists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LB</td>
<td>Living Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCV</td>
<td>New Century Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEV</td>
<td>Contemporary English Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James Version (all Bible texts are from KJV if not indicated)</td>
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The main job description of the pastor is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. A clear understanding of this truth may change the way we do ministry in a very radical manner. But how to train the laity? What kind of tools should I use? And after they get motivated what should they do?

Each member is a disciple, and each church a center of evangelism and training. This project has the intention to help all the laity, including the pastor and paid workers to understand that we were all called to ministry. Even though there are different gifts and ministries, we are all supposed to witness of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

May this project help us to understand our job as part of the laity, and give us the tools we need to help each other in equipping the laity for ministry.

Special recognition is given for the indispensable support I received from my advisers, Dr. Ricardo Norton and Dr. Alanzo Smith, for being so patient and resourceful.

My gratitude also goes to the administration of the Greater New York Conference, the New York Luso-Brazilian Church, Pastor J. Iraja Silva, Pastor A. Claudio Vilela, to all my friends, co-workers, and lay people, for their support and participation in this project.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Dissertation

The Greater New York Conference was organized in 1902 with a total membership of 527, and ten congregations. By the end of 2005, membership was 23,145, and 152 congregations worshiping in twenty-two different languages. This great diversity reflects one of the most cosmopolitan areas in the world.

Evangelizing a multicultural and secularized population like this is a challenge. In spite of the great effort of pastors and leaders, several churches are still not growing as they could if they were committed to the Great Commission. Churches need to learn how to equip and mobilize the members to evangelize this growing area of New York City.

Even though the work in New York City has been progressing, and many churches have been planted, there is still much to be done. Some churches are growing, but mainly through immigration.

There is a need to develop strategies that will motivate and involve more members in evangelism. There is a need to expand the meaning of the Great Commission among the laity. In order to finish its mission, the church must continue to develop strategies to motivate, train, and empower the majority of the laity to fulfill the Great Commission.
This project develops tools that can be used to equip and mobilize church members of the Greater New York Conference. The project will be applied to the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church as a pilot program, with the purpose of offering it to other churches in the Greater New York Conference.

**Definition of Terms**

The whole concept of equipping is based upon the reason we receive spiritual gifts. According to Eph 4:12, “These special abilities” (LB) are given to God’s people, so that they can be equipped to do better work for Him. The result from this endowment will be the growth of the church, in “strength and maturity.” The spiritual gifts are given in order to equip the saints for service.

The idea of equipping implies the spiritual call for discipleship, the training and motivation for service, and the material resources to deliver the message. These three areas will be involved in this equipping program. Some of the most important concepts of this dissertation are defined as follows.

**Equip**

The word “prepare” (NIV) or “perfecting” (KJV) that appears in Eph 4:12 is also translated as “equipping.” It has the meaning of “complete qualification for a specific purpose.”

The work of equipping is an intimate cooperation of the divine and human in ministry.

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Laity

The term laity is derived from the Greek *ho laos*, meaning "the people of God." As Russell Burrill says, "Anyone who is a part of the people of God is considered laity. By this definition, even clergy are laity. Ministers do perform ministry, but when they do so, they are acting in the role of the laity-of which they are a vital part."¹

Clergy

The word clergy is derived from the Latin *clerus*. At the beginning, Christianity applied *clerus* to all Christians because they had been chosen or elected by God to participate in His inheritance (1 Pet 5:3).

Later it was used in a restricted sense and designated only a segment of the Christian community: those persons entrusted to exercise the offices of worship. It designates the entire body of people who are consecrated to holy functions by an official rite. "The word cleric comes from the Greek word *kleros* and means "lot," "portion," or "heritage." Since the second century the word cleric has been the common name applied to those who, according to St. Jerome, "belong to that body of men who are the portion of God and at the same time have God Himself as their lot."²

Jerome endorses, in his *Epistula ad Nepotianum*, the etymology of "clerk" by having it derive from the Greek *kleros*, signifying "fate" or "lot." Isidore of Seville returned to Jerome’s explanation in his *Etymologiae* (7, 12). "In the twelfth century

Gratian assured the acceptance of this etymology by including Jerome’s and Isidore’s texts in his Decretum (distinction 21, canon 1; causa 12, quaestio 1, canon 5).”

Disciple

The basic meaning of the Latin, discipulus, and of the Greek, μαθητής, is “learner.” Most of the time, people relate the term “disciples” to the Twelve, but this is not the most common meaning. This word has three general uses “in the Gospels and Acts: (1) to distinguish the disciple from the teacher (Matt 10:24-25); (2) to designate anyone who follows a great movement or leader; thus, sacred Scripture speaks of the disciples of Moses (John 9:28), of the Pharisees (Matt 22:16; Luke 5:33), and of John the Baptist (Matt 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; John 1:35; 3:25); (3) to describe men and women who believed the doctrine of Christ (Acts 9:1, 20); in this sense the term is used 230 times in the Gospels and 22 times in the Acts.”

Discipleship

Discipleship is a spiritual process that demands an ever-expanding, multi-generational discipling network. This idea brings together three elements which allow the Holy Spirit to bring about accelerated growth in a believer, the Word of God, transparent relationships, and mutual accountability.

The power of the Word of God is revealed in the context of transparent relationships rooted in mutual accountability. We were created for community, and we

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should not grow alone. As G. Ogden says, “When the truth of God’s Word is at the heart of self-revealing, intimate relationships rooted in mutual accountability, you have the ingredients for Spirit-motivated transformation. This tool provides the structure for these three elements to come together. Add to this discipling unit a vision for equipping followers of Jesus to pass on the faith from one generation to the next, and you have the components to renew a ministry from the bottom up.”

Lay Priesthood

The priesthood of all believers is one of the biblical teachings the church has not put into practice. Even Catholic literature describes lay priesthood “according to a firm and unbroken tradition, with an explicit basis in the New Testament (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Heb 13:15-16; Phil 4:18; Rom 12:1; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), all the faithful are priests and constitute a spiritual temple in which they offer to God acceptable worship.”

Ministry

Generally, when people hear the word ministry, they think of pastors, priests, and professional clergy, but God says every member of his family is a minister. The biblical words servant and minister are synonyms, as are service and ministry. If you are a Christian, you are a minister. The call to salvation included the call to service. According

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to Warren, “regardless of your job or career, you are called to full-time Christian service. A ‘non-serving Christian’ is a contradiction in terms.”1

Limitations of the Dissertation

This dissertation presents some of the most important Bible texts about equipping, especially those regarding the life and experience of Moses, Paul, Peter, and Jesus.

This dissertation does not exhaust all texts about this subject, but to take some practical lessons from those selected, and to apply them in an equipping program.

The program itself gives direction, training resources, and witnessing tools to practice the call of discipleship. However, it is dealing with a North American population and may not be applicable to all international communities.

In this program a local church was selected to apply the program and to serve as a model to be followed around the Greater New York Conference. However, this is not an easy task, considering the diversity of the constituency and the freedom to develop other systems that can lead the church into action.

The geographic location of subjects (urbanized, industrial area) may result in difficulty in applying the results to other non-urbanized, industrial populations. The target group was the Luso-Brazilian church in New York City. The target group is, therefore, not a random sample of Luso-Brazilian churches across America.

1Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 228-229.
Limitation of instrument: unless the measures used to collect data are dependable, one cannot be sure that the findings are totally accurate. The instrument used to collect the data on the pre- and post-survey was not tested for reliability or validity (see appendix F).
CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR EQUIPPING

The Scriptures furnish the groundwork and rationale for equipping. The purpose of this chapter is to present insights on equipping from some of the most influential equippers of humankind—Moses, Paul, Peter, and Jesus Christ.

The spiritual equipper must possess an integrated understanding of God, people, and how divinity and humanity interface with each other. The equipper develops headship skills as a collaborating project with God. This project can be described as an interactive process called spiritual formation. McNeal calls this process "heart shaping."¹ The equippers' school for this course of action is their own lives, and it requires a close relationship with the Lord. The curriculum includes knowledge, experience, observation, and participation; all these factors will affect the heart shaping process. Equippers make things happen through others. According to Pollard, "They must be generous in their delegation of authority and responsibility."²

The equipper has a long-term responsibility. It does not matter in what stage of life it occurs. It is a life of service, and it is clearly presented in the Bible. First, we were created to serve God. "Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work" (Jer 1:5,

NCV). Second, we were saved to serve God. “It is he who saved us and chose us for his holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was his plan” (2 Tim 1:9, LB).

We were not saved by service, but we are saved for service. Third, we were called to serve God, as the Bible says that this call is for every Christian (Eph 4:4-14; Rom 1:6-7; 8:28-30; 1 Cor 1:2, 9, 26; 7:17; Phil 3:14; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 1:3). And finally, we were commanded to serve God. Jesus said, “I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life” (Matt 20:28, LB).1

Warren describes the shifting in someone’s life as the heart is shaped for serving God; most of the time we are looking for a place to meet our needs, but as we mature in Christ, the focus of our lives should shift to a life of service. As we discover God’s purpose for our lives, we can allow Him to work in us. The sense of our own purpose will change in the process of His work through us. According to God’s plan, we can make a difference in His world. He wants to work in us and through us. “What matters is not the duration of your life, but the donation of it. Not how long you lived, but how you lived.”2

The equipper’s goal is to form new disciples. They can promote diversity, recognizing people’s differences. This can strengthen the group, providing “an environment in which people can learn and grow as they work and share together.”3 The equipper whose heart has been wonderfully and meticulously shaped by God is a magnificent piece of work, a real masterpiece. “As water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man” (Prov 27:19).

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1Warren, 227-233.
2Ibid., 233.
3Hesselbein, 246.
Insights from Moses

Moses is an example of how God raises an equipper in a multicultural environment. His Hebrew background gave him the spiritual strength and the ability to hear God’s voice. His Egyptian culture gave him the traits of a prince and the determination of a soldier. Pharaoh provided the training in leadership practices, which prepared the Hebrew emancipator for service. There in Pharaoh’s palace he studied law, communication, conflict resolution, project management, and Egyptian religion.

God instructed Moses that he was chosen to break the bondage of His people. “His ability as a military leader made him a favorite with the armies of Egypt, and he was generally regarded as a remarkable character.”¹ Moses’ understanding of the Egyptian religion gave him advantages in his assignment to be an ambassador of the Living God. According to the Egyptian laws, those who might be on the throne should be initiated in the religious practice and priesthood. He was instructed in the polytheist religion; however, he gave up the human heritance to wait for the eternal reward (Heb 11:24-26).

The circumstances of Moses’ childhood and teenage years collaborated to make him feel “different” from others. His two mothers had high expectations for him. As he grew up, the understanding of his life’s purpose heightened his uniqueness. Each demonstration of Yahweh’s power showed His superiority over the Egyptian pantheon. The royal priesthood of the Egyptian society gave Moses a strong basis for the covenant he would receive from the Lord. God called the Israelites from slavery to become

“Yahweh’s royal priests, carrying out his will and serving as his ambassadors.”¹ “This faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin.”²

Moses’ Call to Equip

Moses was elected to a very special mission. The circumstances related to his birth and miraculous protection from the Pharaoh’s fury gave his parents enough reason to hope he would be the deliverer. His childhood and personal development opportunities prepared him to fulfill his call.

Moses committed the mistake of trying to do on his own what God promised to do. “In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do. It was not God’s will to deliver His people by warfare, as Moses thought, but by His own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to Him alone. Yet even this rash act was overruled by God to accomplish His purposes.”³

After a failing act to start his deliverance ministry, for the second time he was in danger with Pharaoh. He ran away to the desert and that experience became his four long decades of graduate school. As a shepherd leader, he demonstrated accountability and stewardship, as opposed to the Egyptian style of leadership-authoritarian power. “The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of

¹McNeal, 6.
²White, 246.
³Ibid., 247.
Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience. Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn.

Moses’ Equipping School

The desert school gave Moses a different perspective in guidance and taught him indispensable lessons. Patience, observation to details, and wilderness survival techniques, helped shaped him to attend to another flock. By providing water, food, and safety for the sheep, he was equipping himself to become a shepherd leader. Through self-denial and pain, he developed the patience to hold his temper and his emotions.

Moses finally accepted a personal call for an imperative mission. The human element is always present to fulfill God’s work; but in order to receive God’s assistance, man has to realize his weakness and debility. In the wilderness, Moses was alone with God. The fact that a man feels his own weakness is at least an indication that he understands the magnitude of the task assigned to him. Fearful in the beginning, he accepted God’s commission. Thus, it started a personal relationship between a human being and a divine Being. A spiritual equiper has to be closer to God than at any other job today.

Moses’ equipping education included exposure to another culture and experience that impacted him profoundly, the Midianite culture. In the midst of this new culture Moses found the figure of Jethro, the most influential person in his midlife. The Midianite priest provided Moses with a wife and a job. Most probably, Jethro was very supportive to Moses’ call. During the time he went to Egypt to release the Israelite

\[1\text{White, 247.}\]
people, Moses’ father-in-law took care of his family. Back together at Sinai, Jethro not only brought his family and blessing, but also gave Moses some good management advice.

Moses’ Equipping Experience

The most challenging moment in Moses’ mission was not when he had to convince Pharaoh to let the people go, but when he had to handle the position of guiding a two to three million member church (Num 1:45-46 registers 603,550 men able to go forth to war, not including the elderly, the youth under twenty years old, and the women). How could he by himself help them to take care of their personal needs, handle conflict resolution, take care of his own family, and remain alive? “God had an answer for Moses and it came through Jethro, his father-in-law. You must find ‘capable, godly, honest men’ (Exod 18:21 TLB), Jethro said. Appoint them as ‘rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens’ (Exod 18:21).”¹ “In this way, nobody would oversee more than a few people, from the smallest leader to the greatest. Communication would flow from bottom to top, and commands could flow from top to bottom.”²

Jethro’s advice in Exodus chapter eighteen includes some benefits. First, Moses would be able to endure the pressures of his many responsibilities (verse 25). Second, he would be free to be the peoples’ representative before God (verse 19). As a result, there would be peace and harmony in the camp. Jethro was “a good planner.” He proposed a system that ensured quality of care, communication, and efficiency. “We declare Moses


wise for heeding his advice, which he could have ignored.\textsuperscript{1} To follow these instructions was not an easy task. The number of leaders needed for that kind of structure may have come close to 80,000.\textsuperscript{2} "This is the first explicit Scriptural mandate in the Old Testament for organizing God's people into groups."\textsuperscript{3} This had been a very complicated and energy taking work to select, to train, and to oversee thousands of assistants. However, God inspired Moses to follow His instructions and, as a result of this organizational structure, he became an effective leader, bringing his people to the Promise Land. "Delegation of authority is definitely part of the will of God."\textsuperscript{4}

God honored Moses, confirming his calling in various ways. Although chosen to be the instructor of the whole nation, this did not exclude him from receiving instruction. The advice Moses received from his father-in-law was accepted, bringing relief to Moses and establishing a more perfect order among the people.\textsuperscript{5} "God gave His approval to the suggestion of Jethro, that Moses should divide the entire new nation of Israel into groups of ten, not just to make Moses' work easier, but to make God more accessible to the people."\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1}Arnold, 35.
\textsuperscript{2}Kurt W. Johnson, \textit{Small Groups for the End-Time} (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1997), 50.
\textsuperscript{3}Cema, 19.
\textsuperscript{5}White, 307.
\textsuperscript{6}David Cox, \textit{Think Big, Think Small Groups} (England: Personal Ministries Department of the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1998), 15.
\end{flushright}
Moses' Equipping Challenges

Moses felt alienation among those he lived with and guided. His personal history gave him the feeling of not belonging to any of the cultures in which he had lived. This sentiment brought him even closer to God. It is important to remember that God can work through weakness. When Paul did not receive deliverance of the thorn in the flesh, the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

Equipping is a lonely job. Many who are unable to understand their own situation try "to plug the gap with more work, more attention, more power, and more . . . whatever. God desires to fill the heart spaces with himself." Moses faced what many fear the most, to be rejected by the people they are called to serve. More than any other biblical person, Moses seemed profoundly alienated from his headship constituency most of the time. He was never quite accepted by the Hebrews. Seeing that, Moses learned to get even closer to the Lord.

The kind of communion Moses developed with the Lord is one of a kind. The Lord spoke to him as a friend, face to face (Exod 33:11). Two times he spent forty days with the Lord; there is no other record of another mortal to ever experience that closeness with the Lord on earth. When he came down from the mountain, his face glowed even after he had left God's presence.

Yahweh revealed to Moses his master plan. God designated the children of Israel a "kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6). This is a huge promotion for a nation of slaves to become the Lord of the Universe's personal representatives on earth, from the bottom of

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1McNeal, 14.
society to the highest position of royal priests. Peter and John used the same figure (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10), and this concept will be studied closely later in this research.

Moses was the first one to receive this insight of the mission of God's people to the world. "Moses serves as the great archetype of the Deliverer. It is not enough to be delivered from something. The trick is to be delivered to something. At 40 years of age, Moses could have gotten the Israelites out to Egypt. Not until he was 120 years old could he deliver them to the banks of the Jordan. He could accomplish his call only by his constantly submitting to God's heart-shaping activity. And having gotten his people ready for their next chapter, Moses moved on to his. The graduation ceremony at Nebo was attended by an Audience of One."

**Insights from Paul**

No other man took the call for equipping more seriously than Paul. "God had prepared Saul to be the first cross-cultural missionary for the very movement he was intent on destroying. God secured the influences of three cultures in the heart-shaping of the apostle. Paul would need to be acquainted with Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures in order to carry out his life assignment."

Diversity brings opportunity and challenges for ministry. The first time we see cultural differences in the church is in Acts 6:1, when a murmuring arose between the Grecians and the Hebrews. A few years later we can identify with the important decisions taken at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). At that Council the church became culturally

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1McNeal, 20.
2Ibid., 37.
relevant to the new groups that were evangelized. As we can notice in different parts of
the world today, churches grow faster when they are controlled by local leadership. As
Russell Burrill stated, “The culturally relevant church will not change the basic message
of Scripture or Adventism, but it will package that message in a way that is meaningful to
the people it is trying to reach.”¹

Paul was a great promoter of cultural relevance, as he tried to “become all things
to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22). However, there
are two perils when we try to be sensitive to cultural differences. The first is to change
our message. We do not have to, and we should not. The second is not to change our
methods. If this happens, we become irrelevant with no influence on the society, as if we
were “Adventist Amish.”²

The incarnation of Jesus gave the ultimate example of God’s commitment to
reach human beings in their own circumstances. In the same way, Paul’s strategy was to
make the gospel culturally relevant to every group he attempted to reach. He was able to
vary his methodology without changing his message. He adapted his presentations to
meet the minds of people in their own culture. He wrote that it requires considerable
sacrifice to reach out those who are different, and this is one of the reasons we have not
succeeded as much as we could have.

Jon Paulien speaks about the struggle of “Adventism,” to keep and share the faith
in a secular society. He also identifies the task of reaching secular people with the gospel

¹Russell Burrill, Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research
Center, 1996), 55.

²Ron Gladden, Plant the Future: So Many Churches, Why Plant More? (Silver Spring, MD:
Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 15.
as the most urgent challenge facing the church today.\footnote{Jon Paulien, \textit{Present Truth in the Real World} (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993).} Whatever strategy that did not compromise the everlasting gospel could and should be used in order to share the truth.

Paul’s Call to Equip

Saul’s father, apparently a man of some means, had become a Roman citizen before Saul’s birth. Being brought up in Tarsus, Saul also learned to speak, read, and write in Greek, the international language of commerce in the first century. His father was also a Pharisee, providing Saul the religious environment and later on giving him the opportunity to learn in Jerusalem under the great rabbi Gamaliel.

After his encounter with Jesus, Paul lost his sight, but acquired a new vision for his life. He experienced a new dimension of spiritual growth. The restoration of physical sight would come only after an internal vision had begun to come into focus. Paul’s healing and anointing through a human instrument in the person of Ananias, introduced to Paul a new spiritual reality—grace.

The rest of his life is defined by his call, which means a life of intentionality in obedience to the mission that was received from God. The apostle saw the call as integral to his relationship with God. He could not separate the obedience to his call and the joyful experience of developing his relationship with the Master. The long time spent in the wilderness gave Paul the opportunity to develop a close communion with God.
was using again the school of the desert bringing “into focus the elements of Paul’s mission and his message.”

In every ministry assignment, God is preparing the worker for the next one. All equippers can identify themselves with Paul when criticized. Paul did not receive support from the Judaizers. He suffered persecution from the outsiders. He was also challenged inside the church. The same is true for every worker of God, being faithful over little prepares us to be given influence over much. Because Paul was faithful over little, he was eventually given influence over much.

Equipping and Spiritual Growth

The equipper has to experience the discipleship process of spiritual growth, the process of becoming like Christ. God wants us to grow up not just to grow older (Eph 4:15); we are not supposed to remain as children (Eph 4:14). Paul says, “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13).

Many Christians today have a wrong understanding of the apostle’s words. “This verse shows two parts of spiritual growth: work out and work in. The work out is your responsibility, and the work in is God’s role. Spiritual growth is a collaborative effort between you and the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit works with us, not just in us. This verse, written to believers, is not about how to be saved, but how to grow. It does not say work

\(^1\)McNeal, 44.
for your salvation, because you can’t add anything to what Jesus already did.”¹ A clear perception of this truth can provide assurance of salvation and hope for spiritual growth to become like Jesus.

To every one the Master has given a work, to announce His salvation and His soon return. Even though there are a variety of ways to share the truth, witnessing is everyone’s responsibility. “All must lift the cross and in modesty, meekness, and lowliness of mind take up their God-given duties, engaging in personal effort for those around them who need help and light. All who accept these duties will have a rich and varied experience . . . preserving efforts to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in them both will and to do of His good pleasure.”²

The gifts of the Spirit empower the church to mature the disciples. “This refers not so much to the individual as to the church, which is to come to a state of organic unity, completeness, and maturity as contrasted with the childish immaturity (suggested in Eph 4:14). For both the individual and the church, likeness to Christ is the goal to be reached (Rom 8:29). The refusal to grow is a greater sin than immaturity itself, and is the outcome of self-satisfaction and low ideals. . . . Christ alone has the full stature and is the complete man, the perfect man. We are called upon to participate in that nature, and all the offices of the church and the graces of the Spirit are given to that end.”³

¹Warren, 180-181.

²Ellen G. White, To Be Like Jesus (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004), 260.

Equipping and Reproduction

Equipping in the discipleship context is intrinsically related to ministry reproduction. As McNeal presents, Paul is one of the best examples of the principle:

Paul was almost always in the company of ministry colleagues. His journeys and itinerant preaching efforts not only planted and nurtured churches but also created a phenomenal ministry team. Silas, Luke, Timothy, Titus, and John Mark are just a few. . . . Paul took the team approach very seriously. For him, practicing team-work went way beyond meeting a need for companionship; it represented a key piece in his strategy for spreading the faith. The apostle told Timothy to make sure that he passed along to others the things he was learning himself (2 Tim 2:2). Paul knew that ministry reproduction would be necessary for the movement to survive. . . . He had been converted to genuine knowledge of God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. He came to understand that one’s relationship with Jesus Christ is lived out in the relationships with other believers.¹

The apostle Paul adds to the list of spiritual gifts that of the pastor, “Why is it that he gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God’s people will be equipped to do better work for him, building up the Church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity” (Eph 4:12 LB).

As Wagner defined, equipper is a “leader who actively sets goals for a congregation according to the will of God, obtains goal ownership from the people, and sees that each church member is properly motivated and equipped to do his or her part in accomplishing the goals. . . . The best possible combination for growth occurs when the pastor concentrates on leading and equipping and the people concentrate on ministering. I believe that is what Eph 4:12 means when it describes the role of leaders ‘to prepare God’s people for works of service.’”²

¹McNeal, 48.

²C. Peter Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 131-133.
The pastoral role in the context of Eph 4 is to equip the saints for their ministry. Paul does not present the pastor as a performer of ministry, but as a trainer of ministers. This gives the idea of the pastor as a rancher rather than a shepherd. As described by Wagner, the main difference between the shepherd and the rancher is “who takes care of the sheep. The shepherd must do it personally; the rancher delegates the pastoral care to others.” The members of the church should receive high quality pastoral care, but not necessarily directly from the pastor. Wagner says there are three prominent symbols of the shepherd mode: home visitation, hospital visitation, and personal counseling. The church people should not be expected to get all of that from the pastor, and still appreciate his leadership. They should be taught to know that the pastor is ultimately responsible for seeing to the excellent care that they are receiving by a pastoral care team.

Equipping for Service

One of the most important Bible text about equipping is Eph 4:12. The New International Version states that spiritual gifts are given “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built.” In the previous verses Paul describes the incarnation and ascension of Jesus as the assurance of the divine gift to men to give them the ability to accomplish this important task. Some of the gifts are mentioned in order to exemplify how the saints can be “perfected” for Christian service.

The word “prepare” (NIV) or “perfecting” (KJV) is the translation of katartismos. It is also translated as “equipping,” meaning “a perfectly adjusted adaptation; complete

1Burrill, Revolution, 47.


3Ibid.
qualification for a specific purpose.”¹ This word was used by Paul to describe his desire that the brethren have been “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10). Jesus used this word to describe the disciple “that is perfect shall be as his master” (Luke 6:40). “The verb katartizo is used in Matt 4:21 for the mending of nets, in Gal 6:1 for the restoring of those overtaken in a fault. The gifts were for the purpose of ‘mending’ the saints and uniting them. The ‘perfecting’ involves, as the context suggests, an ordered ministry and government of the church.”²

This is the work Jesus wants to do in us: to repair, to restore, to prepare us for a specific purpose. As Paul affirmed, his prayer was “for your perfection” (2 Cor 13:9 NIV), a complete adjustment, and completeness of character. “The edification of believers is another mission or function of the church. God, explains Paul, gave to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors (Eph 4:11) for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry (verses 12, 13).”³ Equipping can be understood as our primary goal in the ministry to make disciples.

The work of equipping is an intimate cooperation of the divine-human in ministry. To give empowerment for the task, the Spirit added special gifts to individual believers (Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:4–11, 27–31; Eph 4:11). “These charismata, or gifts of grace, are not to be confused with the Christian virtues described as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23). They are apportioned by the Spirit to whom and as He wills (1 Cor 12:11).

¹Moulton, 220.

²Perfecting” [Eph 4:12], SDABC, 6:1023.

They are intended to strengthen the believers in their faith and to enable them to perform their ministry in the church or among unbelievers.”

The work of the ministries or services includes “all types of ministry and serving within the church. The officers of the church are not to lord it over the flock but are to consider themselves servants. This is the immediate purpose of the gift.” As a result, the church is to be built up numerically and in character.

God has given His people the gift of spiritual ministries to equip them for the work of the ministry that has been given to them. “The followers of Jesus today are to seek these gifts just as earnestly as the Corinthians sought for them at Paul’s urging (1 Cor 14:1). These gifts, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will (1) equip church members for the work of ministry including winning people to Jesus, (2) build up the body of Christ, (3) lead into the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, (4) develop spiritual maturity in Jesus, and (5) sustain spiritual growth toward the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:11-13).”

All the endowments of power to the church are imparted by the Holy Spirit, who works in and through the believers. Considering that God controls all these gifts, they must function in perfect harmony with His overall plan for the finishing of His work on earth. We can be sure that “all who surrender to Christ and become members of His church on earth, no matter what their nationality or social or economic status or

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intellectual attainments, have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will equip them with ability to perform their Christian duties with a high degree of effectiveness.”¹

At the end of the partial list of gifts presented by Paul (Eph 4:12) the phrase “pastors and teachers” gives the idea that the apostle “intends to speak of two phases of one office. Any effective ministry is a teaching ministry. The pastoral function of the ministry is presented in John 21:16; Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Pet 5:2, 3; etc., and the teaching aspect in Acts 13:1; Rom 12:7; 1 Tim 3:2, and many other passages. The Master Himself was the great pastor-teacher, shepherding the flock and teaching them.”²

“In the healthiest of churches, the pastor is doing the leading while the lay people are doing the ministry.”³ And this is the best way of mobilizing the laity, helping them to discover, develop, and use their spiritual gifts. Our system of election to choose officers in the SDA church today “seems to foster putting people into ‘jobs’ rather than ‘ministries’. And these jobs tend to fulfill the needs of the institution rather than those of the individual.”⁴

This is the reason Ellen G. White says, “The best help that ministers can give the members of our churches is not sermonizing, but planning work for them. Give each one something to do for others. Help all to see that as receivers of the grace of Christ they are under obligation to work for Him. And let all be taught how to work. Especially should those who are newly come to the faith be educated to become laborers together with

¹“Every man,” SDABC, 6:772.
²“Pastors and teachers,” SDABC, 6:1023.
³Wagner, Church Planting, 117.
⁴Burrill, Revolution, 87.
God."¹ And the “greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers.”²

Jesus did His sacrifice for us dying on the cross; we do our sacrifice living for Him, a life of self-denying service. Burrill writes regarding this:

The sacrifice that Christians are called to offer is not bulls, goats, and sheep, but their bodies, which they give in loving ministry for the Master. Paul maintains that this is their reasonable service. According to Paul and Peter, ministry is not only the right and privilege of every New Testament believer, it is a natural result of being a Christian. The New Testament church could not even imagine a Christian who was not involved in ministry. . . . It was impossible for New Testament believers not to be involved in meaningful ministry in harmony with their spiritual gifts. In fact, the whole context of Romans 12 is a discussion of spiritual gifts. The involvement of every member in ministry in harmony with their spiritual gifts was the norm for the first-century church, and this likewise must become the norm of God’s last-day church.³

The apostle Paul gives the theological foundation for equipping in small groups through the message written to the early church (Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12). He presents fellowship as a vital part of Jesus’ ministry, and small groups as the very place where the community among the disciples should take place. Therefore, small groups should not be a program, but the groundwork of the church (see appendix C: Small Groups Ministries).

