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ABSTRACT

RECRUITING AND EQUIPPING POSTMODERN IMMIGRANT YOUTH  
PREACHERS IN EMMAUS, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, AND  
COMMUNITY TABERNACLE SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCHES

by

Anthony Lincoln Usher

Adviser: Barry Gane

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Theological Seminary

Title: RECRUITING AND EQUIPPING POSTMODERN IMMIGRANT YOUTH  
PREACHERS IN EMMAUS, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, AND  
COMMUNITY TABERNACLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES

Name of researcher: Anthony L. Usher

Name of faculty adviser: Barry Gane, DMin

Date completed: March 2009

After spending over six years at Emmaus SDA church, on January 1, 2004, the author was assigned to Christian Fellowship SDA Church and Community Tabernacle Mission. He observed that the fierce shifting winds of postmodernism have fueled the retardation of youth evangelism. If the trajectory of this dreaded trend goes unchecked, youth preaching in these churches will spiral downward into the obscure corridors of oblivion.

A relevant profile, as well as a specific demographic composition of all three congregations, enhanced the development of an empowering argument that potentially could reverse the momentum of this encroaching tide back to God's side. One hundred and fifteen young adults from the targeted churches completed a similar researcher

generated, qualitative, and quantitative survey before and after exposure to a week-end PowerPoint training seminar. Within the pages of this research are to be found tangible evidences, gleaned from a humanized version of a scientific experiment, which affirms that the flickering flames of successful Voice of Youth evangelistic campaigns can be rekindled.

Generally, recruiting and mentoring immigrant young preachers from the targeted churches posed little or no difficulty. As anticipated, about two dozen young adults exposed to the empowerment experiment joined the ranks of gospel preachers and are active youth preachers in their respective churches; two of which are enrolled in Andrews University Theological Seminary, and two others are laying concrete plans to pursue ministerial careers at Oakwood College.

The mentorship of youth preachers was not as viable within African American circles as it was among West Indian immigrants. In a gallant effort to facilitate the preaching of the message of the three angels, the concepts of this dissertation intended to dispatch youth preachers to the pulpits of neighboring non-SDA Christian denominations for one-week revivals during Easter. Notwithstanding, this important aspect of the dissertation was only partially implemented and tested. An overwhelming exclusive mentality exercised in both pew and pulpit, led to an oppositional stance against such an unprecedented undertaking.

### Conclusion

Among the factors projected to be important to revive youth preaching in the targeted churches are:

1. Youth ministers should interact closely with the youth, embracing postmodern youth culture as a steppingstone for youth evangelism.

2. Youth ministers should be willing to set aside quality time to train youth in the practical techniques of preparing sermons which should motivate them to become gospel preachers themselves.

3. Youth ministers and adult members should be foremost in setting the example of spirituality, by both deeds and words.

4. Adult church leaders should make a conscientious effort to give ownership of the church to the youth, allowing them to fight their postmodern "Goliaths" in their own armor.

5. Church leaders should eliminate from the doctrinal menu irrelevant traditions and the trivial innuendos of exclusive mentality that constantly collides head on with the varying pretenses of postmodern youth culture.

6. Youth leaders can utilize adverse social conditions against minorities as stepping stones to enhance total dependence on God, and as the fuel for youth evangelism.

7. The method of Christ appeals to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism; lifting up Christ in words, deeds, and sermons is the most effective method for youth preachers to enhance the preaching of the Loud Cry Message.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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ADVENTIST CHURCHES

A Dissertation

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

by

Anthony L. Usher

March 2009

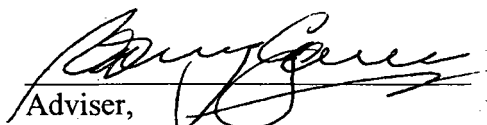
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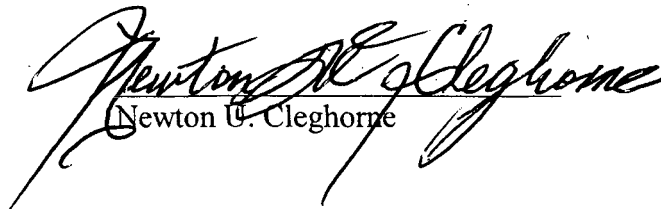
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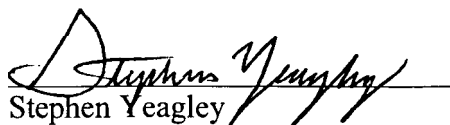
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE

  
Adviser,  
Barry Gane

  
Director of D. Min. Program  
Skip Bell

  
Newton U. Cleghorne

  
Dean, SDA Theological Seminary  
J. H. Denis Fortin

  
Stephen Yeagley

25 MARCH 2009  
Date approved



## DEDICATION

### TO THESE FALLEN HEROES ON THE BATTLE FIELD OF YOUTH MINISTRY

John Hancock

Mike Stevenson

Mike Yaconelli

“Strengthened by their courage and heartened by their valor and borne by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died. Let us show our fallen heroes by our actions that we understand what they lived and died for” (Ronald Reagan). Some say it is too soon to remember; others say it is too soon to forget.