Other than Jesus, Paul is the only one who had more influence on the formation of the Christian church, planting the majority of churches in Asia, and writing most of the New Testament. Following Jesus’ instructions to go two by two, he began his missionary journeys along with other disciples. “Paul and his company did not seek simply to


²Ibid., 7:19.

disciple individuals but continually sought to reach the oikos\(^1\) of those they evangelized. The early church practiced team ministry. . . . This was no accident. It was a deliberate strategy of Paul in obedience to the model of Christ.\(^2\)

**Insights from Peter**

Peter repeats the need of continuous growth for the Christian. Spiritual growth is a basic step to equip for ministry. Coming close to the living stone, Christians become lively stones that fulfill God’s purpose as a “spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:2-5). Being equipped by spiritual growth is illustrated by Peter’s analogy of the Master Builder working in us and through us, as living stones, “so that He may build us up into His spiritual edifice to advance His kingdom.”\(^3\) Peter presents Christ as a “living stone” (1 Pet 2:4), and also applies the same term to us (verse 5). When we submit ourselves to Jesus’ equipping process, not only does personal spiritual growth occur, but also the building up of His body.

During the Old Testament time, the priest performed a twofold activity that the people were unable to perform for themselves. He was the intermediary between God and his people, and he ministered for them.\(^4\) However, in the New Testament the believer has

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\(^1\)The Greek word *oikos* means household. As used in Mark 5:19, it literally means “to those of you.” *SDABC*, 5:606.


the privilege to be his own priest. Direct access to the throne of the Almighty is made possible by Jesus Christ’s “blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” (Rev 1:5-6; 5:9-10).

There are some implications of “every member a priest.” First, every believer has direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). Second, as the priest of the Old Testament, every Christian is a minister and therefore has a ministry to perform. According to this, there is no difference in status between clergy and laity. However, they have a functional difference. “The function of the laity, biblically, is the performance of ministry. Whenever people are performing ministry, they are acting in the capacity of laity—even if they belong to the clergy.”¹

The idea of a kingdom of priests was first presented by Moses immediately after he received his father-in-law’s advice to organize the people into groups, sharing his leadership. God gave him this message, “If ye obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exod 19:5-6). For the last two decades, more and more church pastors have been taught and convinced “that the laity must become involved in the ministry of the church.”² Many have been teaching and preaching in their own churches about this topic. However, when it comes to practice, it seems as if it is easier to do ministry, than equip the church members.

¹Burrill, Revolution, 26-27.

²Monte Sahlin, Sharing Our Faith With Friends Without Losing Either (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990), 175.
In his book *Sharing Our Faith With Friends Without Losing Either*, Monte Sahlin presents some very interesting suggestions of an adequate program to mobilize laity for ministry. Some essential elements of a program using volunteers are: sense of community; chance for personal growth, participation of volunteers in decision-making; choosing from involvement alternatives related to individual interests and needs; an explicit contract regarding time and level of commitment; opportunity to help set goals; regular mechanisms of affirmation and feedback; and training activities.¹

The Holy Spirit is the agent to impress the heart with divine truths. Then “new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to co-operate with God. . . . Many of the believers to whom Peter addressed his letters, were living in the midst of heathen, and much depended on their remaining true to the high calling of their profession. The apostle urged upon them their privileges as followers of Christ Jesus. Ye are a chosen generation, he wrote, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”²

All Christians belong to the “holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5 NIV). The royal priesthood is called to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9 NIV). In the NT the church does not have a priesthood, the church is a priesthood.³ “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness

¹Sahlin, 179.
and fear” (1 Pet 3:15). “According to Peter, then, there is no such thing as a church member who is not a disciple. It comes with the package! When you are born again, you are also designated a disciple. . . . The only way you cannot be a disciple is to openly refuse to be one.”

Peter’s Call to Equip

Jesus called Peter for life-committed service. On His third appearance to the disciples after His resurrection, Jesus gave Peter an outstanding opportunity to reaffirm his call to ministry. Jesus gave the disciples time to relax and eat after an extenuated night of fishing. He then approached Peter, taking him apart from the others, and asked him, “Lovest thou me?” Peter answered Jesus’ question using a different Greek word for “love,” phileo. Even though these two words are used synonymously (John 14:23 and 16:27), they are at times distinguished: agapao refers to a higher form of love, a love controlled by principle rather than emotion; phileo, to spontaneous, emotional love.

The work of equipping is a personal task. Jesus not only preached to the multitudes, but He also spent time on personal interviews. “If one entering upon this work chooses the least self-sacrificing part, contenting himself with preaching, and leaving the work of personal ministry for someone else, his labors will not be acceptable to God. Souls for whom Christ died are perishing for want of well-directed, personal

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labor; and he has mistaken his calling who, entering upon the ministry, is unwilling to do the personal work that the care of the flock demands.\(^1\)

In the first two questions, Jesus used *agapaô*, and Peter answered with *phileô*. The last time, Jesus used *phileo*, and Peter replied with *phileô*. “If the two words are to be distinguished, which intent cannot be determined with certainty, the following interpretation is possible: Jesus asked Peter twice whether he loved Him with the higher form of love (*agapaô*). Peter, however, admitted no more than common friendship. . . . The third time Jesus used the word Peter had twice employed and asked him whether he really loved Him as a friend (*phileo*), which the apostle had already twice admitted.”\(^2\)

Leon Morris states, “There is no reason, on the grounds of Johannine usage, for seeing a difference in meaning between the two verbs. . . . Peter and Jesus would be referring to the same thing.”\(^3\)

Jesus’ triple commission reinstates Peter in ministry. Jesus called Peter to feed His lambs and to feed His sheep. Peter understood this analogy and later on he compared to the “elders of the church to shepherds and those under their charge to a flock whom the elders were to feed (1 Pet 5:1-4). Ministers of God are shepherds serving under the leadership of the Chief Shepherd. . . . If the ‘lambs’ were those new in the faith, ‘sheep’ would refer to the flock generally. Despite his failure, Peter was not to be deprived of his

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call to be a ‘fisher’ of men (Luke 5:10).”¹ Jesus’ final commission combines the verb from the first form with the noun from the second form, confirming the need to authenticate the call. “Peter has been commissioned to tend the flock of Christ . . . either way there is a commission to Peter to engage in pastoral duties.”²

Jesus’ words “more than these” may be interpreted in different ways. It can be a reference to the boat and fishing gear, which symbolize a whole way of living; since Jesus called them more than three years before to become “fishers of men.” Peter’s idea to go fishing (John 21:3) was a kind of denial of his call to ministry. It can be a question of his love for the Master above all the friendship of his fellows. It can also be a reference to the other disciples, since Peter had stated before, “Even if all the others reject you, I never will . . . even if I have to die with you, I will never say I don’t know you” (Matt 26:33, 35 CEV). Whatever way we take these words “more than these,” they were a direct challenge to his love and commitment to the Master.

Undoubtedly, this passage has a parallel to Peter’s three times denying the Lord. Peter was grieved because Jesus questioned his love for Him three times. He was questioning his sincerity and ability to keep his commitment; it was probably a reference to Peter three denials. He denied his Master three times, now he had the opportunity to confess Him three times. “This triple affirmation, accompanied as it was by a triple commission from Jesus, must have had the effect of giving an almost official sanction to his restoration to his rightful place of leadership.”³

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¹“Feed my lambs” [John 21:15], *SDABC*, 5:1072.
²Morris, 771.
³Ibid., 767.
Three times Peter denied the Lord, three times he affirmed his love for Him, and three times he was commissioned to take care of the flock. “Whatever had been the mistakes of the past, Jesus is restoring Peter to a place of trust. It is further worth noting that the one thing about which Jesus questioned Peter prior to commissioning him to tend the flock was love. This is the basic qualification for Christian service. Other qualities may be desirable, but love is completely indispensable (1 Cor 13:1-3).”¹ This is the essential qualification, . . . without the love of Christ in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure.²

Peter finally said, “Lord, thou knowest all things,” showing humility. The arrogance was gone, the self confidence disappeared. He recognized the all-seeing God that knows the innermost secrets of someone’s heart. Peter had shown repentance and love. He could now be entrusted with the flock. He was now able to work for the Master, even die for Him. His future sacrifice would bring honor to God (John 21:19). Peter was ready to follow Jesus. Dying a martyr’s death, he would testify of the power of the gospel, “Don’t be ashamed to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God that you belong to him (1 Pet 4:16). After all, God chose you to suffer as you follow in the footsteps of Christ, who set an example by suffering for you” (1 Pet 2:21). Before Peter’s feet slipped, he had not the spirit of meekness required to feed the lambs; but after he became sensible

¹Morris, 772.
of his own weakness, he knew just how to reach the erring and fallen; he could come
close to their side in tender sympathy, and could help them.”¹

Throughout his ministry Peter presented himself faithful to his call. “It was after
Peter had been led to self-renunciation and entire reliance upon divine power, that he
received his call to act as an undershepherd. Christ had said to Peter before his denial of
Him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). “Remembering
his own weakness and failure, he was to deal with the sheep and lambs committed to his
care as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him. . . . By every means within his power he
sought to educate the believers for active service. His godly example and untiring activity
inspired many young men of promise to give themselves wholly to the work of the
ministry.”²

Later in his equipping ministry, the apostle addressed the church leaders about
their responsibilities as undershepherds of Christ’s flock:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by
constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being
lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief
Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. . . .
Those who occupy the position of undershepherds are to exercise a watchful diligence
over the Lord’s flock. This is not to be a dictatorial vigilance, but one that tends to
encourage and strengthen and uplift. Ministry means more than sermonizing; it means
earnest, personal labor. The church on earth is composed of erring men and women,
who need patient, painstaking effort that they may be trained and disciplined to work
with acceptance in this life, and in the future life to be crowned with glory and
immortality. Pastors are needed—faithful shepherds—who will not flatter God’s
people, nor treat them harshly, but who will feed them with the bread of life—men
who in their lives feel daily the converting power of the Holy Spirit and who cherish a
strong, unselfish love toward those for whom they labor.

¹Ellen G. White, Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists (Basel: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 121.

There is tactful work for the undershepherd to do as he is called to meet alienation, bitterness, envy, and jealousy in the church, and he will need to labor in the spirit of Christ to set things in order. Faithful warnings are to be given, sins rebuked, wrongs made right, not only by the minister’s work in the pulpit, but by personal labor.

Peter needed to take care of the flock. After receiving a revelation about his future, Peter was curious about John’s. Jesus took this opportunity to teach him another important lesson, making first things first. Jesus’ answer was a reproof to Peter; he “was not to become too anxious about his fellow men. His matter of concern was to follow his Lord. This does not mean that we should not have a loving interest in a brother’s welfare. But such solicitude must never take the place of keeping our eyes upon Jesus. Looking too intently upon our brother may lead us to fail where he fails.”

Expressing the danger of being too concerned about somebody else’s future, E. G. White says, “The spirit of the true shepherd is one of self-forgetfulness. He loses sight of self in order that he may work the works of God. By the preaching of the word and by personal ministry in the homes of the people, he learns their needs, their sorrows, their trials; and, co-operating with the great Burden Bearer, he shares their afflictions, comforts their distresses, relieves their soul hunger, and wins their hearts to God. In this work the minister is attended by the angels of heaven, and he himself is instructed and enlightened in the truth that maketh wise unto salvation.”

This prediction is followed by an invitation to follow Jesus. “There is possibly significance in the use of the present tense; ‘keep on following’ will be the force of it. Peter had followed Christ, but not continuously in the past. For the future he was to


2“If I will” [John 21:22], SDABC, 5:1072.

follow steadfastly in the ways of the Lord.”¹ Peter “had been restored to his place among the Twelve. His work had been appointed him; he was to feed the Lord's flock. Now, converted and accepted, he was not only to seek to save those without the fold, but was to be a shepherd of the sheep.”²

**Equipping for Ministry**

After using Peter’s example of learning through his trials and becoming a patient teacher, Ellen G. White describes a great mistake often made in beginning missionary work in new fields “in not calling into exercise all the talents that might be employed in the work. Sometimes those who have excellent ability make great mistakes when they begin to work; but are they to be dropped because of this? No, indeed. Let them be patiently, perseveringly educated and trained, and in nine cases out of ten they will become useful workers... In meekness and love teach them to bear responsibilities, and to labor for others.”³

Being equipped is not only the right and privilege of the New Testament believer, but also the natural way of living. It is the result of being a Christian. The understanding of this point will change the way some clergy motivate the laity. There is difficulty in getting more people involved in ministry because they have “viewed ministry as an activity rather than a way of life for the believer. As a result, the clergy dream up

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¹Morris, 773.
³White, *Historical Sketches*, 121.
programs to involve the laity"¹ that most of the times do not consider the different gifts in
the congregation. This results in frustrated pastors who feel that the church does not want
to be involved, and guilty members that feel they have to be involved but they do not feel
comfortable in this kind of approach. A gift-based ministry is indispensable for the
equipping process. Spiritual gifts discovered unleash an unknown potential for ministry
(see appendix C: Spiritual Gifts).

The New Testament model of church describes a clergy/lay team ministry. As
Burrill describes, “The main function of the church is to prepare the believer for
ministry,” and as it was in the early church “the laity were seen as the performers of
ministry and the clergy as the trainers and equippers of ministry.”² The clergy performs
ministry as part of the laity.

Ellen G. White states that the “best medicine you can give the church is not
preaching or sermonizing, but planning work for them. If set to work, the despondent
would soon forget their despondency, the weak would become strong, the ignorant
intelligent, and all would be prepared to present the truth as it is in Jesus. They would
find an unfailing helper in Him who has promised to save all who come unto Him.”³
"The pastor is not hired to perform ministry. That is not his function but the function of
the laity. . . . Yes the pastor is the shepherd, and yes he cares for the flock. However, his
care does not extend to performing ministry that the flock should be doing for
themselves. The shepherd’s job is to keep the sheep in shape so that they can produce

²Burrill, Radical Disciples, 29-30.
sheep. If the shepherd is really caring for the flock, he will be training his members for their ministry."

The mission of the Church is to announce salvation through Jesus Christ. In order to fulfill this goal, the primary function of the church is to train their ministers to reach out the world and call in new disciples for Jesus. "The Holy Spirit urges us to find a ministry whereby the gift can be used to serve others and attract them to Christ. Under this plan there is no hierarchy. Everyone is a minister performing some ministry for which he or she has been specially gifted.”

Equipping for a Mission

The theological teaching of the priesthood of all believers must be brought into practice (1 Pet 2:5). It is very interesting how the theme of the priesthood of all believers is accepted as "a central belief, it has rarely been a central fact. In reality, the church of Jesus Christ has primarily been a spectator sport since about the third century A.D." Lay ministry is much more than to give members a job the pastor feels they should do; it is "enabling members to accomplish the mission of the church, and at the same time to find personal fulfillment through the ministry in which they are involved."

The ministry of the laity will finish the work of God. "The work of God in the earth can never be finished until men and women comprising our church membership

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1Burrill, Revolution, 35.
2General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 67.
3Arnold, Starting Small Groups, 103.
4Burrill, Revolution, 90.
rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.”¹ The
difference between the clergy and the laity is not that one is full-time and the other part-
time. Both clergy and laity are involved in a full-time ministry, because this is their way of living the Christian life. This work will be completed when these groups, members, church officers, and clergy, get together and commit themselves to God’s work.

Peter says that the commitment to this mission is what gives us the right to be called people of God. Before that, we are not even considered a people. We are placed on earth to make a contribution. We are not created just to consume resources— to eat, breath, and take up space. Everything that takes place in our life has a special purpose. “It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. You are alive because God wanted to create you! The Bible says, the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.”²

God designed us to make a difference with our lives. Instead of trying to get the most out of life, we were created to add something back. God’s purpose for our life is called ministry or service. We were created to serve God. “God has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do” (Eph 2:10). We were saved to serve God. “It is he who saved us and chose us for his holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was his plan” (2 Tim 2:9). We are not saved by service, we are saved for service.

¹Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1901), 351-352.
²Warren, 22.
The word ministry has been misunderstood. We think about pastors, priests, and professional clergy, but God says every member of his family is a minister. In the Bible the words servant and minister are synonyms, as are service and ministry. The verb *diaconeo* means “to minister to, relieve, assist, or supply with the necessaries of life, provide the means of living . . . a commission or ministry in the service of the Gospel.”

If you are a Christian, you are a minister, and when you are serving you are ministering. When Peter’s mother-in-law was healed by Jesus, “she arose and ministered to them” (Matt 8:15).

We are called to serve God, we are commanded to serve God; and this is a full-time Christian service. “We are only fully alive when we’re helping others. Jesus said, ‘If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live’” (Mark 8:35, Matt 10:39; 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33). This truth is so important that it is repeated five times in the Gospels. If you aren’t serving, you’re just existing, because life is meant for ministry. God wants you to learn to love and serve others unselfishly.”

Following Jesus’ example, baptism is not only a ceremony that confirms the cleansing of sins, but also the ordination to ministry. In the apostles’ practice of laying on of hands, they separate them to the ministry (Acts 8:14-17; 13:2, 3; 19:1-6; 1 Tim 4:14; Heb 6:1-2). Accomplishing our personal assignment is a privilege and a responsibility.

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1 Moulton, 92.
2 Warren, 232.
Fulfilling our mission is not only imperative, but natural. According to Jan Paulsen, “Mission is the primary reason for our being as a church.”¹

God uses His own agenda in the process of preparing the equippers. Moses had to wait forty years to facilitate the redemption of his people. Paul had to wait many years to be recognized in the Christian church. Peter received the Master’s call at Tiberias’ shore, but had to wait after His resurrection to be reaffirmed in his calling, and to receive empowerment at Pentecost. In the process of equipping these spiritual leaders, they “cooperated with the divine timetable.”²

The multifaceted process of equipping has to be developed in a close relation between the Master and the disciple. The disciple, empowered by the Holy Spirit receives the gifts and becomes an equipper to reach out to other disciples. Jesus calling His first disciples illustrates this collaborating project. “He ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach” (Mark 3:14). “He closely connected His disciples’ state of being to their state of doing.”³ The starting point of this process is being with the Master, being transformed by Him. Only after this personal experience, we can be equipped and witness for Him. In the course of action of being equipped we become able to equip others.


²McNeal, 57.

Insights from Jesus

Jesus is the most influential equipper of all times. How much we have to learn from our Master-Servant. He is the one who plays the role model of a servant. The Lord gave the instruction, “He that is chief, as he that doth serve”; not only by Christ’s words, but also by His own example, “I am among you as he that serveth” (Luke 22:26, 27).

The understanding of His divine-human nature is imperative. He was fully human. As Son of Man, He gives us the example of commitment to His mission and lifestyle according to His Father’s will. As Son of God, He gives us the power to live according to God’s law requirements and brings us back to the celestial family. “None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption. . . . He is our sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father’s throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man.”¹

“By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey. . . . Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”²


Jesus’ Method of Equipping

When we analyze Jesus’ ministry, we ponder about the strategic advantage of having a small group of people who would “be with him” (Mark 3:14). Among many other reasons, we can highlight two that seems to be most relevant. The first one is internalization. Disciples are the product of an intimate and personal relation. His kingdom should be founded in the hearts of a few, not on the superficial and instable feelings of many. Another reason to use a small group strategy is multiplication. “Just because Jesus focused much of his attention on a few does not mean that he did not want to reach the multitudes... Jesus had enough vision to think small. Focusing did not limit his influence-it expanded it.”

As Robert Coleman described the heart of Jesus’ methodology, His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes but with men the multitudes would follow. “Contrary to what one might expect, as the ministry of Christ lengthened into the second and third years he gave increasingly more time to the chosen disciples, not less... He had to devote himself primarily to the task of developing some leaders who in turn could give this kind of personal attention to others.”

The socio-cultural components during Jesus’ time gave the origin of the first global village. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4). The Greek culture gave the world a common language, and the Romans the road system. During that time traditional religion had collapsed. The Jews had given the world

1Ogden, 20.
a major religious contribution, a monotheism that offered humans a chance to enjoy two extraordinary relationships, community with one another and a covenant relationship with the God of all creation. “Jesus reacted against this bankrupt religious culture. He tapped into people’s aspirations for a personal relationship with God. He again called attention to Israel’s mission by his vision of an expanding kingdom of God.”¹ This vision was long ago neglected by the Judaism.

Ellen G. White wrote about Israel’s mission many years ago:

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. Providence had directed the movements of nations, and the tide of human impulse and influence, until the world was ripe for the coming of the Deliverer. The nations were united under one government. One language was widely spoken, and was everywhere recognized as the language of literature. From all lands the Jews of the dispersion gathered to Jerusalem to the annual feasts. As these returned to the places of their sojourn, they could spread throughout the world the tidings of the Messiah’s coming. . . . Among the Jews there were yet steadfast souls, descendants of that holy line through whom a knowledge of God had been preserved. These still looked for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers.²

Jesus worked in community. As the coach of the disciples, He developed a learning community. We do not know much about the Bethany family, but they became a special support team for the Lord. Jesus also had a constant connection with the Father. His power was the result of His communion, and whatever circumstance He faced, He was willing to submit to the Father’s will because He knew the Father loved Him completely.

Some of the differences between Jesus and other religious leaders of His time are still a challenge today. First, “God is interested more in relationship than in mere

¹McNeal, 54.
²White, Desire of Ages, 32-34.
religious observance. Second, God is on a redemptive mission, and those who do not join Him disqualify themselves as his true followers. Third, God’s basic disposition toward human beings is more informed by love than by law. Fourth, the kingdom of God will not be ushered in by people being good. The gospel is not about being good. It is about grace. People enter the kingdom of God when their hearts are captured by the heart of God. Then, transformed from the inside out, they become salt and light to help the world taste and see that God is good.”¹

The Great Commission

All four Gospels confirm that Jesus' followers are to share the good news through the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit supernaturally enables the church to accomplish its mission to reach the world for Christ. We can never divorce the Holy Spirit from the mission of the church. This was the whole reason for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit... Note that the concern of Jesus was not just the fulfillment of mission, but also the reception of the Holy Spirit’s power to enable the church to accomplish that mission.”²

The Great Commission is repeated five times in the Bible: Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21-23; and Acts 1:8. Of these texts, the most basic for understanding strategy components is Matt 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son

¹McNeal, 69.
²Burrill, Revolution, 14.
and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."

Even though many other translations repeat the verb "teaching" twice, Matthew reported the Great Commission using two distinctive Greek words. The first is better translated as "make disciples," the root of the word *matetéusate* means to learn, to be taught, to learn by practice or experience.\(^1\) The second, *didáskontes*, more commonly translated as "teaching" means to teach or speak in a public assembly;\(^2\) it is all but universally used, occurring 96 out of 104 times.\(^3\)

Considering the four verbs in the Great Commission: "go," "make disciples," "baptize," and "teach;" "three of the verbs are participles or helping verbs and only one is imperative—the command verb. The one imperative is to make disciples. This, then, is the goal of the Great Commission. Going, baptizing, and teaching are the helping verbs or the means toward the end of making disciples. This is not to say that going, baptizing, and teaching are unimportant. Disciples cannot be made without doing these things, so they have somewhat an imperative flavor also. But none of them is the goal of the Great Commission. Making disciples is."\(^4\)

It is boldly remarked by the way the Master's command is registered, being the first verb "make disciples," the only verb in the passage recorded in the imperative tense. According to Mark Finley, "The focus of the church is not on baptism. . . . The Great

\(^1\)Moulton, 257.

\(^2\)Ibid., 98.


\(^4\)Wagner, *Strategies*, 50.
Commission is 'Go and make disciples,' and it includes much more than baptism. Disciplemaking is the development of a faith-filled group of people who are praying, Christians, who are daily growing in grace, studying God's Word, worshipping with His people, and witnessing to the glory of His Name".

The Great Commission rests on the authority of Christ. Frederic Bruner (as cited in Burrill, Radical Disciples, pages 11-12) refers to five alls that form the Great Commission, all authority, all nations, into the name (of all of God), all that I commanded you, with you all the days. No wonder that has given the name of great to this commission. "In fact, the text actually indicates that the commission is given to doubting disciples (Matt 28:17). . . . It is through His authority alone that this command can be accomplished."

Jesus challenges His followers to go, and make disciples. "God requires His people to shine as lights in the world. It is not merely the ministers who are required to do this, but every disciple of Christ." The Great Commission has been given to every disciple of Christ. In accepting Christ, we accepted this commission. "The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. . . . The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory,


2Burrill, Radical Disciples, 12-15.

3White, Testimonies, 2:122.

4“Go ye” [Matthew 28:19], SDABC, 5:557.
but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power.\textsuperscript{1}

Ellen G. White also states, "Every true follower of Christ has a work to do. God has given to every man his work."\textsuperscript{2} As the apostles were waiting for Christ’s return, they "went forth with courage and hope, to do their Master's work with fidelity. They knew that the most acceptable way of waiting for Christ was to work for him. It was theirs to direct others to the coming Lord, and to teach them to wait patiently for his appearing. This work was given to every disciple of Christ."\textsuperscript{3}

The Great Commission is God’s eternal purpose that all people everywhere have the opportunity to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus states, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18). In spite of some similarities between Jesus and other leaders that were removed from their people by their death, Jesus would live on in an exalted new position from which He would continue to impact His followers. He promised something never done by any other leader–His continued presence: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20 NIV).

The final component of the commission is the assurance of His presence—that He will be with them in their mission. Similarly, an emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s presence with the disciples to accomplish the mission can be found.

\textsuperscript{1}White, \textit{Desire of Ages}, 822-826.


\textsuperscript{3}Ellen G. White, \textit{The Spirit of Prophecy} (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1969), 3:263.
The command of Jesus is radically different from the Old Testament paradigm—we are called to go into all the world and make disciples. . . . Some have suggested that the emphasis should be on making disciples rather than on going . . . our ultimate goal in the Great Commission is to make disciples. However, the church cannot content itself simply to sit back and try to nurture people into being disciples. The call of Jesus is unmistakable: the church is to go, and in the process of going, is to make disciples. . . . Only an equal emphasis on all three works—discipleship, baptism, and teaching—can fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord.1

The gospel according to Matthew finishes with a claim (v. 18), a great commission (v. 19), and a great promise (v. 20). All Authority means absolute right to appoint to workforce: from that fact comes the great commission. It means the right to call for obedience—because of love poured in both earth and heaven. "Make disciples is the method, baptizing and teaching being the components of the main task. . . . But ‘disciple’ as a verb (mateteusate) is still the central word. Beyond all forms and all speech, life itself is the best evidence of the authority of Christ. Mission stations have continued to live the faith even when some edict has silenced their voice.”2

Another four statements expand the Great Commission activity of making disciples. "In Mark 16:15-16 preaching is added. Luke 24:47-48 adds witnessing. John 20:21-23 adds sending and forgiving sins. Acts 1:8 brings up witnessing again and gives the geographical scope. Many attempts at planning strategies for evangelism and missions break down at precisely this point. They take only a partial look at the Great Commission and conclude that it is fulfilled by preaching or by witnessing or by sending

1Burrill, Radical Disciples, 18-21.

missionaries. All of these ministries are necessary, but the Great Commission is fulfilled only when disciples are made."

Luke placed Jesus' commission in the first chapter of Acts, providing crucial insight into the role of the Holy Spirit in the church. "In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . . You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:5-8 NIV). Jesus then commands, "Be my witnesses," echoing God's assertion through the prophet Isaiah that His people constantly witness about Him (Isa 43:10). Just as ancient Israel was to be God's witness to the nations, so Jesus' disciples would be witnesses first in Jerusalem, then to the entire world (Acts 1:8).

Jesus challenged His disciples to review their own discipleship process. For more than three years of learning and sharing, their activities had been restricted just to the Jewish people (Matt 10:5, 6). Now, Jesus is challenging them to a greater work. In Mark 16:15, Jesus sent His disciples to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (NIV), reference to the words of Isa 61:1-3. Their goal was to make disciples regardless of ethnicity or nationality, and to invite them to become His followers.

In John's gospel, Jesus directs His command to Peter (John 21:15-17). Jesus challenges His followers to care for each other. People receive the call to take care of each other, as the shepherd takes care of the sheep, feeding, protecting, and supporting the flock, while also proclaiming the gospel to those who do not yet believe.

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¹Wagner, Strategies, 50-51.
The Power to Equip

The power for equipping rests in the authority of Jesus. “All authority has been given to Jesus, although He is not yet exercising all of it (see Phil 2:9-11; Heb 2:5-9; 10:12, 13; Rev 3:21). He will manifest this power when He returns in all His glory (Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 15:27, 28; Eph 1:10). The word authority normally refers to delegated authority (as in Matt 8:9; 9:6, 8; 10:1; 21:23, 24, 27). The Father would give this authority to the Son (Phil 2:9-11).”

There are two common Greek words translated as power. The first one is δύναμις (dunamis), meaning power and strength found in the New Testament 120 times. Jesus reproached the Sadducees saying, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt 22:29). In the parable of the talents He said the servants received “according to his own ability” (Matt 25:15). This word is also used to describe Jesus and God’s strength in the book of Revelation (1:6, 4:11). Later John describes the voice of thousands of thousands, many angels, the living creatures, and the elders around the throne saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev 5:12). This is the vindication of the power God showed when He cast down the accuser from heaven (Rev 12:10).

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2Moulton, 107.
3Howell, 117.
The second Greek word translated into power is ἐξουσία (exousia) meaning power, authority, dominion, and jurisdiction;¹ found 103 times in the New Testament,² most of the times translated as power. It means freedom to act, authority, and delegated power. According to Rodrigues, even though the terms authority and power are not radically differentiated in the Bible, exousia basically means “freedom of choice, bearer of authority.”³ Jesus taught with authority (Matt 7:29; 9:6), and He gave it to His disciples (10:1). After the resurrection, Jesus said He received all authority (28:18). John describes those who accept Him as their personal Savior, receiving the right to become children of God (1:12). In the New Earth, the redeemed may have exousia to the tree of life (Rev 22:14).

Considering the question asked by the disciples, “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), they were still concerned about the restoration of an earthly kingdom. In spite of the profound desire of the Adventists to see God’s work finished, they must see a drastic change in the way they do church. They must pray and be prepared for the Holy Spirit to use them in finishing the work. “There must be action as well as prayer to restore the church to its biblical base, with laity and clergy working together as a team.”⁴

¹Moulton, 146.
²Howell, 118.
Equipping the laity is an indispensable component of the process of fulfilling the mission of the church. Referring to this, Ellen G. White says “the work of God in the earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.”¹ It describes the commitment of the laity: church members, clergy, and church officers working together.

The power, therefore, was a spiritual power, not a magical; an inspiration, not a possession; a power which was not to act as a blind fanatical force, but to manifest itself as a spirit of love and of a sound mind. After the power descended, the apostles were to be not less rational, but more; not mad, but sober-minded; not excited rhapsodists, but calm, clear, dignified expositors of divine truth, such as they appear in Luke’s history of their ministry. In a word, they were to be less like their past selves and more like their Master: no longer ignorant, childish, weak, carnal, but initiated in the mysteries of the kingdom, and habitually under the guidance of the Spirit of grace and holiness… The world is to be evangelized, not by men invested with ecclesiastical dignities and with parti-colored garments, but by men who have experienced the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and who are visibly endued with the power of wisdom, and love, and zeal.²

By definition, disciples became “fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). The perpetual multiplying of disciples reflects Christ’s strategy for reaching the remotest parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). This strategy, as Luke records, became the basis of the explosive growth of the early church: the number of disciples was multiplied (Acts 6:1); the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem to a great extent (Acts 6:7); and the churches were multiplied (Acts 9:31). “In this initial endowment of the Holy Spirit, we discover its purpose: empowerment for the accomplishment of mission.”³

¹White, Gospel Workers, 351-352.
³Burrill, Revolution, 16.
The Great Commission as the origin of mission in the Christian church is rooted in the authority of the risen Christ, who demands of His followers the making of disciples, the baptizing of disciples, and the continual teaching of disciples among all the nations. In order to accomplish that objective, He promised to be with the disciples in this missionary venture, and then fulfilled that promise by giving the Spirit at Pentecost. Thus, Pentecost is rooted in the Great Commission and serves to enable the church to fulfill this commission. The Great Commission is primary—Pentecost is secondary. The Holy Spirit is given for the accomplishment of the Great Commission. The Holy Spirit is not an end in Himself—He serves the risen Christ, enabling His body to fulfill the Great Commission.¹

Equipped to Witness

The authority given by Jesus through the Holy Spirit was given in order to equip His disciples as witnesses, not as attorneys or judges. “Christ expects every disciple to be a witness. Witnessing to the Good News is simply the expression of Christian discipleship. Acts 1:8 provides an important key to Christ’s expectations of his disciples. He said, ‘You shall be My witnesses.’ The Greek verb in this command is actually in the declarative form. Had Christ used the imperative verb to be, it would have implied a conscious activity or planned action. Rather, Christ meant that being his witness was to

¹Burrill, Radical Disciples, 21-22.
be a natural, assumed part of the disciple’s lifestyle. This normal dimension of the
disciple’s life is God’s secret to fulfilling the Great Commission!”

When we reflect about the Great Commission the Master gave the disciples, we
can think, what a burden of responsibility. Who will be able to fulfill this mission? What
a challenge. “Jesus knew the insufficiency of His instruments. Therefore, having invested
them with official authority, He proceeded to speak of an investment with another kind of
power, without which the official must be utterly ineffectual.”

The whole concept of equipping is based upon the reason the spiritual gifts are
received. According to Eph 4:12 (LB), these special abilities are given for the purpose
that “God’s people will be equipped to do better work for him.” The result from this
endowment will be the growth of the Church, in “strength and maturity.”

The equipping process involves natural and supernatural aspects. God is the
source, Jesus is the reason, and the Holy Spirit is the vehicle, through which the spiritual
gifts are given in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4). The natural
way to perform ministry is imperfect human beings, empowered by spiritual gifts,
reaching out to other imperfect human beings, and ministering to them.

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1 Win Arn and Charles Arn, The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

2 Bruce, 522.
CHAPTER 3

PROFILE OF THE NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

This chapter provides relevant information about the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, how the congregation was organized, its development, and impact among the Brazilian community in New York. The chapter also provides specific information about the growth patterns and church growth strategies experienced by the church in the past twenty years.

Brief History of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church

The following synopsis of the history of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church expands from its inception to recent years. It describes its development, organizational process, local leadership, and properties acquisitions.

Origin

The Portuguese speaking church in New York started in the early 1970s. According to Pastor J. Miranda, a group of Portuguese-speaking people from New York attended services in Newark, New Jersey, at the Slavian church. Among this group were

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1Joaquim Miranda, former pastor of the Newark Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by Gerson P. Santos, November 30, 2005, Massachusetts.
Walter Vsohoszlai, Ruth Silva Santos, Nilson Santos, Palmira Antunes, Ana Helena Coelho, Lidia Castilho, Noemia Santos, Aurelina Silva, and Elsy Marin. They frequently traveled from New York to New Jersey to worship at this congregation. As the group grew, they felt the need to start work in New York City, not only for their convenience, but also to reach out to the community.

Walter shared their burden with Elder M. S. Nigri, vice-president of the General Conference, who contacted Elder L. L. Reile, president of the Greater New York Conference. “Immediately things began to happen,” says Darrell Kenney. “Plans were made to establish a home for this wandering band.” He states that on October 23, the Portuguese people met in the Spanish Broadway church. Elder Conrad Visser and the members of the Spanish Broadway church, hearing of their need of quarters, invited this group to meet and organize in their church.1 The company was organized in Manhattan, on October 23, 1971. At that time, there were ten other different language groups presenting the Seventh-day Adventist message in the New York City area.

Elder L. L. Reile gave the address on the morning of the organization ceremony day. “He challenged the new church with the privilege of being lights that would warm the hearts of people and show the way to Christ. In these uncertain times, his plea was that they be lights that would be strong and steady, lights that would be clean and pure.”2 At the end of the message, twenty-eight people responded to the invitation to be part of the new church membership.

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2Ibid.
Development

Elder Reile was so impressed with the group that he decided to bring in a paid worker to support them. Pastor Miranda, who attended the organization ceremony with all the members of New Jersey, was invited by the Greater New York Conference to support the new congregation. He would preach in New Jersey Sabbath mornings and in New York in the afternoon. The meetings were held on the second floor of the Spanish Broadway Church, 161 West 93rd Street, Manhattan. After a while, they moved to the Golden Room of the Hebrew Adventist Congregation at 410 West 45th Street, Manhattan.

After a few months, Elder Reile met a young couple who had recently come from Brazil and were residing in Philadelphia. Davi and Evelise Bravo were working as literature evangelists. They were invited to come to New York and join the group. Just before they came, the new conference president, Elder Sanstrom, asked Pastor Merlin Kretschmar to attend to the church. The small group grew slowly, reaching about 50 members by the end of 1975.¹

In 1976, an old two-story building was purchased at 91-17 31st Avenue, East Elmhurst, close to LaGuardia Airport. After some cleaning and remodeling, the church building was inaugurated on September 11. During the summer of the same year Pastor Bravo left with his family to attend Andrews University. Subsequently Pastor José Siqueira became the new church pastor.

In the 1980s the church continued its growth, experiencing a strong outreach motivation from Pastor Ronaldo Cunha. He developed a friendly church that was active

¹Davi Bravo, former pastor of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by Gerson P. Santos, November 8, 2005, Riverside, California.
in the community through social activities and television programs. On February 2, 1986, a group of seven members started a branch Sabbath School in Manhattan where the attendance grew to over twenty by the next year. Unfortunately, the group did not last.

In 1985, the church building was sold for $190,000.00 and a new property was purchased at 39-49 29th Street, Long Island City, for the price of $269,000.00. The last meeting at the Elmhurst building was on January 25, the new church building was pre-inaugurated on February 1, 1986, with the attendance of all the members, several guests, and leaders of the conference.

On March 5, 1988, Pastor Joel Sarli came to pastor the congregation. He served from March 1988 to July 1990. Even though it was a short term, his pastoral leadership was very effective; it strengthened the unity among the members and motivated the church for outreach.

Recent Years

By the end of 1990, the church had an attendance that was close to 100. By 1995 the church changed its name from Brazilian Church to Queens Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church. During this decade, as the church grew, the main challenge was to build a bigger temple for the community. According to Pastor J. Iraja Silva, who

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1New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Minutes of Meetings of the Church Board” (East Elmhurst, NY, October 12, 1985).

2New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Minutes of Meetings of the Church Board” (Long Island City, NY, March 25, 1995).
pastored the church from October 1990 to November 2004, they needed “a bigger building to hold the meetings and to have a better facility to attract new people.”

Looking for a property, the church purchased a lot on Case Street, one block from Roosevelt Avenue, in Elmhurst, New York. After six months, the lot which was bought for $260,000 was sold for $500,000. The church purchased another lot of the same size for $200,000 at 35th Avenue, and started the building process with the remaining $300,000. After a few years of hard work, the first construction stage was finished at an expense of $480,000.

In order to continue the construction process, on April 15, 2000, an action was taken by the church to sell the old building in Long Island City. It was under contract for the first time in November 2001. Facing challenging times right after September 11, the buyer had problems with closing the deal. Another selling contract was signed, but again the closing was rescheduled twice, because the loan process was not finalized.

Finally, on April 5, 2003, the Bayanihan Seventh-day Adventist Church bought the property for $580,000.00. According to information provided by Eliana Alves, the last baptism was held in the building on April 12, and ten new people were added to church. On April 26, Pastor Silva preached his last sermon in that building, his topic, “Flourish wherever you are.” In May, they started meeting in a rented church at the corner of 47th Street and 31st Avenue, in Astoria. On June 28, they moved to a Methodist

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1 J. Iraja Silva, former pastor of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by Gerson P. Santos, October 26, 2005, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

2 Eliana Alves, clerk of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by Gerson P. Santos, December 23, 2005, Brooklyn, New York.
church at 81-10 35\textsuperscript{th} Avenue, in Jackson Heights. The next stage of the sanctuary was finished two years later at an expense of about $500,000.00.

**Growth of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Since its beginning, the Luso-Brazilian Church in New York experienced considerable growth. In this section the numeric, financial, and spiritual growth of the Portuguese-speaking church in New York will be described. Information was gathered from church and conference records, former pastors, and we also interviewed pioneers of the church.

**Numeric Growth**

The Luso-Brazilian Church in New York started at the end of 1971 as a small congregation of about 10 members. During the following three years the congregation grew to 17, 33, and 40 members respectively. By the end of 1976 the membership was around 50 members.

From 1981 to 1987, 39 people were baptized. And by the end of 1990, church records show 134 members, but attendance was around one hundred. The church reflected the mobility of the Brazilian community with several transfers in and out.

The next decade was a period of considerable growth, reaching almost 200 members by the year 2000. By that time the church had strong leadership with almost 50 percent of the members involved in some kind of church activity; almost half of the membership holding an office, and 10 to 15 percent doing outreach activity on a regular basis.
As discussed before, New York City faced difficult challenges after September 11, 2001. A small decline can be seen in membership from 2002 to 2005. In 2002 the church reached its peak with 358 members. In 2003, membership fell to 325. The next year the membership grew to 341 and at the end of 2005 there were 346 members (see table 1). This membership includes the two new congregations, Long Island and Westchester. Long Island was organized in 2002 with 30 members, and Westchester was organized in 2003 with 25 members.

**TABLE 1**

**NUMERIC GROWTH COMPARISON OF THE LUSO-BRAZILIAN CHURCH IN NEW YORK 1995-2005**

As shown in table 1, between 2003 and 2005 the Queens congregation experienced little or no growth. In the past ten years (1995-2005), the annual average growth was 13 new members\(^{2}\) (including baptisms and profession of faith), not

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\(^{2}\)Ibid.
considering transfers. This represents an annual rate of 5 percent. After 2001, church membership growth slowed down. By the end of 2004, attendance was 200 and membership was 266. The Westchester church has had the fastest growth in the last two years. It started with 25 members and reached 45 by 2004 (for a complete comparison between the growth rate of the three congregations see Appendix A).

Financial Growth

One variable that was used to evaluate the growth of the Queens Seventh-day Adventist Church was finance. Finance is always an important factor of the spiritual growth and development of a church. “The greatest praise that men can bring to God is to become consecrated channels through whom He can work. Time is rapidly passing into eternity. Let us not keep back from God that which is His own. Let us not refuse Him that which, though it cannot be given with merit, cannot be denied without ruin. He asks for a whole heart; give it to Him; it is His, both by creation and by redemption. He asks for your intellect; give it to Him; it is His.”

The last four years reflected in table 2 shows a negative growth in tithe. As was discussed before, New York City faced some financial challenges after September 11, 2001; hence, the reason for the decline in tithe, from $380,145.00 in 2002 to $356,673.00 in 2005. Appendix B provides a comparison between the tithe remittances of the different congregations.

1 White, Acts of the Apostles, 566.
TABLE 2

TITHE REMITTANCE OF THE LUSO-BRAZILIAN CHURCH
IN NEW YORK 2001-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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Spiritual Growth

The real growth of a church should not be evaluated just by considering numbers. It is very important to consider the spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is a slow process, but it is also the heart of the Christian faith. It is related to experiencing and knowing God. This is not achieving by reading a book, attending a seminar, or through a program. It only “comes through a relationship with a person. This is an intimate love relationship with God. Through this relationship, God reveals Him where He is already at work.”


When we grasp the eternal consequences of this process, we will pray fewer comfort me prayers (help me feel good) and more conform me prayers (use this to make me more like you).\(^1\)

The church is to be built up in both character and numbers. When Paul says perfect man, "this refers not so much to the individual as to the church, which is to come to a state of organic unity, completeness, and maturity as contrasted with the childish immaturity. . . . For both the individual and the church, likeness to Christ is the goal to be reached (Rom 8:29). The refusal to grow is a greater sin than immaturity itself, and is the outcome of self-satisfaction and low ideals. . . . Christ alone has the full stature and is the complete man, the perfect man. We are called upon to participate in that nature, and all the offices of the church and the graces of the Spirit are given to that end."\(^2\)

The Word of God challenges us not to remain as children (Eph 4:14-15). God wants us to grow up like Christ in everything. Our heavenly Father's goal is for us to mature and develop the characteristics of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6). Spiritual growth is related to discipleship, the process of becoming like Christ. "Sadly, millions of Christians grow older but never grow up. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment."\(^3\)

Spiritual growth is related to Christian ministry. We should stop making excuses and start stepping out in faith, doing what God has called us to do. Don’t focus on your

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\(^1\)Warren, 199.

\(^2\)"Perfect man" and "Fullness of Christ," [Eph 4:12], SDABC, 6:1024.

\(^3\)Warren, 179.
weakness; focus on your God. “If God chose to use perfect people only, He’d have no
one to use.” Paul says that people should “continue to work out your salvation with fear
and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good
purpose” (Phil 2:12-13). This text presents the two parts of spiritual growth: work out and
work in. “Spiritual growth is a collaborative effort between you and the Holy Spirit.
God’s Spirit works with us, not just in us.”

Every gift contributes its value to the unity of the church. “He that descended is
the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he
gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and
teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of
the body of Christ” (Eph 4:10-12).

Every one receives a gift. They are given in order to equip or perfect the saints for
ministry. As the original meaning of the word perfecting suggests, the gifts were for the
purpose of “mending” the saints and uniting them. The “perfecting” involves an ordered
ministry of the church. The work of the ministry includes all types of ministry.

A survey was used to gather information about the spiritual life of the Luso-
Brazilian church members. It included questions about years as converted Christians,
Bible reading, personal devotional habits, church attendance and participation, ministry

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2Warren, 180.
3“Perfecting” and “Work of the Ministry,” [Eph 4:12], SDABC, 6:1023.
4This pre-survey was used at the end of 2004 during church service, and 52 people participated.
involvement, and outreach activities. The following information emerged from the questionnaire given to the New York Luso-Brazilian Church:

Only 5 percent of participants became members in the last five years.

Only half of the participants read or studied the Bible, the Sabbath School lesson, or devotional books, on a daily basis.

65 percent took the time to have personal prayer.

35 percent have daily family worship.

40 percent hold offices in church.

80 percent give tithe.

75 percent give offerings regularly.

44 percent frequently attend Sabbath School.

78 percent attend church worship each Sabbath.

11 percent attend prayer meetings.

10 percent give Bible studies.

30 percent won someone to Jesus.

10 percent participate in outreach.

84 percent would like to have more evangelistic programs.

86 percent would like to participate in lay training.

Church Growth Strategies in Chronological Order

In this section the various church growth strategies used for outreach since the beginning of the New York Luso-Brazilian church will be portrayed. It will describe different evangelistic tools such as visitation, literature distribution, radio and television broadcast, and social activities.

Literature Distribution, Radio, and Television Evangelism

During the early days of the church, the strategy used for church growth was basically personal visitation and literature distribution, collaborated with the radio program *A Voz da Profecia*. The visitation and literature distribution was made especially in downtown Manhattan. As J. Canario recalls, "Using a map to select the areas, they visited people with the intention to find the Portuguese speaking people and to invite
them to the church. During this time, over a hundred families were given literature and
Bible studies."¹

The radio program was recorded in Brazil, and it was edited with the name and
address for local contact. The program was aired on a multicultural radio station, and the
interests were followed up with magazines and Bible studies. Social and cultural events
were promoted with the intention to contact the community and open doors for outreach.
Programs such as how to cook classes, health seminars, and social services were offered
to the community, especially for recently arrived immigrants.

In the 1980s, a twenty-four hour telephone line called Telepaz was established for
counseling. Pastor Cunha also initiated a Portuguese television program Um Novo
Amanhã on the Spanish channel that gave the church a lot of exposure in the community.

Friendship Evangelism and Social Events

Friendship evangelism has been used as a strong strategy for outreach. Special
attention was given to the new arrivals, and hundreds of immigrants were helped. Other
important activities during this period were: camp meetings, weeks of prayer, and
revivals. A community choir was formed with the idea of it being a missionary choir,
involved guests from the community.

In the 1980s Pastor Cunha tried to hold evangelistic campaigns but discovered
that the meetings would be more successful if used as reaping events. The choir was used
to expose the church in the community. It was well known by the Brazilian consulate and
was very active in popular Brazilian festivities. During that time the Adventist pastor

¹Joaquin Canario, layperson of the Luso-Brazilian Church in New York, interview by Gerson P.
worked as a chaplain for the consulate, attending to Brazilian families in need of support and counseling. The pastor was involved in all activities of the church, such as playing soccer, conducting the choir, and showing personal interest in the members.

According to Pastor Cunha, “Of the majority of church members, 70 percent were single, young adults coming from Brazil looking for a better salary.”¹ As a church for immigrants it planned needed-oriented activities. Several social activities were promoted on Saturday night. Everybody was invited to participate in soccer games and picnics on Sundays, and the members were motivated to invite their friends to come and be part of the activities. The church was like a family. A lot of time was given to support and to counsel families, couples, and singles.

Bible studies were given mostly by the pastor during Sabbath School. He led a new convert’s class, which included visitors. Annual evangelistic campaigns were planned whenever there was a significant group of interests attending church activities. Pastor Cunha states, “Evangelism was not planned to attract new members, but to bring to decision the friends that were already attending church programs; inreach was used as a foundation for outreach.”

The family was a priority in order to make the church a family. Today the need is still to have warmer and friendlier churches. As E. G. White wrote, “Christ’s methods alone will give true success in reaching people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won

¹Ronaldo Cunha, former pastor of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by Gerson P. Santos, November 22, 2005, Miami, Florida.
their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’ The church has to be the light and the salt. A friendly church will be respected by the community.

Weekly Evangelism Program

In the late 1980s, J. Sarli, the church pastor, implemented the idea of promoting evangelistic meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays. He offered dynamic preaching, movies, slides, and select music, especially during the months of October to April. The main source of interests was the members inviting their friends. Even though the brethren used to bring their friends and relatives to church, they had difficulties in giving Bible studies; therefore most of them were given by the pastor.

During this time, a health food store was opened in the church facilities, and several members and community people used to come to buy healthy, meatless food, and Brazilian products. The social aspect was also very important and mid-week meetings had almost the same attendance as Sabbaths. The church became a center of assistance to the immigrants, including material and spiritual support.

Other Activities

In the following years camp meetings continued to be a very important activity to attract visitors. Pastor Silva mentioned that social events, choir, and revivals were very active and well received by the church. To follow up the friendship evangelism, Bible study classes were offered on Sabbath morning and afternoon. Special dates like Easter,

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1 White, The Ministry of Healing, 143.

2 Joel Sarli, former pastor of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by Gerson P. Santos, October 31, 2005, Chattanooga, Tennessee.
Christmas, New Year, Thanksgiving, *Dia da Patria*, along with community guest day and birthdays were used to promote outreach.

Even though the interest list helped to keep regular baptisms, the challenge of the outreach was to continue to find new interests. Immigrants work hard, and they frequently find it difficult to take a day off to attend church. Most of them have the making of money as their priority.

For the last decade most of the baptisms were children of the church, former members, relatives, and people that had previous knowledge of Seventh-day Adventists in Brazil. The choir continued to be a very important activity of the church, mainly helping to keep the young people active and to attract and retain young people. At almost every baptism ceremony some member of the choir had someone prepared for baptism.

**Church Planting**

The late 1990s was a period of starting new congregations. Ellen G. White gives extensive counsel about the danger of pastors concentrating their labor among the churches, "God designs that we should spread abroad and our missionary labor be extended over as much ground as we can possibly occupy to advantage, going in every direction to raise up new companies."\(^1\)

During the last eight years, three new congregations were formed from the Queens Luso-Brazilian Church. The first was in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1998. The second congregation was planted in Mineola, in 2000. The following year it was

organized into a company, and at the end of 2004 moved to Brentwood. In 2005 it moved again to Kings Park, where it was organized into a church.

The third congregation started in Mount Vernon in 2001, in Westchester County. Several meetings were held in Mamaroneck by Gerson Rodrigues. The company was organized in 2002 and as a church in 2004, under the leadership of Luis Biazzoto, Pastor Iraja's assistant.

**Equipping Strategies**

Since its beginning, the growth of the church was based more on immigration. This was a tremendous task, considering all the social and emotional support that the immigrants need as they arrived. However, considering church activities, not too much effort was made to equip the church for growth. Even though some outreach activities were developed, the church was satisfied with the positive increase of membership, and equipping and evangelism was not the priority.

**Training for Personal Ministries**

In its early years, some training was offered to the brethren. According to Pastor Davi Bravo, the first pastor of the congregation, the training was focused on how to make personal contact and to distribute literature. Visitation was made especially in downtown Manhattan, and most of the literature was to introduce the church and the radio program.

The church organization in New York has been very supportive to the work among minorities, and this positive attitude regarding church growth has made Greater New York one of the fastest growing fields in North America. E. G. White states that "the talents to be found among the English and Americans should be united with the
talents of those of every other nationality. And each nationality should labor earnestly for every other nationality. There is but one Lord, one faith. Our effort should be to answer Christ's prayer for His disciples, that they should be one."

Making Friends

In the 1980s, Pastor Cunha realized that just promoting evangelistic meetings was not doing well; therefore, he decided to train the church for friendship evangelism. Even though it was an informal training, the pastor tried to sell the idea to the members through sermons and special meetings. During this time, the local church leadership intentionally provided motivation and opportunities for the members to invite their friends to social activities.

Personal Witness

In the late 1980s, J. Sarli put into practice the weekly evangelistic meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays. Some training was offered with the intention to help the members to be more effective in witnessing, inviting their friends and relatives to church events, and especially to the weekly evangelistic meetings.

According to Pastor Marco Valença, who took the church as an interim pastor for a couple of months until the end of 1990, "the spirit was very good, training seminars were presented, and the church was being equipped." The church's annual camp meeting

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2Marco Valença, former Stewardship Director of the Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, interview by Gerson P. Santos, October 27, 2005, Bakersfield, California.
was a very important activity that kept the church together and motivated the members for mission. There was a positive attitude in the church, and attendance grew. Prayer meetings and Adventist youth programs had the same attendance as Sabbath mornings. The church was going in the right direction.

Equipping Church Officers

For the last ten years, very little lay training was offered. On the other hand, new church officers’ training was offered almost every year, and this was a real need especially considering that new congregations have been planted. In the last two years, special training in Spiritual Gifts, Action Units on Sabbath School, and Small Group ministries was provided.

Lay Training

The majority of the New York Luso-Brazilian Church members are young adults, adventurers that immigrated to America looking for a better life, and this reflects the target community. This congregation is very active in terms of internal church activities, but the commitment for outreach is low. The young people are involved in several activities, but evangelistic dedication is limited. The Adventist youth program is held practically every Sabbath. The Pathfinder club has also been very dynamic.

Analyzing the profile of this church, it can be verified that the growth came mainly through immigration. Its growth tended to slow down when immigration diminished. Since the beginning of the congregation one of the main challenges for laity involvement was the lack of commitment of members to dedicate more time to missionary work. It is recognized by Dr. Bravo, one of the first pastors of the
congregation, that they should have held more evangelistic meetings and more training to put the members to work.¹

Considering this profile, it confirmed the need to develop a more effective, intensive, and intentional equipping program, which will be developed in the next chapter.

¹Bravo, interview by the author.
CHAPTER 4

EQUIPPING PROGRAM FOR THE NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

This chapter gives details of the equipping program proposed for the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church. It begins with a description of the program, followed by the content of the seminars, the program’s projection, and organization.

Description of the Program

The program consists of a training process and a series of seminars linked to an evangelistic strategy. It provides an equipping cycle that must be part of the life of the church, for it is not a seasonal program. The seminars present the New Testament vision for ministry with the intention of equipping the laity for service. The seminars covered spiritual gifts, discipleship principles, priesthood of all believers, church mission, outreach activities, and spiritual leadership.

As part of the equipping process, the program requires that church activities should be planned in the framework of outreach. This will provide hands-on-training opportunities for the laity. A disciple is not formed just by attending a seminar or workshop. Christian principles should be applied to one’s daily life. Each church department plans its events and services with the intentional purpose of evangelism and
involving the laity in ministry. Several activities will be developed with a view to market the church in the community.

The program includes outreach activities. These will involve personal visitation, Bible study, small group meetings, and evangelistic meetings. The laity will be equipped to develop friendship evangelism: finding co-workers, relatives, and neighbors to share the gospel. Small group activities will be able to connect people’s needs with church resources. A continual net strategy is indispensable, considering the actual size of the church and the intention to grow. The evangelistic meetings will consist of weeks of revival, camp meetings, festivals, and short series of reaping events.

Content of the Seminars

The equipping program is based on twelve seminars of about two hours each. The seminars are prepared on two levels. On the first level, the laity will have the opportunity to develop general basic skills in Christian ministries. The seminars for this first level are: (1) Spiritual Gifts, (2) Principles for Christian Witnessing, (3) How to Present Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines, and (4) Christian Leadership.

The second level will give disciples the opportunity to specialize in specific areas of ministry, building up the body of Christ, and making new disciples. At this level, the laity will have the opportunity to develop their ministries skills according to their gifts. Simple techniques of teaching and witnessing will give them the basics to be more effective disciples. The seminars for the second level are: (5) Principles for Evangelism in the Life of Jesus, (6) Methods for Door-to-door Visitation, (7) Simple Methods for Giving a Bible Study, (8) Principles and Methods for Obtaining Decisions, (9) Small
Group Ministries in the Local Church, (10) Inductive and Relational Bible Study and Teaching, (11) Developing Sabbath School Action Units, and (12) How to Interpret the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy (see appendix C).

A summary of the seminars is presented below.

Spiritual Gifts

The purpose of this seminar is to help the participant experience the power of the Holy Spirit in his/her daily life. Special instruction will be given to help the participant understand the nature of the Spirit’s gifts, to discover his/her unique gifts, and how to minister with these spiritual gifts. Only the power of the Holy Spirit will effectively advance the work of the church on this earth. According to Coleman, “The group of believers became the body of Christ, and as such ministered to each other individually and collectively. Every member of the community of faith had a part to fulfill in this ministry.”

Even though spiritual gifts are closely related to the life of the church, people should be very careful of not trying to identify them to fill in positions. “The vast majority of spiritual gifts tools are designed to help the church fill leadership slots. . . . They teach people to be good supportive church members, not how to live as gifted Christian seven days a week.” There is also another purpose for which the gifts were given by God, and that is to enable all to live spiritually empowered lives. “Spiritual gifts


are given not that people may be put on appropriate committees in the church but that we might live as faithful disciples in the world."

The primary task of the church is to "make disciples" (Matt 28:18-20). The disciple-making process involves a chain of activities such as: reaching out and receiving, relating people to God, nurturing and strengthening in the Christian faith, sending forth to live transformed/transfoming lives, and continuing the process. "Spiritual gifts discovery is not a program, and it is not a complete process in itself." Spiritual gifts discovery is just the first step to a lifelong journey of growth and discovery.

Spiritual gifts need to be identified, verified, used, developed, and polished. The apostle urges all to "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed" (2 Tim 2:15). Dan Dick and Barbara Miller say, "There is no one right way to develop and discover our gifts. What is important is that we try some things that feel right and see what the Holy Spirit will provide." Churches are powerless without the Holy Ghost and His anointing (Acts 1:8). Church growth comes as the result of the Holy Ghost dwelling in and on the members as they function in ministry through God’s spiritual gifts. And this is the most exciting task of the pastor, as Paul stated right before he listed the spiritual gifts: "Equip the saints for the

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1Dick and Miller, 146.
2Ibid., 8.
3Ibid., 105.
work of the ministry” (Eph 4:11), “not to do the work of the ministry, but to equip the members to do the work of the ministry.” ¹

The Spirit singles out individuals for particular ministries (1 Cor 12:11) by distributing spiritual gifts to each, and giving the ability to perform these ministries (Acts 1:8). Two parts of the Spirit’s “gifting” ministry single out individuals for particular ministries-giving spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:11; Isa 61), and imparting the ability to perform these ministries (Acts 1:8). Spiritual gifts are useless without active service; they are not an end in themselves.

Principles for Christian Witnessing

According to the New Testament, church growth was natural as a result of committed disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit.² There is need for involvement, E. G. White affirms: “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with the ministers and church officers.”³

Most people are not involved because they lack confidence or knowledge of their potential, some have never been asked, and they receive no training. “Many


²This seminar was adapted from the Personal Ministries Handbook, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Go One Million edition.

³White, Gospel Workers, 351-352.
would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin." Another important reason why people are not involved is their limited understanding of their role. Christianity has mistakenly divided the church into clergy versus laity. However, in New Testament times this was not so. There was no sharp distinction between the role of the clergy and the role of the laity. Church pastors must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the disciple-making process. "The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers." Usually the "people have had too much sermonizing; but have they been taught how to labor for those for whom Christ died?"

The responsibility of soul winning is not only for the pastor or officers in the church, as "every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost. . . . To every one, work has been allotted, and no one can be a substitute for another." This point is strongly supported by Eph 2:10 and 2 Tim 1:9.

In an attempt to answer the question, "How do we transform spectators into participators?" Warren presents some very interesting ideas. First, teach the biblical basis for every-member ministry. Second, streamline your organizational structure. Third, establish a ministry placement process where classes are taught to start the process of

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2White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:19.


4Ibid., 10.
discovering their personal profile and identify areas of ministry. Fourth, provide on-the-job training. And fifth, never start a ministry without a minister.¹

There are several motivating factors for witnessing. The signs around us present in an undisputable way that the end of this world is near. “Time is short, and our forces must be organized to do a larger work.”²

Even though in the process of witnessing, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people,”³ it is important to evaluate people’s receptivity, which will facilitate their openness to receive the gospel message. Another important element in the process of making disciples is the communication of God’s love through a social network. This has been called the oikos principle. The majority of people that join the church do so as a result of the influence of a friend or relative.

FORT is an acronym of the words family, occupation, religion, and testimony.⁴ It sums up a simple strategy for personal witnessing: It is a sequence of questions presented with the intention of raising spiritual interest and creating an opportunity for witnessing. These questions are related to family, occupation, and religious background. The FORT strategy will close with a personal testimony, giving the witness the opportunity to invite the person to learn more about Jesus and to accept Him as their personal Savior.

¹Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 365-392. (In this quote Warren says minister regarding laity, on the previous quote, Testimonies 7:19, White is referring to the pastor).
²White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:27.
³White, The Ministry of Healing, 143.
⁴General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Personal Ministries Handbook, 30.
The plan of salvation has to be presented in a very simple way. Christ’s example should be followed, presenting the gospel in its simplicity. A four-part presentation of the gospel can be used right after the personal testimony, or as an introductory Bible study to lead someone to accept Jesus as a personal Savior. First, salvation is God’s initiative. Second, the human being is lost without God. Third, Jesus is the only way to salvation. And fourth, a personal decision is necessary to receive the gift of eternal life.1 “What you need is a living experience in the things of God and simplicity in presenting the love of Christ to the lost.”2

How to Present Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines

The purpose of this seminar is to help in the understanding of the biblical message. It will include subjects such as: how revelation works, the process of dynamic inspiration, an introduction to the Bible, and basic steps for Bible interpretation.

The seminar will discuss the development of the Fundamental Beliefs, and will give a general overview of the 28 Beliefs with special emphasis on the distinctive doctrines such as the Great Controversy, the Law and the Sabbath, the Sanctuary and The Judgment, Death and Hell, Creation and Eschatology, Wholeness of Man-Health, and Christian Lifestyle (see appendix C, How to Teach Basic Adventist Doctrine). God always had someone or a group of people with the mission of “Restoration of Truth and the Remnant.” In the nineteenth century, the Seventh-day Adventist Movement was called to present a special message.

1General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Personal Ministries Handbook, 31.

In the book *Evangelism*\(^1\) some of the distinctive truths that must be presented are found. A series of nine Bible studies called *Pillars of Faith* was prepared on a DVD format, using these distinctive truths as the main topic. All the fundamental beliefs are briefly mentioned throughout the lessons. "The present truth is to be our burden. The third angel’s message must do its work of separating from the churches a people who will take their stand on the platform of eternal truth."\(^2\)

Even though this Bible study was prepared to present the pillars of our faith, all fundamental beliefs are mentioned throughout the lessons. The key to this Bible study series is to present Jesus first. A person has to accept Jesus before being asked to make a decision on any other important truth of the Word of God. Jesus has to be presented as the center of the message, the center of every doctrine. "Let every teacher present an open door before all who will come to Jesus, repenting of their sins."\(^3\)

**Christian Leadership**

There is great enthusiasm regarding the theme of leadership. Bookstores are loaded with all kinds of literature and many Christian leaders have used an almost indiscriminate and uncritical acceptance of secular leadership theory without measuring it against the timeless precepts of Scripture.\(^4\) Even tough spiritual leadership involves many

\(^1\)White, *Evangelism*, chapter VIII.
\(^2\)Ibid., 229.
\(^3\)Ibid., 217.
of the same principles as general leadership, but spiritual leadership has certain distinctive qualities.

There is a great need for leaders that God can trust. “The greatest want of the world is the want of men, men who will not be bought or sold; men who in their inmost souls are true and honest; men who do not fear to call sin by its right name; men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole; men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”¹

The need for church organization came as the numbers increased. “To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable.”²

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus presents a biblical basis for church organization (16:13-19). God is the real leader, the Head of the Church. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matt 16:18). Paul confirms “the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph 4:15). The New Testament church and the Protestant reformers saw Christ as the leader of the church, training, equipping, and empowering the members through the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-16; Acts 1:4-5). Jesus illustrated the secret of servant leadership. Even secular writers

²White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 26.
recognize Him as a compelling model of good leadership. “Jesus has established the model for Christian leaders.”

The New Testament churches set an example of how “church leaders were primarily responsible for preparing the congregation for productive service and witness to the people about them.”2 “The more closely the New Testament plan is followed in missionary labor, the more successful will be the efforts put forth.”3 “It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister.”4

The church organization is well represented by the body of Christ concept, and the challenge is to build a gift-based church using a holistic approach to spiritual gifts, where people are placed in the most appropriate places for their gifts and interaction skills. Leadership trains, equips, and empowers through delegation of responsibility.

Even though there are other factors that affect the life and growth of the churches, “the evidence clearly establishes that competent pastoral leadership is one of the most important factors in church growth.”5 Effective pastoral leadership will result in effective lay leadership, which is also indispensable for expansion of the kingdom. The pastor should model Christian leadership principles of training, equipping, and empowering the members of the Body of Christ.

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The concept of church growth also includes healthy churches. In one of the most comprehensive studies about church growth ever made, Christian Schwarz identifies eight universal principles of Natural Church Development. “Leaders of the growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as helpers in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. Rather, they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be.”

True leaders are secure enough to empower others and train them to be leaders. “God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men.”

“If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him, lest great harm be done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others.”

A common denominator in every growing church is a leadership that is not afraid to believe in God. Do not be worried about growth, but focus in the fulfillment of God’s

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1 Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 22.

2 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:236.

purpose for you and your church. “God will grow his church to the size he wants it, at the rate that’s best for your situation.”

Principles for Evangelism in the Life of Jesus

This seminar will cover Jesus’ challenge in the Great Commission. Discipleship is the primary task of Jesus followers. It will also present the basics on witnessing according to Jesus. The “incarnation” principle of connecting and making a difference in the community is the practical application of the gospel in the daily life.

In the Great Commission, Jesus challenges His followers to “go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19-20). The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. And it will include all the believers to the end of time. It is a great mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister.

“The first disciples went forth preaching the word. They revealed Christ in their lives. And the Lord worked with them. . . . The gospel was to be carried to the uttermost parts of the earth, and they claimed the endowment of power that Christ had promised. Then it was that the Holy Spirit was poured out, and thousands were converted in a day. So it may be now.”

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1Warren, The Purpose Driven Church, 394.

2White, The Desire of Ages, 822.

3Ibid., 827.
Jesus' method of witnessing "will give true success in reaching the people."¹ There are important lessons for witnessing that all can learn from Jesus. He socialized with people, He sympathized with them, and He ministered to their needs. "God retains his blessings because His people do not work in harmony with his methods."²

Methods for Door-to-door Visitation

This seminar will present the need for home visitation. It will provide simple tips on how to get into the home, and the marks of Christian culture. "This house-to-house labor, searching for souls, hunting for the lost sheep, is the most essential work that can be done."³ Even if house visitation is a challenging task in today's world, E. G. White says, "If you fail ninety-nine times in a hundred, but succeed in saving the one soul from ruin, you have done a noble deed for the Master's cause."⁴

The best way to build interests for Bible studies is to make friends with people. There are many opportunities for the church to offer help and friendship when there is some kind of distress. The New Testament presents home visitation as an effective missionary labor. It was the method of Christ, it was also used by the early church to develop fellowship, for teaching the gospel, and to penetrate in unentered areas. There are several other ways to find Bible study interests.

Three of the basic principles in presenting the gospel are: introduce Jesus first, gradually reveal the truth, and make frequent calls. Special attention will be given on how

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¹White, The Ministry of Healing, 143.
²White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:18.
³White, Evangelism, 110.
⁴White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:132.
to present the gospel to a former member. General principles for reclaiming backsliders are important topics to cover. It is very important to remember that love is a key factor in reclaiming former members.

Simple Methods for Giving a Bible Study

This seminar will present simple methods of giving Bible studies. The system of giving Bible studies has been proven very successful around the world. Most people can master it very quickly. The student can learn and soon be trained and equipped with completed Bible study guides.

God gave clear instructions that “we are to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world.”1 “Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifested.”2

Preparation is very necessary for giving Bible studies. Not only spiritual preparation, but preparation of materials such as: the Bible, Bible study guides, pictorial aids, DVDs or other devices. Also, mental preparation is necessary and this involves the readiness to answer the reason for our faith (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pet 3:15).

A Bible study outline should include three parts: (1) an introduction to awaken the interest of the hearers; (2) the body, which must be solid and in logical sequence from beginning to end, and could include ten to fifteen texts; (3) the appeal or conclusion,

1White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:150.
2Ibid., 126.
summarizing, appealing, and introducing the next topic. When doing a Bible study, the instructor should be punctual, enthusiastic, sit at the right place, give a short introduction, be understanding, and speak wisely. The Bible study should start with prayer, the students should be encouraged to listen and ask questions. The presenter should stick to the subject, and never introduce ideas for which the Bible student does not have sufficient background.

Two of the most common ways to give studies are: drop-off or sit-down studies. In drop-off studies, the study guides are left for the student to study alone. We return to pick up the completed lessons and leave the next study guides. Opportunities should be given for questions and seek to develop a relationship. The student does the studies independently.

There are some common mistakes that should be avoided, such as giving too much information, staying longer than an hour, using too many Bible texts, lecturing to the listener, arguing, straying from the topic being presenting, criticizing or disrespecting others, and staying too long after the Bible study.

Ellen G. White says that the perception and appreciation of truth depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. For those who have an honest desire to know and to do His will, the truth is revealed as the power of God for their salvation.1

1White, The Desire of Ages, 455-456.
for protection. As the end of time approaches, thousands will step out from the shadows into the light, and “many backsliders will return to the church as these wandering sheep again hear and heed the voice of the Great Shepherd.”

Small Group Ministries in the Local Church

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to preach the gospel to the entire world (Matt 28:19-20). This task will never be finished until the membership unites in the work with pastors and church officers, and the essential Latter Rain cannot come until “the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God. God cannot pour out His Spirit when selfishness and self-indulgence are so manifest; when a spirit prevails that, if put into words, would express that answer of Cain, ‘Am I my brother's keeper?’” One who cannot err has advised the formation of small groups “as a basis of Christian effort.”

The interplay of several factors and elements contributes to church growth. However, “if we were to identify any one principle as the most important . . . without a doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups.”

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1White, *Evangelism*, 693.
6Schwarz, 33.
The definition of a small group is a group of people from the community that get together every week at home to help each other strive in their life, to experience a revival in Jesus, and fulfill their mission in the community. People tend to be individualistic, not because they like to, but because society is like that. The advantages of “small groups” are that they can develop friendship, fellowship, spirituality, life of service, personal testimony, hope, faith, new leaders, and constant growth.

The small group program includes some time for fellowship, testimonies, prayer, and studying of the word. “Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer. . . . What testimonies you may bear of the loving acquaintance made with your fellow workers.”

The practice of selecting leaders for small groups comes from the time of Moses (Exod 18:1-19:6). His father-in-law gave him advice to select leaders of different levels, one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. They would lead and minister to the people. Jesus also used a small group approach to train those who would take care of the development of His kingdom (Luke 6:13; Mark 3:13). The Apostolic Church continues to use this strategy to keep the faith alive and to continue outreach (Acts 5:42).

Small group ministries can be established by using five basic steps. The first step is to know the plan: studying, praying, preparing a calendar, and being committed to the plan. The second step is to prepare the leaders: presenting the plan to the church leadership, discussing it at the church board, and determining methods of implantation. The third step is to organize the work: choosing and training the leaders and advertising

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1White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:195.
the plan. The fourth step is to prepare the church through a week of revival, promoting
the plan, organizing the groups, and advertising the place of the meetings. The fifth step
is to start the meetings: begin with a few meetings for the members to get acquainted with
the program and for spiritual revival, and then the meetings for visitors should follow.

The small group should have a leader, an associate leader, a secretary and a host.
These leaders should be faithful, willing to serve, be led by the Spirit, and have a desire
for saving souls.

Ellen G. White says that “our forces must be organized to do a larger work” and
she “saw jets of light shining from cities and villages, and from the high places and the
low places of the earth. God's word was obeyed, and as a result there were memorials for
Him in every city and village. His truth was proclaimed throughout the world.”¹

Inductive and Relational Bible Study and Teaching

This seminar is designed to improve the Bible study and teaching experience. A
four-step process is presented to begin to get people involved and lead to genuine
discovery. First, settle on one or two main points only. Second, briefly set the context.
Third, present a few well-chosen, open-ended questions. And fourth, guide group
discussion for real discovery.²

Sabbath School teachers and Bible instructors may use these principles. They may
be called discussion leaders. They should practice the following skills: really listen,

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:26-28.

²This four-step process was presented by Steven Siciliano, in a seminar for the Certification
paraphrase or sum up each contribution, resist the urge to answer all the questions, bring
the discussion back to the main point, learn something new, and summarize.

Some students do not respond to discussion because their past experience has
conditioned them not to respond, there is a lack of interest in the topic, they are poorly
prepared for the lesson, or the teacher is poorly prepared for the lesson. Questioning
techniques should be developed to promote and enhance participation.

Using the six categories of Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy\(^1\) will help to strength the
learning process and go beyond a shallow presentation. Bloom created this taxonomy for
categorizing level of abstraction of questions that commonly occur in educational
settings. The student will be equipped to have a clear vision of the gospel and will be able
to evaluate different situations and apply the Word of God in an appropriate way.

Developing Sabbath School Action Units

This seminar\(^2\) will consider Sabbath School problems such as the decline of
attendance, lack of study of the Sabbath School Bible study guide, missing members, lack
of training of teachers. Two basic reasons for leaving the church were identified: lack of
warm fellowship and support by fellow members, and church services that do not meet
member’s felt needs in coping with the complexities of daily life.


\(^2\)Adapted from Calvin L. Smith, *Church Growth Through Sabbath School Action Units* (Los
Angeles, CA: The Voice of Prophecy, 1999).
Ellen G. White says that changes must be made in the order of things in Sabbath School to meet the “purpose for which they exist.”¹ A great amount of mechanical work is done, while “there is little evidence that there is moral transformation in the souls of those who teach and who are taught.”²

There are four Sabbath School objectives: spiritual nurture, fellowship, community outreach, and world missions.³ The Sabbath School Action Unit can provide an excellent way to promote those objectives and to meet the basic divine imperatives for a finished work, and provide adherence to those imperatives.

The formation of a small group “as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who can not err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also.”⁴ The Action Unit can provide an excellent training school, turning spectators into participants, and preparing members for effective outreach. The Sabbath School Action Unit plan requires small classes, outreach leaders, an outreach plan, class time of one hour, and lesson discussion application.

²Ibid., 66.
How to Interpret the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy

The first part of this seminar\(^1\) will present the nature, purpose, and authority of the Bible. It will develop the theme of hermeneutics, presenting basic principles of interpretation. Some challenges to interpret the Bible involve our personal opinion and tradition.

Helpful steps will be covered to interpret the Bible and tools for Bible study, such as: the Bible itself, a Bible concordance, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, Bible handbooks, and Bible commentaries.

There are different methods to study the Bible, for example, daily reading, analyze the message of a book, look for solutions to a specific problem, study of a particular word, study of a topic, and biographic study.

The second part of the seminar will cover how to use and interpret the writings of Ellen White, the gift of prophecy and its role in the life of the church, and the gift of prophecy in the Bible. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth, which provide for church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.

The Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. The principles of interpretation deal with the authority, the inspiration, the nature of inspiration, interpretation, and worldwide application.

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\(^1\)Adapted from James Zackrison, *How to Use and Interpret the Bible and the Writings of Ellen White*, Church Growth Resources Series, Advent Source.
Program's Projection and Organization

The program started with a retreat for the church officers where they were informed and instructed about the program. This retreat took place at the end of 2005, the year previous to the implementation of the program. Then, during the months of January through March of 2006, a series of sermons were preached on Sabbath mornings to motivate the church. The topics covered the great commission, discipleship, priesthood of all believers, personal commitment, and equipping for service.

Every three weeks in the afternoon (3:00 P.M.-5:30 P.M.), from February through April the first level seminars (first four) listed in the previous section were presented. During these months the Sabbath School and the Personal Ministries Departments were enlisting people for different ministries.

Bible study classes were organized during Sabbath School, Wednesday evening, and Juniors/Pathfinders with a view to obtaining interests. Small groups at home were formed for spiritual growth and outreach.

Each month, starting in February, there was a week of revival covering different themes like: family life, the passion of Jesus, youth evangelism, health, Christian life, last days events, and Pillars of Faith (distinctive Adventist doctrines). In June the first week of reaping took place.

In October there was a two-week reaping event, finalizing with a celebration in a big hall where the church commemorated the 35th Anniversary of the Luso-Brazilian Church in New York. Pioneers were acknowledged; results of outreach reported with the new members and lay ministers recognized.
Therefore, the leadership retreat informed and oriented the leaders of the church. A series of sermons was planned to educate and motivate the members. The leaders were trained during the seminars and Sabbath School. The laity now has been equipped for ministry. The church has an ongoing program as a center for training and evangelism.

The church, as a training school for Christian workers, will equip the laity to fulfill their mission. The hands-on training will give opportunity for practical learning and for outreach. As a result, the church will accomplish both objectives, equipping the laity and reaching the world.
CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUIPPING PROGRAM

Recent research has shown that not one of the 3,141 counties in the United States showed a measurable growth in the percentage of Christian presence among its population in ten years. On the other hand there is an increase in violent crimes, births outside of wedlock, divorce, children living in single parent homes, and suicide among teenagers.\(^1\) This is a very painful report on the American society.

The Christian church, in general, is facing this deteriorating situation; it is making progress, but losing ground. "When the Church measures itself against its past, there may be a degree of satisfaction found in growing numbers. But when looked at in light of an increasing population, accelerating decay and the greater needs of our cities, we find the Church’s capacity to affect change continues to plummet. We are loosing our cities at an increasing rate."\(^2\)

The Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church in New York faces the same reality. In the last decade there has been an increase of activities and small growth, but considering the challenge of New York City, and the large number of Portuguese-speaking immigrants, very little was accomplished. Like many other churches, the Luso-


\(^2\)Ibid., 6.
Brazilian Church tends to immerse itself in more and more activities, but without a clear vision of where it is heading. The church must answer the current situation with a strategic response. As Jack Dennison stated, one definition of insanity is to keep doing the same things and expect different results. “Doing more of the same will only produce more of the same results.”¹

The world is experiencing a global migration. People are moving from the Southern hemisphere to the North, from the East to the West, and most people are moving to the cities. Mission is no longer crossing the oceans and reaching the most remote jungles. Mission is to cross the streets of the large cities. A hundred years ago, urban world population was just 10 percent; today is about 50 percent. The urban population is growing, and this is especially true in the United States, where 90 percent of the people live in an urban setting.² Church efforts are scattered, all pointing in different directions. “There is no focal point to which each is drawn, no evidence of progress toward a common goal. The city that so desperately needs help continues in its sordid, confused condition.”³

This equipping program presented to the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church is a direction to follow. It also enables the laity and the pastor to coordinate training and outreach activities. These outreach activities are described as follows:

¹Dennison, 8.
²Ibid., 14.
³Ibid., 4.
Preparation Stage

The equipping program started with acquainting the church with the equipping process, presentation of equipping seminars, and the development of a strategy for outreach activities.

This program gave suggestions and provided the necessary tools for a cycle that must be part of the church life and not a seasonal program. It started with a retreat for the church officers during the first weekend of December 2005. The New Testament vision for ministry was presented, and discussion on other topics such as, discipleship principles, priesthood of all believers, church mission, and spiritual leadership. After that, the church officers began to discuss how to implement these principles in all department activities of the church.

The program went along with a once-a-month motivation/challenging sermon on Sabbath morning, and an equipping seminar in the afternoon. This took place from January to April. The seminars’ outlines were described in the previous chapter in the basic level of the equipping program, and they are presented as a whole in appendix C. The sermons covered topics related to the same seminars, emphasizing church mission and discipleship.

The church planning activities were developed in the framework of the various ministries for outreach. Each department leader received the overall idea at the leaders’ retreat, then during the months of December and January they met with their associates to finalize their strategic plan. Each church ministry planned its activities with outreach in mind. The different departments prepared their events and services with the intentional purpose of soul winning and how to support the church’s general program of evangelism.
Participative Stage

The church was involved in visitation. Personal contact is indispensable to nurture the interests and reclaim missing members. Visitation teams were trained and motivated to reach out to the community. The most promising interests are those who are already closely connected to the church community, family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and colleagues.

Personal visitation is crucial for nurture and outreach. E. G. White recommends, "Visit the people who live close to you, and for the sympathy and the kindness, make sure you reach their hearts. . . . Sympathize with them, pray with them, take advantage of the opportunities to do good to them, and when possible, get together with a few people and read the Bible to their darkened minds."\(^1\)

All kinds of personal contact to communicate God's love is more effective through a social network. "This was the way the Christian Church was established. Christ first selected a few persons and bade them follow Him. They then went in search of their relatives and acquaintances, and brought them to Christ. This is the way we are to labor. A few souls brought out and fully established in the truth will, like the first disciples, be laborers for others."\(^2\)

Personal contact is fundamental to bringing success to God's work. Most of the time, church leaders promote many intricate strategies and forget the basics of Christian service. E. G. White affirms, "Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly

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\(^1\) White, *Christian Service*, 144, 145.

Father. We are to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world."  

Personal witnessing is described as the strategy to finish the work, "Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence."  

Personal ministries training was offered in the first week of April 2006. The church was challenged to write down names of friends and former members to be visited. Over a hundred names were collected, and put on a mailing list to receive mail from the church announcing special events, invitations, and personal letters. Many of them were visited to develop friendship with the church community.  

According to Fred Comforth and Tim Lale, among the five most common mistakes made by members and congregations in their attempt to bring inactive members back to activity is just sending a letter. Research shows that this method angers more people than it attracts. Phone calls receive a similar response. Visits are the best form of contact because they are the most personal. The inactive members expect the pastor to visit them; it is perceived as part of their job. A visit from a member, however, will mean much more.  

A simple visit in order to get them to attend church again will cause more harm than good. They can sense this and may be driven farther away. The main goals of  

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1White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:150.  
2Ibid., 126.  
visitation should be showing care and reestablishing a relationship. A series of visits is necessary to bring about healing and reconciliation (one visit for every year the former member has been inactive).

It is amazing that "hosts of people are really backsliders but still consider themselves Seventh-day Adventists... In a city survey where we had about seven hundred members, three thousand listed themselves as Seventh-day Adventists!"\(^1\)

Appendix D presents a whole procedure to be followed on reclaiming former members. "Given the high number of former members who have left because of problem with people, being better friends to our inactive friends and family may be the next natural step. We have to break our concern with gaining or reclaiming numbers and be concerned about restoring relationships."\(^2\)

During the same time, the external aspect of evangelism was emphasized, connecting the church with the community. The idea is to create a positive image of a caring church in the neighborhood.

The internal aspect of evangelism focused on children and youth evangelism. By the end of May, a special Family Camp Retreat took place, with a youth guest speaker, followed by two weeks of revival and youth evangelism. During this time two people were baptized.

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\(^1\)Fordyce Detamore, *Seeking His Lost Sheep* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 6.

\(^2\)Comforth and Lale, 126.
Distributing Literature

Literature distribution follows three main categories: door-to-door/streets, family/friends/neighbors, and occasional distribution. The material distributed included special tracts, Bible studies, flyers and posters inviting for special events, and DVDs.

During the months of April and May, the church distributed thousands of pieces of literature and DVDs among friends, former members, and interests to generate interest to attend the special events. On May 20, door-to-door literature distribution was organized in the communities of major concentrations of the target population. It also covered the church’s neighborhood. The distribution was done close to Luso-Brazilian restaurants, grocery stores, and supermarkets. The Community and Health Services van was used to attract interests and make contacts.

About one hundred members went out on the streets distributing literature and DVDs and collecting names. One hundred and twenty six new names, with addresses and phone numbers, were added to the interest list. One thousand Bible study DVDs were distributed during the months of April and May, and more than three hundred names were added to the interest list.

Starting Bible Studies and Small Group Meetings

The members have developed a friendship approach by finding co-workers, relatives, and neighbors with whom to share the gospel. Small group activities will be able to connect people’s needs with church resources. A continual net strategy is indispensable, considering the actual size of the church and the intention to grow. Special prayer groups will be organized to “warm up” the church for the harvest.
E. G. White envisions the tremendous influence of small groups.

Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer, that they may be strengthened, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This work Christ wants to have done in the heart of every worker. If you yourselves will open the door to receive it, a great blessing will come to you. Angels of God will be in your assembly. You will feed upon the leaves of the tree of life. What testimonies you may bear of the loving acquaintance made with your fellow workers in these precious seasons when seeking the blessing of God . . . Christ will come into your hearts. It is by this means only that you can maintain your integrity.¹

The Sabbath School can facilitate the challenge to bring people closer. Especially in a large urban church, people need to develop closer attachments. Sabbath School should be one of the greatest instrumentalities and the most effectual in bringing souls to Christ.²

God has advised the formation of small groups. “The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who can not err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also.”³

Intensive Outreach

The church has been making an arbitrary division between nurture and outreach and, according to Zackrison, “there is no such distinction in the Bible.”⁴ The same thing happens when evangelism is divided into public and personal. “This has gotten so far out

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:195.
²White, Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 10.
³White, Evangelism, 115.
⁴Zackrison, Power to Witness, 21.
of hand in Adventist circles that the word evangelism only means to many of us 'public meetings,' an unfortunate limiting of a dynamic biblical concept to only one strategy."

The public aspect of evangelism has different activities. The church will combine weeks of revival with camp meetings or festivals. A system of interest coordination will be formed to keep contact with the general public, the net of friends, and the interests, and to invite them to the meetings. At the same time, a series of sermons and specific seminars will be offered with the intention to have an ongoing process of equipping in the church.

Starting in March, a monthly week of revival was held. These special weeks covered themes like, Discipleship, The Passion, Salvation, Youth Evangelism, Holy Spirit, Prophecies, etc. Two camp meetings were scheduled. The first was in the spring, on Memorial Day weekend. The second was in the fall, closing a two-week public evangelism in a big hall in Manhattan.

Two major public meetings were planned. The first was in June and the second one during the fall. From June 10 to 17, the church had the first series of public meetings. Over two hundred people attended each evening, and at the end of the week twenty-six people made decisions for baptism. A series of meetings started the following week, using the Pillars of Faith Bible study. About one hundred people attended this program, and at least twenty-five interests were obtained. In September, five of them were baptized.

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Evaluation Stage

Results of the equipping program will be enunciated in more detail in the following chapter through these methods: (1) number of members participating in outreach activities, (2) number of people attending church, and (3) number of people baptized. A questionnaire was developed and presented to the church to evaluate any changes made on spiritual activities, especially in the area of outreach.

The pastor and church board will evaluate these reports and make suggestions, if any, to adapt the program and to achieve more participation next year.
CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This evaluation was prepared with the intention of assessing the equipping program held at the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church. It gives insights into the difference between a church with an equipping program and one without. It enables the laity and the pastor to coordinate training and outreach activities as a yearly cycle program.

Description of the Process

The equipping program implemented was evaluated through these methods: (1) number of members participating in outreach activities, (2) number of people attending church, and (3) number of people baptized. This information was obtained through personal interviews with church leaders and members, clerk reports on attendance and baptisms, and a questionnaire given to the members. The results of the evaluation were shared with the pastor and church board. They will evaluate these reports and make suggestions on how to adapt the program and to achieve more participation in the following years.

The questionnaire used for this evaluation covered several aspects of the spiritual life, church attendance, and outreach involvement of the members (see appendix F). The survey was given in the form of a pre-survey at the beginning of 2004, when the plans for
the program were implemented. The most significant findings of this survey were
described in chapter 3, "Profile of the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist
Church." The survey was again given to all members in the form of a post-survey in
September 2006.

Analysis of the Survey

The data were analyzed and comparisons between the pre- and post-surveys were
drawn. The findings are summarized below.

1. A number of active new members participated, compared to just 5 percent in
the pre-survey.

2. Ninety percent of the members are now involved in having personal prayer,
whereas there was only 65 percent in the previous survey.

3. Thirty percent of the participants are giving Bible study, in comparison to the
10 percent that reported before.

4. Forty percent were involved in some kind of outreach or leading someone to
Jesus, in the pre-survey 10 percent participated.

5. In both surveys, the great majority said they would like to have more
evangelistic programs, and they would be willing to participate in lay training.

During the first eight months of the program significant changes in the church’s
activities were observed.

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1The post-survey was taken six months after the equipping program started, and forty-two
members participated.
A. Number of members participating in outreach activities

Visitation. The church was involved in visitation. On April 2006, after an intensive training on personal witnessing, more than one hundred names of friends and former members were collected. Most of them were personally contacted and/or visited.

Literature distribution. During the months of April and May, the church distributed thousands of pieces of literature and DVDs among friends, former members, and interests. On May 20, over one hundred members went out on the streets and into neighborhoods that have a high percentage of Luso-Brazilian population. As a result, one hundred and twenty-six new names were added to the interest list.

Weeks of revival and retreats. The church has now been utilizing regular church activities as opportunities for outreach. The weeks of revival, spiritual retreats, and camp meetings became evangelistic means to invite visitors and bring them to Jesus.

B. Number of people attending church

Regular Meetings. Between March and August the general church attendance did not grow much as it was expected. One of the reasons for this may be the church building project that is taking longer than expected. On the other hand, it is important to note that a number of visitors were attending Sabbath School.

Special Programs. Last May a revival week was held for the youth. The attendance during the week was about 80 percent of the Sabbath worship, including many visitors. In the month of June, a week of prophecy seminar was conducted. The nightly attendance exceeded that of the Sabbath service. On the weekends the attendance almost doubled the regular worship service, and more than one-quarter of these were visitors.
C. Number of people baptized

As a result of this initiative nine people were baptized, and fifteen more are ready to be baptized by the end of October during the next series of public evangelistic meetings.

*New Members.* It is interesting to note that most of the people baptized came from outside the church community. In other words, the church is really reaching out to new converts. For example, in the last baptismal ceremony, just one person out of the five baptized was a child from the church. All the others were either friends or relatives of members, but totally new to the church community.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter describes conclusions and recommendations resulting from the equipping program held at the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church. It enables the laity and the pastor to evaluate and adapt this project, considering different possibilities.

Conclusions

In consideration of this in-depth study on equipping and mobilizing the laity for service, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. When a church embarks on a program of equipping and mobilizing the members, there will be more membership involvement in the in-reach and out-reach of the church.

2. An equipping and mobilizing program will help to foster active and positive participation in outreach efforts.

3. There will be an increase in newcomers participating in church activities.

4. The equipping program will enhance the development of small group ministries.

5. The organization and promotion of small group ministries is the key to an active vibrant church.
6. There is a dire need for the implementation of this equipping program in churches that are stagnant or dying.

7. One of the requirements of this equipping program is the formation of small groups. A small group can provide a safe place for the members to develop their ministry. Also, in a very large church, small groups can keep members connected.

8. The equipping program, when administered effectively, will supply opportunity for spiritual and numerical growth.

9. The equipping program presented to the New York Luso-Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church is a direction to follow. It enables the laity and the pastor to coordinate training and outreach activities.

10. The equipping program provides a strategic response to churches that immerse themselves in more and more activities without a clear vision of where they are heading.

11. The equipping program is an excellent tool that provides training for new believers, to integrate them into the life of the church, and to train them to become effective soul winners themselves.

12. Given the high number of former members who have left because of problems with members, the equipping program is an outstanding tool for gaining, reclaiming, and restoring relationships.

13. The external aspect of the equipping program creates a positive image of a caring church in the neighborhood.

14. The internal aspect of the program that is geared towards youth and child evangelism provides an avenue for the motivation, involvement, and training of young people, thus enhancing the retention of youth in the church.
15. The equipping program fosters the need for regular Bible studies and in-depth reading of the Spirit of Prophecy, thus strengthening the members of the church as they delve into the Word of God.

**Recommendations**

The conclusions of the study have implications in two main areas: practice and future research. The research holds implications for pastors, church leaders, officers, members, mental health professionals and Luso-Brazilian groups. These recommendations are:

1. A replication of the study could be done using another ethnic group. It would be helpful to compare the findings of these studies to determine if they are applicable.

2. This study should provide and promote insights and awareness for churches in need of an equipping program.

3. Pastors should understand the need to let lay leaders play a significant role in the equipping program of the church.

4. The equipping seminars that this study provided could be utilized by pastors with large contingences of Luso-Brazilian members.

5. It is a fact that the work cannot be finished without the involvement of the laity. Therefore, more pastors should put stronger emphasis on the motivation and training of laity for service.

6. Pastors and members should become more aware of the needs and concerns of non-church people, and through this equipping program, seek to reach them and invite them to a family-friendly church.
7. Churches that are dying or experiencing lack of growth should study this equipping program and, by God's grace, seek to implement it.

8. This equipping program will be most helpful in preparation for an evangelistic series, as well as assisting in new convert retention after the series.

9. Pastors should establish the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy platform on which this equipping program stands. By doing so it will reduce the critics, and strengthen the faith of the believers.

10. A sociological study on Luso-Brazilians should be of interest to pastors, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals for two reasons: (1) as members and leaders in society, they are expected to be informed and knowledgeable about major social trends, and (2) an understanding of the phenomena specific to this group will help to distinguish them from pathology of other origins and increase the potential for effective treatment and ministry.
APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH OF NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH OF NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

In 1995, the New York Luso-Brazilian Church had 204 members. In the past ten years, the annual average growth was 13 new members (including baptisms and profession of faith), not considering transfers. This represents an annual growth rate of 5 percent. After 2001, the terrorism threat made immigration decline, and church growth slowed down as well. The church remained with practically the same membership for the last three years. By the end of 2004, the attendance was about 200 and the book record 267.¹

We can see a small decline in membership from 2002 to 2005. In 2002 the church reached its peak with 358 members. In 2003, it fell to 325. The next year it started building up again, it grew to 341, and closed the year 2005 with 346 members. This membership includes the two new congregations: Long Island and Westchester; the first was organized in 2002 with 30 members, and the second was organized in 2003, with 25 members.

The Westchester church had the fastest growth in the last two years. It started with 25 and reached 45 in 2004. A complete comparison between the growth rates of the three congregations is presented on the next table:

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**FOUR-YEAR MEMBERSHIP**

**LUSO-BRAZILIAN CONGREGATIONS IN NEW YORK**

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![Graph showing membership growth from 2002 to 2005 for Long Island, Westchester, and Queens congregations.](image)
APPENDIX B

FINANCIAL GROWTH OF NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
APPENDIX B

FINANCIAL GROWTH OF NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

In the last four years we can notice a negative growth in tithe. As we discussed before, New York City faced some financial challenges after September 11, 2001. The tithe remittance fell from $380,145.00 in 2002 to 356,673.00 in 2005.¹

TEN-YEAR MEMBERSHIP
NEW YORK LUSO-BRAZILIAN CHURCH

During this period we can also notice a small decline in membership. A comparison between the tithe remittances of the different congregations is reflected below.

FOUR-YEAR TITHE LUSO-BRAZILIAN CONGREGATIONS IN NEW YORK

[Bar chart showing tithe remittances for Long Island, Westchester, and Queens from 2002 to 2005]
APPENDIX C

EQUIPPING SEMINARS
APPENDIX C

EQUIPPING SEMINARS

(1) SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I. Introduction

The purpose of this seminar is to help the participant experience the power of the Holy Spirit in his/her daily life. Special instruction will be given to help the participant understand the nature of the Spirit's gifts, to discover his/her unique gifts, and how to minister with the spiritual gifts. Only the power of the Holy Spirit will effectively advance the work of the church on this earth.1 “The group of believers became the body of Christ, and as such ministered to each other individually and collectively. Every member of the community of faith had a part to fulfill in this ministry.”2

The mission of the Church is to announce salvation through Jesus Christ. In order to fulfill this goal, the primary function of the church is to train their ministers to reach out to the world and call in new disciples for Jesus. “The Holy Spirit urges us to find a ministry whereby the gift can be used to serve others and attract them to Christ. Under

1International Institute of Christian Ministries (Silver Spring, MD: Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002), 14.

this plan there is no hierarchy. Everyone is a minister performing some ministry for which he or she has been specially gifted.”¹

Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men.² “But each of us has been given his gift. . . . When Jesus went away, the Holy Spirit was given to His followers, bringing to each a gift or gifts for ministering, ‘distributing to each one individually just as He wills’ (1 Cor 12:11, NASB). Everyone receiving the Holy Spirit receives a ministering gift designated by the Spirit to be used in ministry for Christ.”³

Even though spiritual gifts are closely related to church life, we should be very careful and try not to use them to fill in positions. “The vast majority of spiritual gifts tools are designed to help the church fill leadership slots. . . . They teach people to be good supportive church members, not how to live as gifted Christian seven days a week.”⁴ There is another purpose the gifts were given by God and that is to enable us to live spiritually empowered lives. “Spiritual gifts are given not that people may be put on appropriate committees in the church but that we might live as faithful disciples in the world.”⁵

¹Church Manual, 67.
³General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 121.
⁴Dick and Miller, 8.
⁵Ibid., 146.
Why should I know about Spiritual Gifts?

- I Corinthians 12:1  we should know about spiritual gifts
- I Timothy 4:14  we should use them
- I Peter 4:10  we are responsible for them

II. Definition of Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual Gifts are divine abilities distributed by the Holy Spirit to every Christian, according to God’s will for the well being of the body of Christ.

Romans 12:6-8

I Corinthians 12:4-11

I Corinthians 12:27-31

Ephesians 4:11-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual Gifts Key</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wisdom</td>
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<td>2. Knowledge</td>
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<td>3. Administration</td>
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<td>4. Apostleship</td>
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<td>5. Shepherding</td>
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<td>7. Miracles</td>
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<td>8. Prophecy</td>
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<td>10. Giving</td>
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III. Spiritual Gifts Description:

1. Wisdom — the gift of translating life experience into spiritual truth and enabling others to apply such wisdom.
2. Knowledge — the gift of knowing the truth of God through the study of Scripture, intuition, and experience.
3. Administration — the gift of organizing human and material resources for the work of Christ.
4. Apostleship — the gift of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to other cultures and foreign peoples.
5. Shepherding — the gift of guiding and empowering others to faithful service.
6. Faith — the gift that empowers an individual or group to hold fast to their convictions regardless of external circumstances.
7. Miracles — the gift that recognizes and facilitates the miraculous power of God in the world.
8. Prophecy — the gift of speaking God’s word clearly and faithfully.
9. Leadership — the orchestration of the gifts and resources for ministry.
10. Giving — the gift of supplying physical and material needs for ministry.
11. Compassion — an exceptional empathy that moves one to action on behalf of others.
12. Healing — the gift of channeling God’s healing power to those who are afflicted in body, mind, or spirit.
13. Discernment — the ability to separate truth from erroneous teaching and rely on spiritual intuition to receive God’s guidance.
14. Teaching — the ability to share spiritual and scriptural truths with others in a transforming way.
15. Helping — the gift of supporting the demanding work and workers of Jesus Christ.
16. Evangelism — the gift of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.
17. Servanthood — the gift of providing for the spiritual and material needs of others without condition.
18. Exhortation — the gift of exceptional encouragement and hopefulness.
19. Tongues — the ability to communicate the gospel to other people in a foreign language not studied.
20. Interpretation of Tongues — the ability to understand and translate the gospel when it is communicated in a foreign language not studied.

1Dick and Miller, 38.
IV. The Spiritual Gifts Process

1. **Identify your gift**
2. **Use your gifts**
3. **Avoid abuse**

Our Primary Task

The primary task of the church is to “make disciples” (Matt 28:18-20). The disciple-making process involves a chain of activities, send forth to live transformed/transfoming lives, reach out and continue the process. “Spiritual gifts discovery is not a program, and it is not a complete process in itself.”¹ Spiritual gifts discovery is just the first step to a lifelong journey of growth and discovery.

¹Dick and Miller, 8.
1. Identify your gift

2 Tim 2:15  “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed.”

How do you identify your spiritual gifts?¹

- Take a spiritual gifts inventory
- Have the body of the church affirm your gift
- Have the Lord confirm your gifts through prayer
- Experiment – use your gifts in a ministry

2. Use your gifts

The development of the spiritual gifts is related to:

- Your experience
- Your service
- Your conviction
- A specific call

According to Dan R. Dick and Barbara Miller, “There is no one right way to develop and discover our gifts. What is important is that we try some things that feel right and see what the Holy Spirit will provide.”²


²Dick and Miller, 105.
Verifying your gifts

- Confirmation by the church body
- Confirmation by the Lord through intercessory prayer

3. Avoid abuse

Abuses of Spiritual Gifts:
- Gift projection - "Why don’t you have my gift?"
- Gift exaltation - "My gift is better than yours."

V. Spiritual Gifts Benefits

1. Personal
2. Church
3. God’s Kingdom

Personal Application Card

Name: ___________________Date: _______ Topic: ________________________________

Principle or teaching I am going to apply this week: ________________________________

What am I going to do (in general)? _____________________________________________

List three or more steps I will take in applying this Biblical principle or teaching this week:
1. ___________________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________________

How do I think my life (or the lives of others) will be different if I make these changes? ________________________________________________
Two Chapters to be memorized:

"The 12th and 13th chapters of 1 Corinthians should be committed to memory, written in the mind and heart."¹

"Read this chapter (1Cor 13) every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength."²

Churches are powerless without the Holy Ghost and His anointing (Acts 1:8). Church growth comes as the result of the Holy Ghost dwelling in and on the members as they function in ministry through God’s spiritual gifts. And this is the most exiting task of the pastor, as Paul stated right before he listed the spiritual gifts, "equip the saint for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:11). "Not to do the work of the ministry, but to equip the members to do the work of the ministry."³

The concept that every believer has been ordained to ministry and receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of ministry has being well defended.⁴ Ministries resulting from spiritual gifts are for the building up of the church, not the individual. They were given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph 4:12). The Spirit singles out individuals for particular ministries (1 Cor 12:11) by distributing spiritual gifts, and gives ability to perform those ministries (Acts 1:8). Spiritual gifts are useless without active service, they are not an end in themselves.

¹Ellen G. White, Manuscript 82, 1898.
²Ellen G. White, Review and Herald 21, 1904.
³Gladden, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Churches, 6.
⁴Fowler, 88.
(2) PRINCIPLES FOR PERSONAL CHRISTIAN WITNESSING

According to the New Testament, church growth was natural as a result of committed disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit:

- Acts 1:15
- Acts 2:41, 42
- Acts 4:4
- Acts 5:14
- Acts 6:1, 7
- Acts 9:31
- Acts 16:5
- Acts 21:20

1. Need of Involvement

There is need of involvement. E. G. White affirms, "The work of God in this earth can never be finished until men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with the ministers and church officers." 

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1This seminar was adapted from the Personal Ministries Handbook, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Go One Million edition.

2White, Gospel Workers, 351-352.
2. Why are people not involved?

1. Lack of confidence
2. Problem of unknown potential
3. Have never been asked
4. No training

"Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin."¹

5. Limited understanding of role:
   - Christianity has mistakenly divided the church: Clergy versus Laity.
   - The biblical meaning of laity is related to the meaning of the Greek word “Laos,” which means a special people or God’s own people. In the Old Testament, Israel; in the New Testament, those who believe in Christ and accepted Him as their Lord and Saviour.
   - “The idea that the minister must carry all the burdens and do all the work is a great mistake.”²
   - The theology of involvement is based upon:
     - a biblical command (Matt 28:19, 20)
     - the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9)
     - the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12)
     - the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4, 5)

¹White, Christian Service, 59.
²Ibid., 68.
6. Motivating factors for witnessing:

- Witnessing is a biblical command
  
  (Matt 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8; Isa 60:1; Acts 13:47; Mark 5:19).

- It brings joy to God’s heart; as it is presented in the parables of - the
  lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
    - the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)
    - the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7).

- Witnessing is the heart’s response to love (2 Cor 5:14).

- Witnessing contributes to spiritual life, and “in order to enter into His
  joy, the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice, we must
  participate in His labor for their redemption.”¹ It brings “strength to
  resist evil.”²

- Witnessing is related to His second coming (Matt 24:14). The Latter
  Rain cannot come until the “largest portion of the church are...
  laboring together with God.”³ The signs around us show in an
  undisputable way that the end of this world is near. “Time is short, and
  our forces must be organized to do a larger work.”⁴

¹White, The Desire of Ages, 142.
³White, Review and Herald, July 21, 1896.
⁴White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:27.
3. The Role of Laity

Church pastors must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the disciple-making process. "The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers"\(^1\) usually the "people have had too much sermonizing; but have they been taught how to labor for those for whom Christ died?"\(^2\)

Ministry in the world involves primarily proclamation, service, and fellowship. Pastors and lay members should work together and "go forth into the ripening fields."\(^3\) The responsibility of soul winning is not only for the pastor or officers in the church, "every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost. . . To every one work has been allotted, and no one can be a substitute for another."\(^4\) This point is strongly supported by Ephesians 2:10 and 2 Timothy 1:9.

The average Christian church has 10 percent of members who are active in some kind of personal ministry, and 50 percent have no interest in serving in any ministry.\(^5\) The challenge is to mobilize that 40 percent that is not yet active. Most of the time, we call the active member who attends and contributes regularly to church. In reality, they are not more than spectators.

\(^1\)White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:19.
\(^2\)Ibid., 6:431.
\(^3\)White, *Christian Service*, 67.
\(^4\)Ibid., 10.
4. Transforming Spectators into Participators

R. Warren presents some very interesting ideas.¹

1. Teach the Biblical Basis for Every-Member Ministry. People need to know why before you challenge them how to be involved in ministry. Warren used a four-pillar biblical foundation:

   (1) Every believer is a minister – every Christian is created for ministry (Eph 2:10), saved for ministry (2 Tim 1:9), called into ministry (1 Pet 2:9-10), gifted for ministry (1 Pet 4:10), authorized for ministry (Matt 28:18-20), commanded to minister (Matt 20:26-28), to be prepared for ministry (Eph 4:11-12), needed for ministry (1 Cor 12:27), will be accountable and rewarded according to his/her ministry (Col 3:23-24);
   (2) Every ministry is important (1 Corinthians 12:18-22);
   (3) Everyone is dependent on each other, and must work together;
   (4) Ministry is the expression of personal shape: spiritual gifts, heart (passion), abilities, personality, and experiences.

2. Streamline your organizational structure. People today have less discretionary time than they had before, so the most valuable asset they can give to the church is their time. People should be invited to minister, not to be seated on a committee. The difference between maintenance, church work, and ministry, the work of the church, must be understood. Warren presents the difference between a committee and a lay ministry:

   "Committees discuss it, but ministries do it. Committees argue, ministries act.
   Committees maintain, ministries minister. Committees talk and consider, ministries serve and care. Committees discuss needs, ministries meet needs."²

²Ibid., 376-377.
3. Establish a ministry placement process, where classes are taught to start the process of discovering their personal profile and identify areas of ministry. People will be challenged to commit themselves to ministry. They will not discover their gifts to start ministry, they will be involved in ministry to discover their gifts.

4. Provide on-the-job training. Once people start ministering, they will receive training. This will give them the opportunity to be involved as quickly as possible in actual ministry.

5. Never start a ministry without a minister. The most critical factor in a ministry is not the idea, but the leadership. Most of the time we have a list of positions and we start to fill in the names. We should do the opposite.

   To keep lay people involved in ministry we should establish minimum standards and guidelines. A job description for every position in each ministry that explains all the commitment, resources, restrictions, lines of authority, and results expected. A few guidelines are very important: do not expect the staff to run your ministry, the ministry must be compatible with our church’s beliefs, values, and philosophy of ministry; no fund-raising is allowed.

   A minister should be allowed to quit or change ministries gracefully. People should be encouraged to try a new ministry if they are unsatisfied where they are currently serving.

   The secret to motivating people to serve for a long period of time is to give them a sense of ownership. Trust people and delegate authority with responsibility. We will have the best from people if we give them challenge, control, and credit.
We should provide the necessary support to continue to have lay involvement. Don’t expect people to succeed without support. They will need material, communication, promotional, and moral support. The vision for service has to be renewed regularly. There is nothing more important or more rewarding than serving Jesus.

Nobody is saved by service, but for service. A true disciple is a full-time Christian. A Christian who does not serve is nonsense, because “every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver”\(^1\)

5. Process of Witnessing

In the process of witnessing, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then he bade them, “Follow Me.”\(^2\)

Christ’s Methods:

- He mingled with men as One who desired their good
- He showed sympathy
- He ministered to their needs
- He won their confidence
- He bade them, “Follow Me.”

\(^1\)White, *Christian Service*, 9.

6. Receptivity

There are several keys to discovering people's openness to receive the gospel message:

- Family dilemma
- Emotional crisis
- Financial crisis
- Health problem
- World trauma
- Personal crisis

7. Finding Interests

Another important element in the process of making disciples is the communication of God's love through a social network. This has been called the "Oikos Principle."

**The Oikos Principle**

- Oikos means "house" (Greek)
- Bible: "household" extended family
- Biblical examples: Abraham, Joseph, etc.

Oikos describes all social systems "related to each other through ties of kinship, tasks, and territory."¹ "This was the way the Christian Church was established. Christ first selected a few persons and bade them follow Him. They then went in search of their relatives and acquaintances, and brought them to Christ. This is the way we are to labor.

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¹Arm and Arm, 40.
A few souls brought out and fully established in the truth will, like the first disciples, be laborers for others.\textsuperscript{1}

8. How Do People Join the Christian Church?

The majority of people that join the church (75-90\%) come by the influence of a friend or relative.

These are some other ways to find interested individuals:

- Visitors to Sabbath School and other programs
- Individuals who have completed any Bible correspondence programs
- Parents of children who attend Vacation Bible School
- Friends from the Ingathering Program
- Non-SDA students studying in Adventist schools and their parents
- Regular customers of literature evangelists
- Those who have attended evangelistic meetings and who have not made their decision for Jesus

\textsuperscript{1}White, \textit{Welfare Ministry}, 60.
9. The "FORT" principle

The "FORT" principle is a simple strategy for personal witnessing.

"FORT" is an acronym for a sequence of questions presented with the intention to raise spiritual interest and create an opportunity for witnessing: Family, Occupation, Religion, and Testimony.

The "FORT" principle

Family

Are you originally from here?

Where are you from?

How is your family doing?

Occupation

What kind of work do you do?

How long have you worked there?

Religion

Do you normally attend here?

What is your religious background?

Which church do you attend?

Testimony

My life before I accepted Christ.

How I became a Christian.

My life since becoming a Christian.
10. Personal Testimony

Your personal testimony of what Jesus Christ has done and is doing in your life is a powerful, essential response to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. The best example of this is when the man, freed from Satan's grasp, has but one message to share: That Jesus had torn him loose from Satan's grip.

If you are a sinner, if you trust in Jesus Christ for eternal life, then you have a special testimony to share. I suggest that you consider designing a short, 3-point testimony . . .

1. Tell about your life before you knew Christ, without the gory details.

2. Tell how you came to know Jesus Christ as your personal friend.

3. Tell what God is doing in your life and what this means to you.

After your three-minute testimony, ask your friend if there is any reason why he would not want to invite Jesus to be his personal friend.
11. Steps to Christ

1. If Jesus came tonight would you be ready? (I John 5:11, 12)
2. Why would God let anybody into heaven? (John 3:16)
3. Are human beings naturally good? (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)
4. What is sin? (I John 3:4)
5. What can I do about it? (I John 1:9)

Ask your friend if he would like to be forgiven and become Christ’s friend. If so, have him repeat after you: “God, I know you love me. I am selfish and want to be changed. Jesus, please forgive me. Save me and change me. Amen.”

12. Present the Gospel in its Simplicity

E. G. White recommends to “visit the people who live close to you, and for the sympathy and the kindness, make sure you reach their hearts. . . . Sympathize with them, pray with them, take advantage of the opportunities to do good to them, and when possible, get together with a few people and read the Bible to their darkened minds.”¹

Most of the time spend in missionary work has been misused trying to convince people about doctrines. “There is no need to spend much time in doctrinal themes; speak of the work and the sacrifice of Christ. . . . Christ crucified: speak of this truth, pray about it and sing it and it will shatter and it will win souls.”² Less time should be spent on trying to give people knowledge of the Word. Instead, we should know God and tell others how we “found Jesus and how blessed you have been ever since you put yourself

¹White, Christian Service, 144, 145.
²Ibid., 142, 163.
in His service. . . . Speak to them about the happiness and joy that accompany Christian life.”\textsuperscript{1} Instead of trying to convince people, we should “win their hearts and you shall speak to them about the Savior. . . . God’s angels will assist you in accompanying you to the homes of the people you visit.”\textsuperscript{2}

The plan of salvation has to be presented in a very simple way. We should follow Christ’s example, presenting the gospel in its simplicity. First, we should present God’s initiative to reach fallen human beings (John 3:16). Second, the state of the human being is hopeless without God (Rom 3:23). Third, Jesus came to give us hope; salvation is a gift (Rom 6:23). And finally, all those who accept Jesus will become children of God (John 1:12). This is a simple four-step presentation of the gospel that can be used right after the personal testimony, or as an introductory Bible study to lead someone to accept Jesus as a personal Savior. “What you need is a living experience in the things of God and simplicity in presenting the love of Christ to the lost.”\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}White, \textit{Christian Service}, 156.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 128, 147.
\textsuperscript{3}White, \textit{Sons and Daughters of God}, 266.
(3) HOW TO PRESENT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DOCTRINES

I. Introduction to the Bible

1. Revelation

- The word revelation comes from the Latin revelo – to remove the veil, to manifest, to discover.
- Definition: the auto-manifestation of God to the human being, without that we will never come to know Him.

2. Inspiration

- The concept comes from the Greek Theopneustos, which means breath of God, divine air in movement (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21).
- Theory Dynamic of inspiration - God revealed concepts and ideas, instead of dictating messages to the prophets.

3. Books of the Bible

- Old Testament (39 Books)
  - Law – Pentateuch
  - History / Psalms
  - Prophecy
- New Testament (27 Books)
  - Gospels
  - Acts / Epistles
  - Universal Epistles
  - Revelation
- Approximately 44 authors
- 1,500-year period
  - 1st: Job/Genesis – Moses (circa 1,450 B.C.)
II. Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs

- 1872 - Synopsis of our Faith
- 1931 - 22 Fundamental Beliefs
- 1980 - 27 Fundamental Beliefs
- 2005 - 28 Fundamental Beliefs

Since its beginning, the Adventist movement has been reluctant to establish a creed. However, from time to time, it was necessary to summarize our beliefs. In 1872, it was printed for the first time as a “Synopsis of our Faith,” including twenty-five propositions. Later on, it was expanded to twenty-eight and appeared for the first time in the yearbook of 1889. In 1931, a statement of twenty-two fundamental beliefs was printed in the yearbook. In 1980, a more comprehensive summary presented 27 Fundamental Beliefs.¹

“An expansion and revision occurred at the 2005 Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, when an additional fundamental belief was voted, not to add new or previously unknown material, but better to express the church’s understanding of God’s power to give victorious life over the powers of evil to believers in Jesus Christ.”²


²Ibid., vi.
The 28 Fundamental Doctrines

The Doctrine of God
1. The Word of God
2. The Godhead
3. The Father
4. The Son
5. The Holy Spirit

The Doctrine of Man
6. The Creation
7. The Nature of Man

The Doctrine of Salvation
8. The Great Controversy
9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ
10. The Experience of Salvation
11. Growing in Christ

The Doctrine of the Church
12. The Church
13. The Remnant and Its Mission
14. Unity in the Body of Christ
15. Baptism
16. The Lord's Supper
17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries
18. The Gift of Prophecy

The Doctrine of the Christian Life
19. The Law of God
20. The Sabbath
21. Stewardship
22. Christian Behavior
23. Marriage and Family

The Doctrine of the Christian Life
24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary
25. The Second Coming of Christ
26. Death and Resurrection
27. The Millennium and the End of Sin
28. The New Earth
III. Seventh-day Adventist Distinctive Doctrines

1. The Restoration of Truth and the Remnant

God always had someone or a group of people with the mission of “Restoration of Truth and the Remnant.”

- Flood – Noah
- Ur – Abraham
- Egypt – Exodus – Moses
- Roman Empire – Jesus
- Dark Age – Reformers
- 19th Century – Adventist Movement

John Fowler drew attention to the importance of choosing the right subjects to preach: “The goal is to gently and lovingly lead the hearers to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and to follow Him in acceptance of all the Word of God.”¹ Our focus will be how to present the Adventist doctrine, after someone accepts Jesus as their personal Savior. Ellen G. White suggests that “when you have a congregation before you for only two weeks, do not defer the presentation of the Sabbath question until everything else is presented, supposing that you thus pave the way for it. Lift up the standard, the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. . . . The present truth is to be our burden. The third angel’s message must do its work of separating from the churches a people who will take their stand on the platform of eternal truth.”²

¹Fowler, 95.
²White, Evangelism, 229.
2. To present the distinctive truths:

   In the book *Evangelism* we find some of the distinctive truths that must be presented:

   1. Great Controversy
   2. The Law and the Sabbath
   3. The Sanctuary and the Judgment
   4. Death and Hell
   5. Creation and Eschatology
   6. Wholeness of Man - Health
   7. Christian Lifestyle

3. Our Mission - Return to the Word and to present the Three Angel’s Message

   Our distinctive contribution to Christian doctrine - “The one distinctive, separative, structural truth – the sole doctrinal teaching that identifies and sets Seventh-day Adventists apart from all other Christian bodies past and present – is what we have always designated the ‘Sanctuary truth.’ . . . All other major doctrines that we hold and teach – Seventh-day Sabbath, Conditional Immortality, Second Advent, Spirit of Prophecy, prophetic interpretation, premillennialism, Righteousness by Faith, immersion, tithing, et cetera – have all been held by others, one group or more, in whole or in part.”

   But neither in the early church, nor in the Reformation church, “was the Heavenly Sanctuary truth taught, with its Ministering Priest officiating in two distinct phases of that

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1 White, *Evangelism*, chapter VIII.

mediatorial service, with the second phase comprising God's great present Judgment Hour activities."

"Adventism began with a certainty that God had raised this people to proclaim the last warning message to the world, a message of the 'everlasting gospel' in the context of the three angels of Revelation 14. . . . And what He has given us are crucial, distinctive truths that make us Seventh-day Adventists. . . . Not that all these truths are uniquely Adventist. Many aren't nor should they be. But taken together, in the context of what we call 'present truth,' these teachings make up a distinctive message that no one else is proclaiming. And because no one else is, we have to. That's, in fact, why we're here."

In 1889, E. G. White endorsed the righteousness-by-faith message presented the year before. She outlined the "old landmarks" to which the church is committed:

The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The no immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks."

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1 Froom, 541.


According to this quotation, there are five old landmarks: the pre-advent judgment, the three angels’ messages, the law, the Sabbath, and the mortality of the soul. Our mission is to return to the Word and to present the Three Angels’ Message.

**Pillars of Faith – the SDA Distinctive Doctrines**

*Pillars of Faith* is a nine Bible study series using this distinctive truth as the main topic. All the fundamental beliefs are quickly mentioned throughout the lessons. “The present truth is to be our burden. The third angel’s message must do its work of separating from the churches a people who will take their stand on the platform of eternal truth.”¹

A sound understanding of what the Bible teaches is fundamental to all forms of outreach, evangelism, and nurturing. *Pillars of Faith* is a Bible study guide that can be used in Bible studies, Sabbath School, seminars, reaping events, and small group settings. In my personal experience giving Bible studies, leading small groups, or leading reaping evangelistic events, this material has been proven to be very useful.

*Pillars of Faith* summarizes the whole third angel’s message. This study guide is concise and right to the point. At the same time, you may follow the outline but do not move ahead faster than the interests can follow. Each lesson covers one or two of the “Pillars,” but also gives the presenter an opportunity to talk about all the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs.

¹White, *Evangelism*, 229.
Principles and Methods for Obtaining Decisions

This seminar will present the basic principles on how to bring people to a decision for Christ. We should have a compelling sense of mission and an aggressive character. To persuade another person, it is necessary to set an example in life. It is also imperative to have a conviction of the truth and to let our speech be persuasive. Demand a decision in every message, not waiting until the series is finished. There is a psychological moment to ask for a decision. Study the countenance of the hearers. Let the experiences of others help make decisions. Make the decisions in a personal way. Remember, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and to convert, therefore, do not push them to the point of refusing.

Four aspects of the process of appealing for a decision to accept Christ are: (1) God dearly loves all; (2) All are in need spiritually; (3) God’s solution to problems is found in Jesus Christ; and (4) Jesus must personally be invited to help.

Some points to keep in mind on how to get decisions are: Ask for a decision at the end of every study. Encourage the student to put in practice each new duty. Do not ask for a major decision until the prospect has sufficient information to enable an intelligent decision to be made. Call for a decision when evidence is seen of conviction. Learn to recognize signals. Help the student make the decision definite. Clear away obstacles. Use decision questions.

There are five motives that move people to decision: desire for gain, desire for comfort and convenience, desire to please loved ones, desire to gratify pride, and desire

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1This seminar was adapted from G. Earl Knight, *Church Growth Made Easier For Pastors and Laymen*, Greater New York Conference.
There are several advantages to this Bible study guide. Since it is available in four different languages (English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese), it facilitates more participation in a multilingual environment (we can have parents reading in Spanish and the children reading in English, all following the same study guide). It gives opportunity to review all the doctrines in one week, and to lead people to a decision for Christ (there are many spouses, children, and visitors attending church for a long time and these topics can help them to make a decision for Christ and be baptized at the end of the week). It is not just a “short” Bible study guide, it is based on E. G. White’s suggestions about the Present Truth, Pillars of Our Faith, and Platform of the Truth, presented along with the Fundamental Beliefs.

4. Jesus, the center of the message, the center of every doctrine.

Even though this Bible study was designed to present the pillars of our faith, it is very important to present Jesus first. A person has to accept Jesus before being asked to make a decision on any other important truth of the Word of God. Jesus has to be presented as the center of the message, the center of every doctrine. “Let every teacher present an open door before all who will come to Jesus, repenting of their sins”1

“We will study each, doctrine from the perspective of Christ as the hub from whom all truth radiates. Each doctrine is to be a window that reveals Christ in all His matchless beauty. The Cross, the sanctuary, the high-priestly ministry of Christ, the three angel’s messages, the antitypical day of atonement, the judgment, the Second Coming, and others all form a cluster of interrelated lessons that-understood in the light of Christ-

1White, Evangelism, 217.
define who we are and what we are supposed be in these last days as we await the glorious return of our Lord, a return to be preceded by a fiery, Holy Spirit-inspired conviction burning in the hearts of those who 'keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus' (Revelation 14:12)."  

"Biblical truth is personal; it connects us to a Person. ‘This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent’ (John 17:3, NIV). The heart and the core of the Adventist faith cannot be ideal, a philosophy, even a lifestyle; it is a Person – Jesus Christ. To have and to maintain a trusting, loving, and obedient relationship with that Person is the essence of the Christian life. . . . That’s why Jesus is not one of the pillars of our faith; He is, instead, the foundation of the pillars. Without that foundation, the pillars – no matter how solid, no matter how firm in and of themselves – sit on flimsy sands that ebb and flow with the tides of time, culture, and trends. As such, these pillars would inevitably fall. We must, then, view the distinctive beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in light of our relationship to Christ."  

"Christ demonstrated that the Scriptures point to Him. . . . Jesus demonstrated that His ministry is the central theme of the Old Testament"  

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1 Goldstein, 3.
2 Ibid., 6.
and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.”

“Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended into the heavens, Christ coming again, should so soften, gladden, and fill the mind of the minister that he will present these truths to the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer… Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured froth in every supplication, Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God.”

“Christ is the center of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. All Bible truth finds its center in the One who is ‘the truth’ (John 14:6). . . . Every Bible truth reveals a facet of Christ’s character. As we take our stand at Calvary, the Cross will open before our wondering gaze the deeper meaning of redemption through Christ.”

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1 White, Gospel Workers, 315.

2 White, Evangelism, 185

3 Gane, 12.
Jesus is the center of every doctrine

E. G. White returned from her stay in Europe in 1887 with a great concern about the spirituality of the church. She mentioned that the leaders had become very controversial.\(^1\) Later, she declared “revival of true godliness” to be our most imperative need,\(^2\) this revival begun just after the Conference of 1888. The Minneapolis Session remains as a unique point starting with conflict followed by a period of revival and heart searching. This was brought by the message of Righteousness by Faith in Christ as ‘all the fullness of the Godhead,’ an expression that became a virtual keynote, stressed at the stormy session.

“Christ was uplifted before the Conference as never before in our history. . . . It eventuated at last in a unified platform of ‘Fundamental Beliefs,’ preparatory to the grand climax of the Movement, assuredly destined to come.”\(^3\)

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\(^1\)Review and Herald, July 20, 1886.

\(^2\)Review and Herald, March 22, 1887, 177-178.

\(^3\)Froom, 187.
This seminar will introduce the basic principles of Christian leadership and relate these principles to the numerical and spiritual growth of the local church.

**Spiritual Leadership**

There is a great enthusiasm regarding the theme of leadership. Bookstores are loaded with all kinds of literature and many Christian leaders have demonstrated an almost indiscriminate and uncritical acceptance of secular leadership theory, without measuring it against the timeless precepts of Scripture. “Christian leaders who know God and who know how to lead in a Christian manner will be phenomenally more effective in their world than even the most skilled and qualified leaders who lead without God. Spiritual leadership is not restricted to pastors and missionaries. It is the responsibility of all Christians whom God wants to use to make a difference in their world.”

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, in their book, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, report that they discovered over 850 different definitions of leadership. Blackaby gives a brief definition that describes what is at the heart of being a spiritual leader: “Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God’s agenda.” Even though spiritual leadership involves many of the same principles as general leadership, spiritual leadership has certain distinctive qualities. First, the spiritual leader’s task is to move people from where they are to where God wants them to be; this is influence. Second, spiritual leaders depend on the Holy Spirit. Third, they are accountable to God. Spiritual

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2Ibid., 16.
leaders can influence all people, not just God's people. And finally, spiritual leaders work from God's agenda.

Leadership is influence, everyone is a leader. If we take on the name "Christian" and do not demonstrate a Christ-like character or Christian ethics, we dishonor God, we misrepresent Jesus, and God's name is blasphemed because of us (Rom 2:17-29). It is only through the grace of God that we can make a right use of our ability to influence others. Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own. Every person is consciously or unconsciously affected by our influence. We cannot escape from this responsibility. There are many who will fear to meet the judgment of God for the results of their influence.

The Christian motivation for service is not fear of punishment or the hope of reward. As E. G. White said, "They behold the savior's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him."

There is a great need for leaders that God can trust. "The greatest want of the world is the want of men, men who will not be bought or sold; men who in their inmost souls are true and honest; men who do not fear to call sin by its right name; men whose

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1Richard Marker, Spiritual Leadership workshop presented as part of the Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Certification Program training in the Greater New York Conference.

2White, Christ's Object Lessons, 339-341.

3White, The Desire of Ages, 480.
conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole; men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.\textsuperscript{1}

**Theological Foundations for Church Leadership**

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus presents a biblical basis for church organization (16:13-19). Peter describes it as “the priesthood of all believers” (for Peter’s understanding of Matt 16:13-19 see 1 Pet 2:4-6, 9). Peter’s Symbolism: Christ is the Cornerstone in a living structure upon which we are living stones built to form a temple. Other passages refer to “the Body of Christ” (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4).

The Biblical Leadership Model: the stones which hold up the most stones are the lowest in the structure. They are supporting or holding up other stones, signifying servant leadership. As the lowest, they are also the closest to the Cornerstone, signifying their need to be the closest to Jesus Christ. Paul describes the same symbolism as Peter (Eph 2:18-22).

God is the real leader, the Head of the Church. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matt 16:18). Paul confirms “the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph 4:15). The New Testament church and the Protestant reformers saw Christ as the leader of the church, training, equipping and empowering the members through the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-16; Acts 1:4-5).

The leader functions as a steward “ambassador for Christ.” Jesus said, “I give you the keys to the kingdom” (Matt 16:19). He also presented the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30). “We therefore are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His

\textsuperscript{1}White, *Education*, 57.
appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20). The leader governs with the expectation that he will one
day give up his role in a new era. The leader’s role is servant leadership. Jesus said, “On
this rock I shall build my church” (Matt 16:18) compared with “you also, as living
stones” (1 Pet 2:2-6, 9). The greatest is he who humbles himself like this child (Matt
18:1-4).

Even secular writers recognize Jesus as a compelling model of good leadership.
He illustrated the secrets of servant leadership. He humbled Himself and allowed God to
exalt Him; He followed His Father’s will; He defined greatness as being a servant; He
was secure in His own identity; He was willing to leave the head table to serve others; He
shared responsibility and authority with followers; and He built and empowered a team to
carry out His vision for the world. “Jesus has established the model for Christian
leaders.”

The church organization is well represented by the body of Christ concept (Rom
12; 1 Cor 12-13; Eph 3-4). And the spiritual gifts are given for the distribution of roles in
the Church. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the principles of body life: the spiritual gifts (vss.
1-2); Christ is Lord (v. 3); gifts are given for the common good (v. 4-7), gifts are given
for ministry or service results (v. 8-10), gifts are distributed according to God’s will, not
man’s (v. 11); there should be unity in diversity (v. 12); and membership by baptism of
the Holy Spirit (v. 13); members are equal (v. 13) and interdependent (vss. 14-20); the
body is only as strong as its weakest part (vss. 21-24); there is equal concern for one
another (vss. 25-26); and some gifts are greater, some less (vss. 27-31).

\[1\text{Blackaby, } \textit{Spiritual Leadership,}\ 28.\]
The challenge is to build a gift-based church using a holistic approach to spiritual gifts, where people are placed in the most appropriate places for their gifts and interaction skills. Leadership trains, equips, and empowers through delegation of responsibility. Distribution of responsibility is made according to natural talents. One’s function within the organization is to be viewed as a role, not a position. Power and authority are to be shared. Dysfunctional organizations often flow from dysfunctional leadership.

The Work of the Pastor

Even though there are other factors affecting the life and growth of the churches, “the evidence clearly establishes that competent pastoral leadership is one of the most important factors in church growth.”¹ Effective pastoral leadership will result in effective lay leadership, which is also indispensable for expansion of the kingdom.

The pastor should model Christian leadership principles training, equipping, and empowering the members of the Body of Christ. Our Primary Task – Make Disciples

Building a Gift-Based Church - A holistic approach to spiritual gifts: People are placed in the most appropriate places for their gifts and interaction skills. The pastor “must be willing to do whatever is necessary to secure and train adequate leadership because this is the key to natural church growth.”²

¹Fowler, 118.
God’s Purpose for His Church

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.¹ "The task of church leadership is to discover and remove growth-restricting diseases and barriers so that natural, normal growth can occur."²

As Rick Warren has presented in his book, “Every church is driven by something.” But he believes that in order for a church to be healthy, it must become a purpose-driven church, and it is based upon five New Testament principles. “Churches grow warmer through fellowship. Churches grow deeper through discipleship. Churches grow stronger through worship. Churches grow broader through ministry. Churches grow larger through evangelism.”³

As Ken Hemphill stated, “Many churches, without knowing it, are doing things which virtually assure that they will remain small – a sort of bonsai church.”⁴ Church growth should be natural. According to Christian A. Schwarz, “God has provided everything we will ever need for church growth, yet we do not always make proper use of it . . . The goal is to let God’s growth automatisms flourish, instead of wasting energy on human-made programs.”⁵

²Warren, The Purpose Driven Church, 16.
³Ibid., 49.
⁴Hemphill, 14.
⁵Schwarz, 7.
It is not about church growth, it is about healthy churches. In the most comprehensive research about church growth ever made, Schwarz reports that in over a thousand different churches on all six continents, he identified eight universal principles of "Natural Church Development," healthy growing churches have in common: Empowering Leadership, Gift-oriented Ministry, Passionate Spirituality, Functional Structures, Inspiring Worship Service, Holistic Small Groups, Need-oriented Evangelism, Loving Relationships.

"Leaders of the growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as helpers in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. Rather, they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assist Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be."1

True leaders are secure enough to empower others and train others to be leaders. "God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men."2 “If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his

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1Schwarz, 22.

2White, Testimonies for the Church, 8:236.
will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him, lest great harm be
done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others.”

A common denominator in every growing church is a leadership that is not afraid
to believe God. Do not worry about growth, but focus on the fulfillment of God’s purpose
for you and your church. “God will grow his church to the size he wants it, at the rate
that’s best for your situation.”

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1 White, Testimonies to Ministers, 362.
2 Warren, Purpose Driven Church, 394.
(5) PRINCIPLES FOR EVANGELISM IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

God's Purpose for His Church

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.  

The Great Commission

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt 28:19-20).

To each of us

The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister.  

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1White, Acts of the Apostles, 9

2White, The Desire of Ages, 822.
Discipleship

The first disciples went forth preaching the word. They revealed Christ in their lives. And the Lord worked with them. . . . These disciples prepared themselves for their work. Before the day of Pentecost they met together, and put away all differences. They were of one accord. They believed Christ's promise that the blessing would be given, and they prayed in faith. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely; they were weighted with the burden for the salvation of souls. The gospel was to be carried to the uttermost parts of the earth, and they claimed the endowment of power that Christ had promised. Then it was that the Holy Spirit was poured out, and thousands were converted in a day.

So it may be now. Instead of man's speculations, let the Word be preached. Let Christians put away their dissensions, and give themselves to God for the salvation of men. Let them in faith ask for the blessing, and it will come.¹

¹White, The Desire of Ages, 827.
Jesus' Method Works!

Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people.¹

The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”²

Jesus’ Method of Witnessing - Socialized, Sympathized, and Served

“While we should cultivate sociability, let it not be merely for amusement, but for a purpose. There are souls to save.”³

Jesus’ Method of Witnessing

Socialized + Sympathized + Served = Soul Winning

Christ’s Methods

- He got along with people.
- He ministered to their needs.
- He sympathized and empathized with the people.
- Won their confidence.
- Said: “Follow me.”

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 143.
²Ibid.
³White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:599.
Divine Counsels:

• "Christ made the presentation of his message precede for acts of love and benevolence."\(^1\)

• "He did not any human being for granted. . . . Jesus saw in every soul a human being who should be called to His kingdom."\(^2\)

• "He makes an invitation: 'Come to me all that are weary and I will bring rest to your life.'"\(^3\)

• "God retains his blessings because His people do not work in harmony with his methods."\(^4\)

• "Now is the time for us to follow the correct learning methods and to imitate the example of Christ."\(^5\)

• "If we follow the example of Christ in doing goodness, our hearts will open up as well as His."\(^6\)

• "My brothers and sisters, visit the people who live close to you, and for the sympathy and the kindness, make sure you reach their hearts . . . helping where it is needed."\(^7\)

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\(^1\) White, *Christian Service*, 142.
\(^2\) Ibid., 151, 149.
\(^3\) White, *Ministry of Healing*, 20.
\(^5\) White, *Evangelism*, 44.
\(^6\) White, *Christian Service*, 150.
\(^7\) Ibid., 144, 142.
• "Sympathize with them, pray with them, take advantage of the opportunities to do good to them, and when possible, get together with a few people and read the Bible to their darkened minds."\(^1\)

• "There is no need to spend much time in doctrinal themes; speak of the work and the sacrifice of Christ."\(^2\)

• "Christ crucified: speak of this truth, pray about it and sing it and it will shatter and it will win souls."\(^3\)

• "Tell them how you found Jesus and how blessed you have been ever since you put yourself in His service. . . . Speak to them about the happiness and joy that accompany Christian life."\(^4\)

• "This way you will win their hearts and you shall speak to them about the Savior."\(^5\)

• "I am with you always," is his promise. "God's angels will assist you in accompanying you to the homes of the people you visit."\(^6\)

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\(^1\) White, *Christian Service*, 145.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid., 163.

\(^4\) Ibid., 156.

\(^5\) Ibid., 128.

\(^6\) Ibid., 144, 147.
1. Helpful tips on how to get into the house
   1. Use a small Bible
   2. Watch your conversation
   3. Never peek through doors or windows
   4. If there is no doorbell, give five firm knocks on the door.
   5. If you go around to the back, do not do it so quietly that someone might be caught by surprise and frightened or embarrassed.
   6. Do not stand too close to the door.
   7. Smile.
   8. Take a half step back.
   9. Introduce yourself.
   10. Be relaxed and get acquainted.

2. Marks of the Christian Culture:
   • Christ in the heart
   • Pleasant countenance
   • Careful grooming
   • No body odors
   • Appropriate dress
   • Sweet breath
   • Clean teeth
   • Remove rubbers or umbrella at the door
“If you fail ninety-nine times in a hundred, but succeed in saving the one soul from ruin, you have done a noble deed for the Master's cause.”¹

3. Three Principles of Bible Study
   a) Introduce Jesus first
   b) Gradually reveal the truth
   c) Frequent calls

4. Use the “F O R T” Principle
   F    Family
   O    Occupation
   R    Religion
   T    Testimony

5. How to present the gospel to a former member
   a) General Principles
      • Never reprove or condemn.
      • Never defend or take sides.
      • Ask for forgiveness.
      • Admit we commit mistakes; however, God does not err.
      • We can learn.
   b) Let’s always keep in mind the human pride factor.
   c) The key factor to reclaiming former members is love.

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:132.
6. A genuine conversion

The majority of the former members need to experience a genuine conversion, and have the assurance that God has accepted them.

"The Bible explains it in a very simple way. Allow me to read a few passages from your Bible."

- The Divine Attraction - 1 John 4:8
- The Problem of Sin - Rom 3:23
- The Solution: The Gift of God - Rom 6:23
- Separation of Sin - Rom 2:4
- Unity in Christ - Rev 3:20

7. Acceptance Prayer

"Dear God, I invite you to take control of my life. I want Jesus to come into my heart. I want you to be my Lord and Savior. Please forgive me of my sins. And I thank you for giving me eternal life in Jesus. Please help me to obey and follow you. In Jesus’ name, Amen."
(7) SIMPLE METHODS FOR GIVING A BIBLE STUDY

Simple Method is needed

1. It has proven very successful around the world.
2. Everybody can master it very quickly
3. The student learns better and faster.
4. The student is soon trained and equipped with completed study
guides to study the Bible.

God’s Instruction

- “Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. We are
to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world.”

- “Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening
before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of
the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On
every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth.
The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence.”

The Bible Study Leader

The key person to lead is the discipler or leader of the group. The Bible study
itself does not make disciples. Disciples make disciples. “God works through disciples to
model life in Christ for those who are maturing. Simply covering the content violates the

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1White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:150.

2Ibid., 9:126.
The intent of this tool. The tool is a vehicle which helps create the context and provide content for disciplers who want to invest themselves in love and commitment to growing disciples."

The Bible study should raise the most important Bible topics. The coordinator embodies the principles in life patterns and convictions. Modeling will be where the real instruction occurs. Remember Jesus’ words, ‘Everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher’ (Luke 6:40 RSV). The most recent studies in secular education reveal that modeling is still the most significant learning dynamic. Neither coercion nor rewards shape human behavior as much as a motivated attempt to resemble a specific person. The lowest level of learning is compliance when one individual has control over another. The second level is identification. Influence is maintained because of a desire to remain in a satisfying relationship. Internalization is the third and highest step, for the desired behavior has become intrinsically rewarding. Modeling creates an atmosphere that affects values, attitudes and behavior.

Preparation Needed

1. Heart Preparation

- Mark 1:35
- James 1:5
- John 16:13
- Prov 23:26
- Acts 1:8
- James 4:7, 8

“The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But

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1 Ogden, 11.
2 Ibid.
thus kept in possession by heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one.”

2. Preparation of Materials

- Bible
- Bible Study Guide
- Pictorial aid or other device

3. Mental Preparation - 2 Tim. 2:15

Building Interests for Bible Studies

- Making Friends with People
  - Matt 4:14 - Jesus loved people and never failed to help them (Mark 1:41, 6:34)
  - Matt 9:10 - Jesus was able to be friendly to all kinds of people (Mark 2:15)
  - John 3:1, 2 - Jesus showed interest in every one He met and tried to give them spiritual help (John 4:7)
  - Prov 18:24 - If we want to win people to Jesus, we must be friendly to them

\[1\] White, *Desire of Ages*, 324.
- When we meet someone: on the road, in a bus, at the market, in the village, at a store always be friendly: smile, talk to people, inquire about family, and give help if needed.

- There are many opportunities for us to offer help and friendship, such as: sickness, family death, new neighbors, people in prison, widows, old people, building/farming.

- **Home Visitation**

  - "How can the great work of the third angel's message be accomplished? It must largely accomplished by persevering, individual effort, by visiting the people in their home."\(^1\)

  - "There are families who will never be reached by the truth of God's word unless His servants enter their home."\(^2\)

- **New Testament Method of Creating and Building Interest**

  - The more closely the New Testament plan is followed in missionary labor, the more successful will be the results.

**The Method of Christ**

- "Our Savior went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate, blessed children, spoke words of hope, and comfort to the weary mothers."\(^3\)

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\(^3\) White, *Christian Service*, 114.
The Method of the Early Christian Church

- Acts 5:42 “And daily in the temple, and in every hose, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”
- They grew - Acts 2:47
- The whole city was evangelized: Acts 17:6
- Penetrating unentered areas - Acts 8:4
- Paul: “taught publicly and from house to house” Acts 20:20

Prospects for Bible Studies

- Children of church members - Heb 11
- Close relatives of church members
- Graduates of the Bible Correspondence School
- Interests of colporteurs
- Interests of hospital or medical outreach
- Branch Sabbath School interests
- Sabbath School members, but not church members

Tips on Finding Bible Studies

1. Distribute a series of tracts or a single tract.

2. Place enrollment cards in the doors.

3. Mass mail enrollment cards to postal areas.

4. Encourage all church members to carry enrollment cards at all times.

5. Give or, better, lend books.

6. Share a video or audio-cassette.

7. Use a Religious Interest Survey.

8. Use a Community Service survey.
Bible Study Outline

- **Introduction**

  To awaken the interest of the hearers

  Let your introduction statement make a lasting impression

  Could be a short story

  Important world events

  An arresting text that introduce the topic

  An appetizer that will make people crave for the main dish

- **Body**

  The body is the main dish.

  The body should satisfy the craving that is created by the introduction.

  It must be solid and in logical sequence from beginning to end.

  Present the subject with conviction and give room for the Holy Spirit.

  Pick verses that are simpler and have a direct connection to your next verse.

  Be brief, direct, and to the point.

  End your study before the interest fades away.

  10 to 15 texts in each will be sufficient.

- **Appeal or Conclusion**

  Summarizing

  Clinching

  Appealing

  Introducing the next topic
What to do at the study:

- Step 1: Be punctual
- Step 2: Be enthusiastic
- Step 3: Sit in the right place
- Step 4: Short introduction
- Step 5: Be understanding
- Step 6: Say something wise

How to present the Bible study:

- Step 1: Begin with prayer.
- Step 2: Give the introduction or review its high points.
- Step 3: You will want to ask each question.
- Step 4: Complement good answers.
- Step 5: After they read their answers, you might say, “Does anyone have a different answer?"
- Step 6: Always listen and ask questions.
- Step 7: Make brief and relevant comments as you go along.
- Step 8: Stick to the subject
- Step 9: Never introduce ideas for which the Bible student does not have sufficient background.
- Step 10: If question deals with a future controversial lesson give a short answer and say that this topic will be discussed later.
Two Ways to Give Studies

1) Drop-Off Studies

1. Leave study guides for student to study alone.
2. Return to pick up completed lessons and leave the next study guides.
3. Answer questions and seek to develop a relationship.

   **Key Feature:** the student does studies independently.

2) Sit-Down Studies

1. Instructor sits down with student and presents a Bible study.
2. One method of doing this is to review the study guide together and discuss the questions and answers.
3. Another method is for the instructor to present a study directly from the Bible with the student following in their Bible.

   **Key Feature:** Studies are presented directly from the Bible.

Benefits of Drop-Off Studies

1. Easy to get studies.
2. Easy to give a study.
3. Higher number of persons accepts the studies.
4. Doesn't require as much skill from the instructor.
Benefits of Sit-Down Studies

1. Qualifies the student as a true interest seeking.
   - Requires commitment
   - Reveals receptivity

2. Higher percentage completes the lessons.

3. Benefits the instructor
   - Learn the Bible better
   - Develops teaching skills
   - Develops witnessing skill

Sit-Down Studies

First present the Bible study.

Then, give the lesson guide as a printed review of your presentation.

How To Get Sit-Down Studies:

1. Especially easy with people who have taken a correspondence course.

2. Use with all other approaches: Bible cards, family, etc.

You must come close to those for whom you labor, that they may not only hear your voice, but shake your hand, learn your principles, feel your sympathy.\(^1\)

\(^1\)White, Gospel Workers, 192.
Which studies should you use?

Two Basic Types of Studies:

- **Topical:** Amazing Facts, Discover Lessons
- **Thematic:** Prophecy Seminar, Daniel & Revelation

Pillars of Faith is a topical Bible studies presenting the distinctive Adventist message. Is also available on a digital format, DVD.

**8 Common Mistakes to Avoid**

**1 - Too Much Information**

Some of your lengthy discourses would have far better effect upon the people if cut up into three. The people cannot digest so much; their minds cannot even grasp it, and they become wearied and confused by having so much matter brought before them in one discourse. Two thirds of such long discourses are lost. If you stop when you should, giving them no more at once than they can comprehend and profit by, they will be eager to hear more, and thus the interest will be sustained. Let your discourses be short, that you may gain the reputation of being an interesting speaker.¹

It is not the best policy to be so very explicit, and say all upon a point that can be said, when a few arguments will cover the ground and be sufficient for all practical purposes to convince or silence opponents.²

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¹White, *Evangelism*, 176-177.

²White, *Gospel Workers*, 376.
2 – Staying longer than an hour

Length of a Bible Study: 30-40 minutes

3 – Too many Bible Texts - 15 Texts are more effective than 30

4 – Do not preach at your listener

5 – Never argue, do not get angry

6 – Keep to the topic you are presenting

Giving Full Message Too Soon

You should plan carefully what to say and what to leave unsaid.¹

Things To Leave Unsaid: Facts found only in the Spirit of Prophecy.

7 – Do not criticize or disrespect other people (being pushy, instead of positive)

8 – After Bible study, don’t stay too long

The perception and appreciation of truth depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. To those who having an honest desire to know and to do His will the truth is revealed as the power of God for their salvation.²

¹White, Evangelism, 125.

²White, The Desire of Ages, 455-456.
(8) PRINCIPLES AND METHODS FOR OBTAINING DECISIONS

How to Bring People to a Decision

Introduction

Have a Compelling Sense of Mission:

- "The World turns aside to let the man pass who knows where he is going."
  "Men of solidity of character."²

Have an Aggressive Character:

- "Compel them to come in." (Luke 14:23)
- "By kindness compel them to come in."³
- "The only compulsion which he employs is the constraint of love."⁴

Set the Example:

- To persuade another man to do what you want him to, you must be persuasive in your life.

Having a Conviction of the Truth Yourself:

- Psalms 116:10

Be In Earnest:

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¹Seminar presented by G. Earl Knight, Greater New York Conference PM Certification Training.

²White, Evangelism, 17.

³White, Christ's Object Lessons, 237.

⁴White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, 182.
"If we were more in earnest, men would be more convinced of the truth of our message."  

Your Very Approach Can Influence People for Christ

"Approach the people in a persuasive, kindly manner."  

Let Your Speech Be Persuasive

2 Cor 5:11

Demand a Decision

Let this be in every sermon, not waiting until the series is finished.

There is a Psychological Moment to ask for a Decision

Heb 4:7

Study the Countenances of the Hearers

Let Others' Experiences Help Make Decisions

Take a brother who has had a struggle along to tell his story.

Make the Decisions in a Personal Way

In the quiet of the home, rather than expect the final decision publicly.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert

After we have employed all our persuasiveness, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert.

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1White, *Evangelism*, 170.

2Ibid., 444.
- Do not push them to the point of refusing.
- A man wishes to be consistent and if he once refuses, he rarely changes his mind.

Appealing For a Decision to Accept Christ

- Step 1 - God dearly loves you.
- Step 2 - We are all in need spiritually.
- Step 3 - God's solution to our problems is found in Jesus Christ.
- Step 4 - We must personally invite Jesus to help us.

Working for Decisions - Meeting Specific Objections

- About Accepting Christ
- About Personal Problems
- About Present Beliefs
- About Relatives and Friends
- About the Sabbath
- About Standards
- About Inner Feeling and Excuses

Points to Keep in Mind - How to Get Decisions

- Ask for a decision on the material presented at the end of every study.
- Encourage your student to put in practice each new duty as it unfolds.
- Do not ask for a major decision until your prospect has sufficient information to enable him to make an intelligent one.
- Call for a decision when you see evidence of conviction.
- Learn to recognize signals.
- Help him make his decision definite.
- Clear away obstacles.
- Use decision questions.

**Decision Questions:**

- Is everything clear?
- Do you know what you should do?
- What's keeping you from doing it?
- You plan to do it some time, don't you?
- Why not do it now?

**The Appeal of the Cross**

"Christ Crucified" Talk it, pray it, sing it, and it will break and win hearts.

**The Decision - Five Motives that Move People to Decision**

- Desire for Gain
- Desire for Comfort and Convenience
- Desire to please loved ones
- Desire to gratify pride
- Desire for protection
Points to remember:

I. Acknowledge the Truth
II. Make every study clear and convincing.
III. A Matter of Life or Death
IV. Uniting with the Church

The Final Call

"When the truth from God's Word comes to the attention of man living out of harmony with God's will, he is at first perplexed. As new light increases, he sees that what he believed violates God's law. As the evidence increases, his perplexity increases, and emotional factors could be present."\(^1\)

"At the time, many backsliders will return to the church as these wandering sheep again hear and heed the voice of the Great Shepherd."\(^2\)

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\(^1\)Knight, 108.

\(^2\)White, *Evangelism*, 693.
(9) SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. Introduction

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men, its mission is to preach the gospel to the world (Matt 28:19-20). This task will never be finished until the membership unites in the work, and the essential Latter Rain cannot come until "the largest portion of the church are . . . laborers together with God." One "who cannot err" has advised the formation of small groups "as a basis of Christian effort."

A Small Group is: a group of people from the community that get together every week at home to help each other to strive in their life, to experience a revival in Jesus and reach out the community. The small group goals are: fellowship, revival, and mission.

The larger the group, the more you water down the essential elements that make for transformation. (1) Truth – Learning occurs in direct proportion to the ability to interact with the truth, which becomes more difficult with an increased number of voices contributing. It also becomes increasingly difficult to tailor the rate of learning to the individual, the larger the size of the group. (2) Transparent relationships – Self-disclosure is integral to transformation, and openness becomes increasingly difficult in direct proportion to the size of the group. If we are not free to divulge our struggles, then the Spirit will not be able to use the group members to effectively minister at the point of need. (3) Mutual accountability – The larger the group, the easier it is to hide. Accountability requires the ability to check to see if assignments were completed, or commitments to obedience were maintained. Greater numbers decrease access to a person’s life.

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2White, *Gospel Workers*, 352.
5Ogden, 11.
Small Groups Objectives:
- Quality Growth
- Quantity Growth

Small Groups Results:
- Friendship
- Fellowship
- Spirituality
- Life of Service
- Personal Testimony
- Hope and Faith
- New Leaders
- Constant Growth

Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer, that they may be strengthened, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This work Christ wants to have done in the heart of every worker. If you yourselves will open the door to receive it, a great blessing will come to you. Angels of God will be in your assembly. You will feed upon the leaves of the tree of life. What testimonies you may bear of the loving acquaintance made with your fellow workers in these precious seasons when seeking the blessing of God... Christ will come into your hearts. It is by this means only that you can maintain your integrity.¹

2. Biblical Basis

Moses (Exodus 18:1-19:6) ___________________________________________

Jesus (Luke 6:13; Mark 3:13) _________________________________________

Apostolic Church (Acts 5:42) _________________________________________

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:195.
3. BASIC STEPS TO ESTABLISH A SMALL GROUP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Step: Know the Plan</th>
<th>Precautions</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To study the plan</td>
<td>Present social, psychological, and biblical basis.</td>
<td>Motivate people to study the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To chose the coordinator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. To pray for the plan</td>
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<td>4. To elaborate a calendar</td>
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<td>5. To be committed to the plan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd Step: Prepare the Leaders</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To present the plan to the pastor, elders…</td>
<td>The Pastor should know the importance of the plan. He</td>
<td>To get the pastor and elders involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To study the plan – Church Board and PM Committee</td>
<td>is the key person to implement the plan, to motivate,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To determine functions</td>
<td>and to train the leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To visit church families</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3rd Step: Organize the Work                                  | At least 3 leaders per group: host, leader, and       | Most of the time leaders give up for   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------| associate leader.                                    | lack of a support system.             |
| 1. To chose the small group leaders                          |                                                       |                                       |
| 2. To train the leaders                                      |                                                       |                                       |
| 3. To advertise the plan                                     |                                                       |                                       |

| 4th Step: Prepare the Church                                 | ATTENTION: Don’t think everybody will be supportive. | It is better to start with a few who   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------| are committed than a great number.    |
| 1. Week of Revival                                            |                                                       |                                       |
| 2. To promote the plan                                       |                                                       |                                       |
| 3. To organize the groups                                    |                                                       |                                       |
| 4. To advertise the place of the meetings                    |                                                       |                                       |

| 5th Step: Start the Meetings                                 | Allow few weeks to ask for a commitment of the       | When a group grows it has to divide or the growth stops. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------| participants. The group is to grow and multiply.     |                                       |
| 1. To show a model meeting to the leaders                    |                                                       |                                       |
| 2. 5 or 6 meetings to get acquainted and revival             |                                                       |                                       |
| 3. Permanent meetings with visitors                          |                                                       |                                       |
| 4. The goals of the group are: fellowship, revival, and      |                                                       |                                       |
| mission.                                                     |                                                       |                                       |
4. The Small Group Leaders

- Leader
- Associate Leader
- Secretary
- Host

Qualities of the Small Group Leader

The SG leader should:

- Be a disciple
- Be faithful
- Be willing to serve
- Be led by the Spirit
- Desire to save souls

Responsibilities of the Small Group Leader:¹

1. Cares for the group’s overall goals, agenda, and growth in love and unity.
2. Leads the meetings, but often shares this with others.
3. Identifies abilities and gifts in others and finds ways to use them in group ministry
4. Manages conflict within the group
5. Develops awareness of the spiritual state of each group member.
6. Works in consultation with church pastor and others to deal with matters beyond the scope of the group.

¹Cox, Think Big, Think Small Groups, 90-91.
7. Communicates the aims and vision of the group with the larger church, and vice-versa.

8. Keeps the goal of growth through conversion fresh in the minds of members, or delegates this responsibility to someone else.

9. Trains an assistant leader for readiness to assume leadership in new group.

10. Works as a team with the host/hostess. This person should be someone who demonstrates a genuine care for people and the ability to put people at ease.

He/she is responsible for one or more of the following, according to ability and time available (duties not undertaken by the host/hostess should be delegated to other group members, not carried by the group leader):

   a. Welcoming group members
   b. Leading the “ice breaker” or initial sharing period
   c. The prayer ministry of the group
   d. General pastoral care of members.

Responsibilities of the Small Group Assistant Leader:¹

1. Recruits a host/hostess to see that child care, refreshments, and appropriate seating for the group is available.

2. Follows up with all prospects and members through personal visits, phone calls, and correspondence.

3. Sets out an open chair for each meeting as a constant reminder to the group of the need for new participants and new conversion growth.

¹Arnold, Starting Small Groups, 133-134.
4. Accepts responsibility for developing relationships with (and extending invitations to) the group, the unchurched, and unbelieving people.

5. Submits a monthly report to the coordinator for your group.


7. Prays for each member and prepares for each meeting.

8. Notifies pastoral staff of acute crisis conditions requiring response.

Responsibilities of the Small Group Host/Hostess:

1. Provides a home (or a comfortable meeting place) and arranges chairs in conjunction with the leader (a circle is preferred).

2. Sets up the simple refreshments before the meeting time in order to be ready to greet the guests and regular attendees.

3. Has extra material. (Bibles, paper, and pens)

4. Has a genuine interest in each guest and greets him or her at the door with a warm smile.

5. Sets the atmosphere of love and acceptance for everyone, calling them by their first names and introducing guests to others.

6. Waits until guests have left before cleaning up and rearranging furniture.

5. Small Group Program:

1. Fellowship 15 min.

2. Testimonies 15 min.

3. Prayer 10 min.

4. Study the Word 30 min.
"Time is short, and our forces must be organized to do a larger work… I saw jets of light shining from cities and villages, and from the high places and the low places of the earth. God's word was obeyed, and as a result there were memorials for Him in every city and village. His truth was proclaimed throughout the world."¹

¹White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:26-28.
(10) INDUCTIVE AND RELATIONAL BIBLE STUDY AND TEACHING

I. Four-step process for conducting Sabbath School classes that get people involved and lead to genuine discovery.¹

1. Settle on one or two main points only.

2. Briefly set the context.

3. Present a few well-chosen, open-ended questions.


II. As a discussion leader, practice the following skills:

   • Really listen to what your class members say
   • Paraphrase or sum up what each contributor says
   • Resist the urge to answer all the questions that people raise
   • Bring the discussion back to the main point if it starts to wander
   • Learn something new yourself
   • Summarize

¹Seminar presented by Steven Siciliano, as part of the Certification Program of the Greater New York Conference, October 2004.
III. Questioning Techniques - Students Don’t Respond to Discussion Because:

- Past experience has conditioned them not to respond.
- There is a lack of interest in the topic.
- They are poorly prepared for the lesson.
- The teacher is poorly prepared for the lesson.

Techniques:

- Avoid yes/no questions.
- Go beyond recall questions.
- Ask “how” and “why” questions.
- Use life application questions.
- Teachers should lay plans to make a practical application of the lesson.
- Use questions that require students to refer to Scripture.
- Avoid questions with trite answers.
- Avoid answering questions yourself.
- Develop a tolerance for silence.

IV. Six categories of Bloom’s taxonomy:

- Knowledge - define, describe, list, name
- Comprehension - classify, compare, describe
- Application - arrange, decide, estimate
- Analysis - analyze, discuss, infer, explain
- Synthesis - deduce, resolve, predict, design
- Evaluation - decide, evaluate, judge, verify
V. Criteria for judging student responses:

- Clarity
- Accuracy
- Appropriateness
- Specificity
- Support
- Complexity
- Originality
(11) DEVELOPING SABBATH SCHOOL ACTION UNITS

Sabbath School Problems

- Decline of Sabbath School attendance in many places.
- It was discovered that nearly 20 percent of those who have been Adventists from four-to-ten years never study their Sabbath School lessons.
- The comparison between church books and Sabbath school attendance shows a large number of missing members.
- The majority of teachers have never had any training.

Basic Reasons for Leaving the Church

- Lack of warm fellowship and support by fellow members.
- Church services do not meet their felt needs in coping with complexities of daily life.

"Our Sabbath schools are what the Lord would have them to be, for there is altogether too much dependence placed upon form and machinery, while the life-giving power of God is not manifested for the conversion of souls, for whom Christ died. The order of things must be changed if our Sabbath schools meet the purpose for which they exist." 

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1This seminar was presented by Calvin Smith on March 2002, at the Leadership Retreat of the Greater New York Conference.

2White, Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 257.
"How sad it is to think of the great amount of mechanical work that is done in the Sabbath school, while there is little evidence that there is moral transformation in the souls of those who teach and who are taught."\(^1\)

"There is much to be done in the Sabbath School work also, in bringing the people to realize their obligation and to act their part. God calls them to work for Him, and the ministers should guide them their effort."\(^2\)

**Sabbath School Objectives**

- Spiritual Nurture
- Fellowship
- Community Outreach
- World Missions

**Sabbath School Action Unit Advantages**

- Basic Divine Imperatives for a Finished Work.
- Can Provide Adherence to the Above Imperatives.

**Basic Divine Imperatives for a Finished Work**

- The church must realize its obligation to carry the gospel of present truth to every creature.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, 66.


\(^3\)White, *Christian Service*, 111.
• The work will never be finished until the membership unites in the work.¹

• Every church should be a training school for Christian workers.²

• The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on ministers.³

• The Sabbath School should be one of the greatest instrumentalities and the most effectual in bringing souls to Christ.⁴

• “One who cannot err” has advised the formation of small groups “as a basis of Christian effort.”⁵

The Formation of a Small Group

“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who can not err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also.”⁶

Sabbath School Action Unit Potential

• Provide an excellent “training school.”

• Turn spectators into participants.

¹White, Gospel Workers, 352.

²White, Ministry of Healing, 149.

³White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:19.

⁴White, Counsels on Sabbath School Work, 10.

⁵White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:21-22.

⁶White, Evangelism, 115.
• Prepare members for effective outreach.

• Enable members to win and retain backsliders.

• Assist members to reach their own goals.

• Contribute to a finished work through focused, coordinated effort.

• Provide assistance to most church projects and activities.

**Sabbath School Action Unit Plan**

• Classes of six to eight

• Outreach Leaders - Care Coordinator

• Outreach Plan

• Class Time - One Hour

• Time for Missing Class Members

• Time for Outreach

• Lesson Discussion Application

• Monthly Corporate Sharing

• Monthly Home Fellowship/Evaluation

• Weekly, then Monthly Leader Consultation

**Class Needs**

• Class size of 6-8

• Outreach Leader

• Outreach Plan

• Time (25 minutes)
Class Operation

- Discussion Group Leaders (5 minutes) cares for missing class members.

- Care Coordinator (20 minutes)
  a. Calls for experiences related to class plan.
  b. Trains from experience shared.
  c. Assigns visits.
  d. Promotes the class plan.
  e. Conducts prayer session.

- Discussion Group Leader - a choir director, not a soloist (35 minutes)
  a. Review the high points of the lesson.
  b. Ask 3 or 4 questions.
  c. Secure full participation.
  d. Applies lesson to life this week.

- Who, Where, How, When?

  Who?
  
  - Decide on the number of classes needed by dividing current Sabbath School adult attendance by seven.
  - Review briefly the Care Coordinator and Discussion Group Leader qualifications needed.
  - Have the group select the best leader possible.
Where?

- This is not a problem, use the ordinary pews.
- The ideal is folding chairs in circles.

How?

- Prepare a list of names for each class with the Discussion and Care Coordinator and allow four to six blank spaces at the end of the names.
- Superintendent, Secretary, Personal Ministries Leader, and Pastor assign members into balanced “family” group.
- Forming classes in specific territories is excellent.

When?

- Superintendent, Personal Ministries Leader and Pastor should, over a one- to three-week period, explain the plan and its benefits.
- Provision can be made for a regular class for any who are totally opposed to this approach.

Task of Discussion Group Leaders

- Study broadly
- Select focus
- Prepare a brief introduction
- Write 3 to 4 application discussion questions
- Give an overview of the major points
• Encourage participation and assist in making definite personal application
• Summarize—express appreciation for participation
• Pray for help to meet application objective for the week

• Good Questions:
  • The Meaning: What does this text mean to you?
  • Learning from Experience: Share an experience where this text was fulfilled or was significant in your life.
  • Application to Life: Think of what will possibly happen to you this week? How can you apply this text to your life this week? How can you use this text in reaching out and sharing with someone this week?

• The CARE COORDINATOR should be:
  a tactful, enthusiastic, persevering, loving, concerned active member with a burden for souls, developing a band of well trained soul winners.

Class Planning Session (Care Coordinator’s Preparation)

• Claim the Holy Spirit’s infilling and wisdom
• Discover outreach plans of the church
• Know the Personal Ministry leader’s objectives
• Determine what activities have worked best in the past to increase quality membership
• Dream big

• List appropriate quality activities

• Make a potential plan

• Pray earnestly

• Elect a secretary to assist and record plans

• Share thrilling experiences of other action unit classes

• Challenge each member with a vision to dream big

• Pray two by two for cleansing

• Explain the focus and plan of the church and the Personal Ministry leader

• Ask what has worked best in the past toward the finishing of God’s work

• Call for and value as important each member’s opinions and comments

• Write down all suggestions

• Together select a few workable ideas or plans

• Do strategic plans

**Seven Key Elements of Success**

1. Class planning session

2. Care for missing class members

3. Care-coordinator time: to share experience and to train, pray, and promote.

4. Application of lesson

5. Leader consultation/evaluation

6. Corporate sharing

7. Home fellowship/evaluation
I. The Nature, Purpose, and Authority of the Bible

1. The Place of the Bible

- Christianity is a revealed religion.
- God made it possible for us to know Him in a personal way (Ps 119:11).

2. Revelation

- Revelation is an act of God. The word is used to describe special audible or visual interventions by God into human history. The Latin word *revelo*, means to remove the veil, to manifest, to discover.
- Definition: the auto-manifestation of God to the human being, without that we will never come to know Him.
- There are two categories of revelation:
  1. General
     - Nature
     - Conscience
     - History
  2. Special
     - Scriptures – John 5:39
     - Jesus – Hebrews 1:1-3
     - Miracles – John 5:36
     - Others – Daniel 2:27-28

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1James Zackrison, *How to Use and Interpret the Bible and the Writings of Ellen White*, Church Growth Resources Series, Advent Source.
3. Inspiration

- *Theopneustos* - breath of God, divine air in movement (2 Tim 3:16)

- It is what happens to a Bible writer and is a major key to understanding how the Bible is put together and how it affects our personal lives.

- How inspiration functions
  - Rev 1:1-3
  - 2 Pet 1:19-21

- Theories of Inspiration:
  - Natural
  - Partial
  - Verbal
  - Dynamic – Seventh-day Adventist position: which means that God revealed *concepts and ideas*, instead of dictating messages to the prophets.

4. Illumination

- Means that anyone who reads and studies the Scripture needs the help of the Holy Spirit in order to understand and interpret correctly what he or she is reading or studying.

- John 14:26

5. Bible Languages

- Bible comes from the Greek *biblion*, which means collection of books.

- The majority of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.

- The New Testament in Greek.
6. The Canon

Even though we do not have the originals of the Scriptures, several dedicated people kept the accuracy of ancient copies. Traditionally, we accept that the Old Testament canon was closed during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah around 420 B.C., with 39 books. The Christian Church had a very important part on this process, and it was only in the 4th century that the completed canon of the Bible was accepted. Athanasio, bishop of Alexandria, wrote a letter to his churches listing the 27 books of the New Testament, in 367 A.D. A few years later it was confirmed by the Councils of Hipon (393 A.D.) and Cartage (397 A.D.).

The division of the Scriptures into chapters was made by Eulalie, during the 5th century. The verses were divided by Robert Stefano, in the 16th century.

The 66 books were written over a 1,500-year period. Moses wrote Job/Genesis circa 1,450 B.C. The Apostle John wrote Revelation/Gospel of John.

7. The Authority of the Bible

- In the Bible, God is not just making suggestions; He is telling us what to believe and how to behave.

- 1Peter 1:25 “The word of the Lord stands forever.”

- The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as the Holy Spirit moved them. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will.
II. Hermeneutics: How to Interpret the Bible

1. Basic Principles of interpretation
   - The Bible is its own interpreter.
   - Scripture means just what it says unless there is an obvious reason to think otherwise.
   - The Bible is a divine-human book (what did it mean then, and what does it mean now?)

   The difference between
   - Interpretation: To find out what it actually says
   - Application: to relate it to everyday Christian living

2. Some challenges to interpreting the Bible
   - Your own personal opinion
   - Your personal tradition
   - The authority you feel the church has
   - Your personal hobbyhorse

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1Seventh-day Adventists Believe, Fundamental Belief - 1.
3. Ten Steps for Bible Interpretation

There are some very helpful steps to interpreting the Bible:

(1) Divine authorship through human language

(2) The Bible interprets itself

(3) Consider the general context of Scriptures

(4) Consider the immediate context

(5) Consider the historic context

(6) Start with the literal meaning

(7) Utilize other translations

(8) Determine the literary style

(9) Know the difference: interpretation, reinterpretation, and application

(10) Be willing to accept new things

III. Tools for Bible Study

- Bible
- Concordance
- Bible Dictionaries
- Bible Encyclopedias
- Bible Handbooks
- Bible Commentaries
IV. Methods to study the Bible

- daily reading
- analyze the message of a book
- look for the solutions to a specific problem
- study a particular word
- study a topic
- biographic study

V. How to use and interpret the writings of Ellen White

1. The Gift of Prophecy and its role in the life of the Church

- One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. As Fundamental Belief 17 states,¹ the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.

2. The Gift of Prophecy in the Bible

- A spokesperson for God. A prophet means one who speaks forth God’s message (Deut 18:14-21)
- The process is outlined in Rev 1:1-3
- God communicates generally through dreams and visions (Num 12:6)

¹Seventh-day Adventists Believe, Fundamental Belief - 17.
• The gift of prophecy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message from God to His people.
• It is not to be treated with contempt (1Thess 5:20)
• It is to be tested (1Thess 5:21)
• Whoever receives a prophet because they are a prophet gets a prophet’s reward (Matt 10:41)
• Have faith in the prophets to be successful (2 Chron 20:20)

3. Principles of interpretation

• Dealing with the authority
  – The counsels provide an authoritative voice, distinguishing between truth and error.
• Dealing with the inspiration
  – Keep in mind the nature of inspiration.
• Dealing with what not to do
  – There are no degrees of inspiration.
  – The counsels are not given to take the place of faith, initiative, hard work, creativity, or Bible study.
  – Do not use to prove preconceived opinions.
  – Do not use unauthenticated statements.
• Dealing with interpretation
- Study all available counsels on the subject.
- Study specific counsels in their setting.
- Take into account the time and place of specific counsels.
- Find the underlying principles and seek to apply them today.

• Dealing with interpretation
  - Time does not invalidate the principles revealed.
  - Recognize that the counsels are scientifically sound.
  - Recognize that some things are hard to understand.

• Dealing with worldwide application
  - The counsels are worldwide in scope.
APPENDIX D

RECLAIMING - THE MAIN GOAL OF HIS COMING
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1. God's Church on Earth

Ephesians 5:26, 27

Zechariah 2:8

God's Regard for His Church

"Nothing else in this world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care. Nothing so offends God as an act that injures the influence of those who are doing His service. He will call to account all who aid Satan in his work of criticizing and discouraging."\(^2\)

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\(^1\)This section was adapted from Feliberto Martinez Páez, *Peligros para la iglesia de Dios*, chapter 5.

\(^2\)White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 6:42.
"The church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard."1

The Church is not perfect

"The church of Christ on earth will be imperfect, but God does not destroy His church because of its imperfection."2

The Church will consist of defective members

God "has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant." In our churches "there are those who are faulty and erring, as tares among the wheat, God is long-suffering and patient."3 At the time of the judgment the "Lord gathers His own from among the tares. Those who have been members of the same family are separated."4

Christ is leading a church, not independent offshoots

"God has a church upon the earth who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people."5 In spite of its defects, the church is and will continue to be used by God to fulfill His purpose.

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1White, Testimonies to Ministers, 15.
2Ibid., 46.
3Ibid., 45.
4Ibid., 234.
5Ibid., 61.
2. Relationships

Making Friends

One of the key characteristics of soul-winners is that they love people. Relationships are important to them. They have learned the art of coming close to people. They are sensitive to others’ needs. They genuinely care about other people. They are not critical, defensive, judgmental, or argumentative.

Witnessing does not consist of winning arguments. It consists of winning hearts. “Before you make a Seventh-day Adventist friend you must make a friend.”

A number of studies have proved the importance of friendship in soul-winning. A study by Flavel Yeakley examined three different groups of people, with 240 in each group:

1) Those who had dropped out of the church: 71 percent of these people had been approached by someone who used manipulative monologue, that is, someone trying to twist their arm and pressure them into the church.

2) Those who did not respond to the Gospel invitation: 84 percent of these people had been approached by someone who used information transmission, someone who simply shared the truth in a “take it or leave it” manner – “If you accept this message you go to heaven, if you don’t, you go to hell.”

3) Those who were active church members: 94 percent of those people had been approached by someone who used creative dialogue, someone who asked questions, showed an interest in them, became a friend.

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Friendship leads people into church and helps them stay. Dr. Winn Arn compared 50 people who were active church members with 50 people who had dropped out. He examined how many friends each person had in the church within six months of becoming a member. His findings: The vast majority of those still active had five or more friends in the church soon after joining. The vast majority of those who dropped out had very few friends, if any, within six months of joining the church.

"Friendship evangelism is simply a recognition of the fact that most people come to Christ and into the church through the ministry of Christian friends and relatives. For example, Dr. Gollfried Oosterwal"¹ considered all the agencies that influenced people to join the Adventist Church, he shares that: 57 percent of those who join Adventism list friends and relatives as the greatest influence; and 67 percent say this was the avenue through which they first became acquainted with the Adventist message.

**Loving Relationship – The Ultimate**

"Given the high number of former members who have left because of problems with people, being better friends to our inactive friends and family may be the next natural step. We have to break our concern with gaining or reclaiming numbers and be concerned about restoring relationships."²

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¹Sahlin, 50.

²Comforth and Lale, 126.
Christ wishes all to be welcomed and affirmed and form loving relationships.

These are some guidelines for Christians nurturing loving relationships:

- Ephesians 4:32
- Galatians 5:22,23
- "A kind courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity."\(^1\)
- "If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now is only one."\(^2\)

**Facts About the Unchurched**

- In our modern, high-tech society in North America, there is a new hunger for "high-touch" relationships.
- Time of trauma or transition causes people to think about spirituality and church membership.

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\(^1\) White, *Gospel Workers*, 122.

3. Relationships Come Before Resources

Programs don’t win people back to church, people do! But programs are only as good as people, influenced by the Spirit, who work with the program. This resource needs to be placed in the context of church members who:

- Recognize the biblical invitation to seek out God’s “lost sheep.”
- Feel the sense of loss that comes from missing members not attending church.
- Pray for a burning desire to make winning back former members a priority in your mission.
- Believe in closing the back door of the church to prevent dropouts as much as opening the front door to winning new members.

Six Ways to Raise Concern Over Missing Members

1. Communicate the Biblical Paradigm. God’s people seek lost members. The “seeking the lost” parables of Jesus emphasize this. Touch member’s spiritual commitment with your sermons.

2. Share Facts. Reveal from church books the number of missing members. Use overheads during sermon. Show statistics. Touch member’s minds through visual aids.

3. Encourage Personal Story-sharing. Members who have returned can share their personal experiences during worship service. Touch member’s hearts with testimonies.

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1Curtis Rittenour, Welcome Home, Reclaiming Ministry of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1995, 5.
4. Raise a Vision. Help members see what “could be” in the church by painting a picture of a membership that makes it difficult for people to leave. Touch member’s families through a goal.

5. Begin Intercessory Prayer Sessions. Meet with members before prayer meeting or after church. Bring name lists or cards for people to pray over. Touch member’s families in prayer.

6. Connect with a Member Passionate About Missing Members. Meet and pray with a member who shares the same concern. Pray for God’s Spirit to be poured out on your church. Plan a strategy. Work together.

**Six Relationship Concepts to Remember When Reclaiming Dropouts**

1. Most people are missing from a church because of personal pain from life events and a lack of support from other members, not theology.

2. Most missing members want to share their story and why they left.

3. Most dropouts need time to heal, time to know the church wants them back, time to rebuild relationships, and time to grow again in their relationship with Christ and His church.

4. Most former members would be happy to meet with another church member, but not the pastor.

5. Most who have left need one visit for every year they have been out of the church before they will darken the door of the church.

6. Most people respond to personal care shown by someone toward them more than the “ideas” someone uses to “convince them” they should be back in church again.
4. How to Present the Gospel to a Former Member

There is no experience that brings greater satisfaction than that of helping a former member return to the Church and to Christ. When we are reminded of the love that Christ has for the unbelievers, it is easier for us to feel the same love towards those that have left the fold.

**General principles for interacting with former members:**

1. Never reproof or condemn.

2. Never defend or take sides.

3. Ask for forgiveness for the wrong doings of the past, and solicit the opportunity to compensate for the embarrassment that they have experienced.

4. Admit that sometimes our church members make mistakes, however, remind them that God does not err. He is always just and considerate.

5. We can learn a valuable lesson of how to treat a former member, as we consider the following statement: “We will help you to begin the work for your neighbors. I would like to begin by offering you these books.”

Let’s always keep in mind the human pride factor. In the best of cases, the journey back to the fold is difficult. We need not make it harder. The key factor to reclaiming former members is love.

The majority of the former members need to experience a genuine conversion, and have the assurance that God has accepted them.

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Presenting the Gospel

“The Bible explains it in a very simple way. Allow me to read a few passages from your Bible.”

The Divine attraction

1 John 4:8 _______________________________________

The problem of sin

Romans 3:23 _______________________________________
Romans 6:23a _______________________________________
John 3:16 _________________________________________

The solution: the gift of God

Romans 6:23 _______________________________________
Ephesians 2: 8, 9 _____________________________________

Separation of Sin

Romans 2:4 _________________________________________

Unity in Christ

Revelation 3:20 _____________________________________

Acceptance Prayer:

“Dear God, I invite you to take control of my life. I want Jesus to come into my heart. I want you to be my Lord and Savior. Please forgive me of my sins. And I thank you for giving me eternal life in Jesus. Please help me to obey and follow you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Valdivia, 35-38.
5. How to Get Decisions from Former Adventists

The greatest needs of former Adventists are for love, understanding, nurturing, and fellowship. You can reach them if you approach with love and tact.

Visitation:

If you do not know the former Adventist already, get acquainted with them using the F-O-R-T approach:

Family

Occupation

Religion

Testimony

Ask questions about their family and occupation. Then ask questions about their relationship with the church.

Sample Questions about their Relationship to the Church:

After you learn about their family and occupation, ask the following questions.

1. I understand that you used to attend the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

2. Which church did you attend?

3. How did you join the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

4. Do you still believe the things you were taught?

5. Do you ever think about returning to the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

6. What is the Holy Spirit impressing you to do?

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1Steven R. Norman, Craig A. Dossman, and JJoseph A. Jones, Gaining Decisions (Nashville, TN: Personal Ministries Department of the South Central Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 83-86.
7. Is there anything that stands in the way of you returning home to the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

8. With Jesus coming soon, wouldn't it be wise to return soon? If the person is a parent, you may say: “Mrs. ____________, You have some lovely children. When Jesus returns, He will ask, ‘Where are my children I gave to you?’ Wouldn’t it be good for you and your children to come back to church before it is too late?”

9. Mr. or Mrs. ____________, I want to invite you to attend church this coming Sabbath. Will you come?

Visitiation Tips

Cornforth and Lale reported some visitation tips suggested by K. Haugk:

1. Listen more than talk. If you are talking more than 25 percent, you will create the impression you are there to straighten out the former member.

2. Listen with all your energy.

3. Care with your whole heart for the person.

4. Be patient.

5. Be genuine.

6. Throw out any present agenda you have.

Keep in Touch

1. Visit the former Adventist on a regular basis.

2. Help them work through special problems such as transportation, Sabbath employment, child care, the opposition of relatives, bills, etc.

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1Cornforth and Lale, 122.
3. Find one or two compatible church members to befriend the former Adventist.
4. Add the person's name to the church's mailing list.
5. Send them a greeting card on their birthday and wedding anniversary or when they are sick.
6. Give them a gift subscription to *Message, Signs of the Times* or *Centinela*.
7. Call them to tell them about upcoming events at church.
8. Visit and support them in times of bereavement.
9. Pray for them during altar calls.
10. Don't embarrass them by acting surprised or being overexcited when they come back to church.

"Dos" and "Don’ts" For Working With Former Adventists

Fordyce W. Detamore gives several "dos" and "don’ts" to remember when working with former members.¹

"Dos"

1. Come to the point quickly.
2. Let the bitterness come out. Listen kindly and interestedly.
3. Avoid defending anyone.
4. Do keep the backslider's conversation with you in confidence.
5. Do make your visit brief.
6. Always close your visit with prayer.

¹Fordyce W. Detamore, * Seeking His Lost Sheep* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 44-52.
7. Give a brief invitation to come out to the evangelistic meetings or to church the next Sabbath.

"Don’ts"

1. Don’t linger. Leave immediately following prayer.
2. Don’t try to arrange Bible Studies.
3. Don’t accept money from backsliders.
4. Don’t solicit backsliders for an Ingathering contribution.
5. Don’t dismiss a backslider as hopeless because he is too many miles away.
6. Don’t argue about church standards with a backslider.

Common Mistakes

Cornforth and Lale\(^1\) presented the five most common mistakes made by members and congregations in their attempt to bring inactive members back:

1. Sending a letter - research shows that this method angers more people than it attracts. Phone calls receive a similar response. Visits are the best form of contact because they are the most personal.
2. Stewardship visits – if the visit is made in order to ask for money, this indicates to the person that their money is more important to the church than they are as a person.
3. The pastor makes the visit – the inactive members expects the pastor to visit them; it is perceived as part of their job. A visit from a member, however, will mean much more.

\(^1\)Cornforth and Lale, 120-121.
4. A simple visitation – visitation in order to get them to attend church again, they can sense this and may be driven farther away. The main goals of visitation should be showing care and reestablishing a relationship.

5. Visiting only once – a series of visits is necessary to bring about healing and reconciliation (one visit per each year the former member has been inactive).

"Hosts of people are really backsliders but still consider themselves Seventh-day Adventists... In a city survey where we had about seven hundred members, three thousand listed themselves as Seventh-day Adventists!"¹

¹Detamore, 6.
6. Ellen G. White Quotations About Reclaiming

Efforts should be made to bring back those who have strayed

I wrote out pointed testimonies not only for those who had erred greatly and were out of the church, but for those members in the church who had erred greatly in not going in search of the lost sheep.¹

In the parable of the Lost Sheep Jesus illustrated heaven’s attitude toward the backslidden. Many have not learned that they have a special duty to go and search for these lost sheep. The ninety and nine sheep are left, and diligent search is made for the one that is lost. The entire effort is made for the unfortunate sheep. So should the effort of the church be directed on behalf of those members who are straying from the fold of Christ. And have they wandered far away? Do not wait till they return before you try to help them, but go in search of them.

When the lost sheep was found, it was borne home with joy, and much rejoicing followed. This illustrates the blessed, joyful work of laboring for the erring. The church that engages successfully in this work is a happy church. That man or that woman whose soul is drawn out in compassion and love for the erring, and who labors to bring them to the fold of the Great Shepherd, is engaged in a blessed work. And, oh, what a soul-enrapturing thought, that when one sinner is thus reclaimed, there is more joy in heaven than over ninety and nine just persons! Selfish, exclusive, exacting souls who seem to fear to help those in error, as though they would become polluted by so doing, do not

taste of the sweets of this missionary work; they do not feel that blessedness which fills
all heaven with rejoicing upon the rescue of one who has gone astray.  

**Labor brings strength**

Let a strong man be shut away from labor, and he becomes feeble. That church or
those persons who shut themselves away from bearing burdens for others, who shut
themselves up to themselves, will soon suffer spiritual feebleness. It is labor that keeps
the strong man strong. And spiritual labor, toil and burden bearing, is what will give
strength to the church of Christ.  

But there is a brighter side to the picture. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are
remitted." Let this thought be kept uppermost. In labor for the erring, let every eye be
directed to Christ. Let the shepherds have a tender care for the flock of the Lord's pasture.
Let them speak to the erring of the forgiving mercy of the Saviour. Let them encourage
the sinner to repent, and believe in Him who can pardon. Let them declare, on the
authority of God's word, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our
sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. All who repent have the
assurance, "He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou
wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19.  

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1White, *Life Sketches*, 187-188.
Hunt for the backsliders with the message of mercy

God will help those who love the truth, who give themselves, heart and mind and strength, to Him. God will work mightily with His ministers when their hearts are filled with love for the poor lost sheep of the house of Israel. Hunt up the backsliders, those who once knew what religion was, and give them the message of mercy.¹

7. Checklist for Starting a Reclaiming Ministry

☐ Pray for a God-given passion for missing members.

☐ Develop a vision, a picture of the problem, and possible solutions.

☐ Create awareness and communicate your vision with members.

☐ Organize a ministry, pull together a team, and conduct training.

☐ Choose a Sabbath for a special event to take place.

☐ Prepare customized resources for your church date and event.

☐ Use resources by sending them out or posting them at your church.

☐ Prepare your church, the environment, greeters, and the attitudes!

☐ Do follow-up work, visit, and plan further events to invite them.

APPENDIX E

PILLARS OF FAITH-BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
APPENDIX E

PILLARS OF FAITH-BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

This Bible study outline was designed to give direction to the explanation of the main Bible doctrines. The greater New York area is a very cosmopolitan community, which makes the small group setting a safer environment to present Christian beliefs.

For many, the Bible is a very complicated puzzle of disconnected stories. Having taken messages from sermons, private studies, shared testimonies of fellow believers, they find difficult to understand and make the connections. This Bible study guide was prepared in order to lay out the present truth, or the pillars of the Christian faith. The study guides were carefully laid out to present the distinctive Seventh-day Adventist truths for the end time, and also give an overall presentation of all the 28 Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

After someone accepts Jesus as their personal Savior, Ellen G. White suggests that we should present the most distinctive doctrines. "The present truth is to be our burden. The third angel's message must do its work of separating from the churches a people who will take their stand on the platform of eternal truth." ² Some of these distinctive truths are: The Great Controversy, The Law and The Sabbath, The Sanctuary

²White, Evangelism, 229.
and the Judgment, Death and Hell, Creation and Eschatology, Wholeness of Man-Health, and Christian Lifestyle.¹

Our mission is to return to the Word and to present the Three Angels’ Message. *Pillars of Faith* is a nine Bible study series using this distinctive truth as the main topic, and mentioning all the fundamental beliefs.

A sound understanding of what the Bible teaches is fundamental to all forms of outreach, evangelism, and nurturing. *Pillars of Faith* is a Bible study guide that can be used in Bible studies, Sabbath School, seminars, reaping events, and small group settings. In my personal experience, giving Bible studies, leading small groups, or leading reaping evangelistic events, this material has been very useful.

*Pillars of Faith* summarizes the whole third angel’s message. This study guide is concise and right to the point. At the same time, you may follow the outline but do not move ahead faster than the interests can follow. Each lesson covers one or two of the “Pillars,” but also gives the presenter an opportunity to talk about all the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs.

There are several advantages of this Bible study guide. Since it is available in four different languages (English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese), it facilitates more participation in a multilingual environment (we can have parents reading in Spanish, and the children reading in English, all following the same study guide). It gives opportunity to review all the doctrines in one week, and to lead people to a decision for Christ (we have many spouses, children, and visitors attending church for a long time and these

¹White, *Evangelism*, chapter VIII.
topics can help them to make a decision for Christ, and to be baptized at the end of the week).

It is not just a "short" Bible study guide, it is based on E. G. White's suggestions about the Present Truth, Pillars of Our Faith, and Platform of the Truth, presented along with the Fundamental Beliefs.
PILLARS OF FAITH

(1) UNTIL WHEN?

Until when will there be conflicts and discord in the family, between parents and children, husbands and wives? As we contemplate the terrible world in which we live, we must remember that it wasn’t always like this. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... and it was very good” (Gen 1:1, 31).

Why did these things change? According to the Bible, a being called Lucifer rebelled against God and he was cast out of heaven (Eze 28:14-15; Isa 14:12-14; Rev 12:7-9).

The story of sin in this world started when the serpent deceived our first parents and they violated God’s law (Gen 3). Every human being is born in sin, and all of us are sinners (Rom 3:23) condemned to die. Fortunately, our Creator had a plan to put an end to our suffering by offering to everyone eternal life through Jesus Christ our Savior (Rom 6:23).

(1) What precious promise did Christ offer us? (John 14:3)

(2) When Jesus went to heaven, what did the angels affirm? (Acts 1:9-11)

(3) When Christ returns, how many shall see Him? (Rev 1:7)

(4) When is the exact day of His coming? (Matt 24:36, 42)

(5) What is the purpose of Christ’s second coming? (Rev 22:12)

(6) What great separation will then take place? (Matt 25:31-34, 41)

At the end, what group would you like to be a part of?
PILLARS OF FAITH

(2) WHAT IS JESUS DOING NOW?

If God is love, why does He allow suffering? Where God was when this tragedy occurred, said the mother of a teenager who died in a car accident when a drunken driver hit him.

In the same way we can ask the question, “Where was God when His Son was dying on the cross?” Why did Jesus Christ come to this world? At His birth, He united the families of heaven and earth (Isa 9:6).

(1) What type of example did Jesus Christ leave for us? (John 15:10)

(2) If Jesus lived a perfect life, why did He have to die? (Rom 5:1, 10)

(3) Why doesn’t our faith in Jesus Christ end on the cross? (1 Cor 15:12-14, 22)

(4) What is Jesus doing now? (Heb 4:14-16)

(5) For what kind of sin can we receive forgiveness? (1 Jo 1:9)

Jesus Christ, in His double function as sacrifice and High Priest, intercedes on our behalf in the Celestial Sanctuary.

Christ’s work as the High Priest is coming to an end. The years for testing humanity are coming to an end. No one knows the moment when God’s voice will proclaim: “IT IS FINISHED!”

Are you ready for this day?
PILLARS OF FAITH

(3) BEYOND DEATH

T.V. programs present stories and cases of people’s experiences after death. Movies and books have explored this theme. The question is what really happens when a person dies?

(1) What did God say would happen to man if he sinned? (Gen 2:17)

God made man out of dust and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Gen 2:7). Death is the consequence of sin (Rom 6:23), and the Bible assures us that all those souls that sin will indeed die (Ezekiel 18:20), and when sin came into the world, death passed unto all man (Rom 5:12). The Bible presents death as a sleep, (John 11:11-14) and when a person dies, the breath of life returns to God (Eccl 12:7).

(2) Who has immortality? (1 Tim 1:17; 6:16)

(3) What is the state of a person who is dead? (Eccl 9:6-10)

(4) What did Jesus say about the state of the dead? (John 5:28, 29)

(5) When will the righteous be resurrected? (1 Thess 4:15-18)

(6) When will the wicked be resurrected? (Rev 20:5)

After this, God’s judgment will destroy the wicked and purify the earth (2 Pet 3:7-13). This earth will be restored and it will be the eternal home of the righteous (Rev 21:1-4). The great controversy will be ended and sin will be no more! The universe will be forever free from the power of evil (Rev 22:3). No more death, no more suffering, no more pain, no more sin.

Would you like to live in a place like this?
The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testament, are the written words of God, the revelation of God’s will (2 Tim 3:16, 17). The scriptures reveal and teach that three eternal and equal persons are united in only one God.

These three persons were united at creation (Gen 1:1, 2, 26) in the plan to save man, sending the Messiah (Matt 3:13-17) and caring for His people (2 Cor 13:13).

Even though the Bible is the word of God, it was written by chosen men “inspired by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). There is also a portion that God Himself wrote, the Ten Commandments (Exo 31:18). Read Exodus 20:1-17.

(1) How many people should keep God’s law? (Eccl 12:13)

(2) What are some functions of the Law? (Rom 3:20)

Faith in Jesus as the only way to receive salvation does not invalidate the Law (Rom 3:31). Jesus Himself said that He didn’t come to abolish or to set aside the Law (Matt 5:17), but to fulfill in His life of perfect obedience to the commandments of God. (John 15:10)

(3) How did Jesus summarize the observance of the Law? (Matt 22:37-40)

The Decalogue consists of two parts: the first four commandments tell us of our responsibility to the Creator, and the last six tell of our responsibility to others. Therefore, the summary of the Law is the love to God and to man.

(4) In what ways can we demonstrate our love to Jesus? (Jo 14:15)

Through the Holy Spirit we are born again, and He writes God’s Law in our hearts. This is how we receive the power to live a holy life (2 Cor 5:17).

Would you like to experience this new life?
PILLARS OF FAITH (5) THE TRUE REST

Is it necessary to have a day of rest each week? What day should be chosen? Does this have something to do with physical restoration or does it have any spiritual significance?

(1) What are the three acts of God in establishing the Sabbath? (Gen 2:1-3)

(2) What is the fourth commandment in God’s law? (Exo 20:8-11)

(3) What was the special day Jesus went to church? (Luke 4:16)

(4) After His death, what commandment was obeyed by Jesus’ followers? (Luke 23:54-56)

The apostle Paul attended the synagogues on the Sabbath and preached of Christ (Acts 13:14; 17:1, 2; 18:4), not only to Jews, but to Gentiles also (Acts 13:42, 44).

(5) Where there wasn’t a synagogue, on what day did the apostle worship? (Acts 16:13)

(6) What special day will be observed by the redeemed in the New Earth? ( Isa 66:22, 23)

The Sabbath must be kept by all those who want to be part of God’s people embracing His covenant (Isa 56:2, 6). This day is a sign of liberation from sin and an entering into the true rest of God, which separates the redeemed from the rest of the world (Heb 4:9-10). The Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) invites all to follow His example. Those that respond to His call enjoy the Sabbath as a day of happiness and spiritual feasting. This is the pre enjoyment of what we will encounter in heaven.

Would you like to enter into this true rest?
PILLARS OF FAITH  

(6) HOW TO LIVE WISELY

The Bible affirms, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Ps 24:1). He is the real owner of everything that exists in the universe. We also belong to God, because He created and redeemed us by paying an expensive price for each one of us (1 Cor 6:12, 20).

(1) If everything belongs to God, what does He expect from us? (1 Cor 4:1, 2)

The Christian understands he is responsible for everything that God entrusts to him: Life, body, time, talents, abilities, material possessions, service to others, and being willing to share how God has graciously blessed them.

(2) Why should I take care of my body? (1 Cor 3:16, 17)

(3) In what ways must I improve my abilities? (Col 3:23, 24)

(4) What does the Bible call those that waste their time? (Eph 5:16, 17)

(5) In what ways does God prove my faithfulness with my possessions? (Mal 3:8, 10)

Jesus approved tithing and condemned those who violated its spirit (Matt 23:23). As Abraham paid his tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High (Gen 14:20), so in the New Testament we give tithe to Christ, High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:11-32).

(6) What principle should we have in giving offering? (Deut 16:17)

Christians serve as managers over God’s possessions, and view life as a divine opportunity “To learn to be faithful steward, thereby qualifying for the higher stewardship of eternal things in the future life.”

Are you making wise and unselfish use of life?
PILLARS OF FAITH

(7) WHY ARE THERE SO MANY RELIGIONS?

Do all religions lead you to God? Where is the truth, when all religions say they are right? The invisible church is made of all those who truly believe in Christ. However, in these last days, a remnant has been called.

(1) What are the characteristics of this remnant? (Rev 14:12)

During His most noted speech Jesus warned the apostles of the coming of wrong teachings (Matt 24:4, 24). The three angels’ message (Rev 14:6-12) shows the mission and proclamation of the remnant that should bring final restoration of the truth of the Gospel.

(2) Besides faith and obedience, what is another characteristic of the remnant? What does it represent? (Rev 12:17; 19:10)

(3) To help the remnant, what provision did Jesus give? (Eph 4:8-13)

(4) How are spiritual gifts given? (1 Cor 12:11)

God gives to all the members of His Church spiritual gifts that each member must use in loving ministry for the good of the church and all humanity. One of the gifts of the Spirit is prophecy. This gift is a characteristic of the remnant church and was especially manifested through Ellen G. White. As a messenger of the Lord, her writings are a continual fount of authority and truth that give comfort, orientation, instruction, and correction to the church.

(5) What counsel is given to us by the Scripture? (2 Chr 20:20)

In the end of time the “Testimony of Jesus” will manifest itself through the “Spirit of Prophecy.” This represents a challenge to all, in the sense of not accepting the attitude of indifference or disbelief, but to “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess 5:19-21).
PILLARS OF FAITH (8) GOD'S WILL FOR CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

The narrative of Creation reports the origin of human beings, and marriage as the foundation of society. Everyone can find a special place in the church, where they can be loved, even if they do not have a family.

(1) What kind of behavior should Christians demonstrate? (Rom 12:1, 2)

(2) In addition to the church, what else is called “temple of the Holy Spirit”? (1 Cor 6:19)

God’s law that includes the laws of health, is not arbitrary, but was given by our Creator in order to enable us to enjoy a better life.

(3) What was man’s original diet? (Gen 1:29)

God permitted meat as food only after the flood (Gen 9:3-5), but He gave some restrictions (Lev 11:4-10). Regular exercise is the simple formula to maintain mental and physical health (Gen 2:15). Light is essential for life (Gen 1:3) as water and fresh air are necessary for the well functioning of the organism.

A temperance controlled life, free of drugs, preserves health. Even many kind of popular beverages that contain caffeine and alcohol cause harmful effects to our health. Tobacco is another poison of slow effect; it brings prejudice to physical, mental, and spiritual health.

(4) What invitation does Jesus give us? (Mark 6:31)

Rest is very important for the health of our body and mind. God emphasized the necessity of rest by giving us the weekly Sabbath. (Exo 20:10)

(5) How should the followers of Jesus live? (1 Jo 2:6)

Would you like to live more like Jesus?
What is the Christian church? How should it be organized and administered?
The church is a community of believers that accept the call of Jesus Christ and receive Him as their personal Savior and Lord. Christ is the leader of the church and guides in the worship, companionship and service.

(1) In Eph 1:22, 23, what does the Bible say about the church?

(2) What is the work of the church? (Matt 28:18-20).

(3) What affirmed Jesus about His flock? (John 10:16).

(4) In spite of so many members, what does Jesus expect from His church? (John 17:23).

(5) What steps must we follow to receive salvation? (Mark 16:15, 16).

(6) What does baptism signify? (Rom 6:3-5)

Baptism would not have had significance as a symbol of the passion of Christ if the apostolic Church had practiced another form of baptism other than that of immersion. Baptism represents death to sin – the putting away of the old lifestyle, and living a new life by the power of Christ.

(7) What ordinances did Jesus leave to renew our connection with Him and our brothers? (John 13:10, 15 and Matt 26:26-29).

Two main ordinances assist the Christian faith - Baptism and the Lords Supper. The first is the front door to the church; the last favors those who are members and through their participation they witness of their acceptance of Christ as their personal Savior.

Would you like to have the assurance of salvation?
APPENDIX F

SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT AND LAY INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX F

SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT AND LAY INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer these questions and return the form at the end:

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

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<th>Number of years</th>
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How long have you been a Christian? 

How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist? 

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