### TO EILEEN ESTELLA USHER—MCFARLANE

My Deceased Mother

Even though she never graduated from any educational institution and holds no degree, yet she is numbered among the greats of youth leaders. When I was spiritually dead, she never gave up on me. Her systematic prayers and tears brought me back from the land of the spiritual dead. This served a notice for all times that young people of the most recalcitrant bent will be touched by unconditional love. She will forever be the sweet rose of my heart.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AY	Adventist Youth
ChS	Christian Service
GC	General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
GED	General Equivalency Diploma; General Educational Development
IAD	Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
MTV	Music Television
NAD	North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
NBA	National Basketball Association
NET	North American Evangelistic Technology
NT	New Testament
NEC	Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
NKJV	<i>New King James Version</i>
NY	New York
OT	Old Testament
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SOS	Ship or Individual(s) in Distress
UFO	Unidentified Foreign Object

V1	The First Value Genesis Report
VOY	Voice of Youth Evangelism
V2	The Second Value Genesis Report
YAC	Youth Advisory Council of the North Eastern Conference
YP	Youth Preacher



## PREFACE

Careful analysis and exegesis of Joel 2 and Acts 2 indicate that the Lord, in dramatic and ear-tingling fashions, will engage the youth to spearhead the preaching of the Message of the Three Angels. Five main concepts will emerge from this discussion: The *first* is that, the recruitment and formation of youth preachers, will be greatly enhanced, providing that youth leaders are committed to deep spirituality, and set aside quality time to closely interact and connect with the youth within the niches of their postmodern youth culture. The church should not be doing youth ministry; the entire church should connect with the youth of the church. The preaching of the Loud Cry Message will never occur from a distance or by proxy. This empowerment challenges all youth ministers and adults to unite their efforts in mentoring this army of youth, preparing them for what will go down in history as their finest hour.

The *second* vital concept is that the “visions” of the “young men” should be brighter as they stand on the firm shoulders of the “dreams” of the “old men.” Notwithstanding, the “old men” should not use the dreams of the past to blur the future vision of the “young men.”

Most professors of homiletics are in accord that effective sermon preparation is done in four steps: (1) state your point (theme), (2) explain your point, (3) illustrate your point, and, (4) apply your point. The *third* concept of this empowering instrument is linked to its relevancy—it focuses on the “How to” in sermon preparation, offering

valuable suggestions as to how to arrive at the point of the sermon (the theme). The writer employs the metaphor of a voyage to highlight some simple and practical steps that will empower youth preachers to build sermons from scratch. This method should connect with the youth who are exposed to the innuendos of the travel curriculum. It is safe to assume that such an approach should be quite appealing and highly motivational for the youth to become gospel preachers (see Method of Sermon Preparation in appendix B for more details).

A *fourth* concept is that adult church leaders should make a conscientious effort to give ownership of the church to the youth, allowing them to fight their postmodern “Goliaths” in their own armor. All irrelevant traditions and trivial ecclesiastic innuendos of an exclusive mentality that clashes constantly with the varying pretenses of postmodern youth culture should be removed from the doctrinal “menu” of God’s church. Lifting up Jesus in youth preaching is the last best hope for four of the largest religious groups in the world.

The *fifth* concept is that effective youth leaders are the ones who recognize that they are “sycamore trees,” upon whom our young people can climb high “above the crowd [of the world], so that they might see the approaching Savior, allowing them to say, “We see Jesus; and we know that He sees us.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the call to youth preaching ministry is unique in that “it points neither to a map nor a guide book; but to the Ultimate Guide [Jesus Christ].”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Skidmore, “Becoming the Sycamore Tree,” *Youth Worker Journal* (May/June, 2000): 49-51.

<sup>2</sup>Duffy Robbins, “Call of the Wild,” *Youth Worker Journal* (March/April, 2005): 27.

The *sixth* and final concept challenges youth leaders to utilize adverse social conditions against minorities as stepping stones to enhance total dependence on God; and as the fuel for youth evangelism.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a dissertation can be a lonely and isolating experience; I could never have soared to the heights or explored the depths of success without the help, support, guidance, input, and efforts of numerous individuals.

My primary acknowledgment is directed to the Holy Spirit who sowed the *sine qua non* (the idea) in my mind and moved upon the chaotic confusions of my life and helped organize the material.

I would like to thank my mentor and doctoral adviser Dr. Barry Gane, who patiently sat down with me for hours in his office at the Andrews University Theological Seminary and tactfully offered guidance in restructuring the entire dissertation project. No one should be subjected to the torture of reading my early attempts at technical writing; thanks to Dr. Gane, no one else will. His words of encouragement, quiet urgings, and careful reading of all my writing and drafts will never be forgotten. Having a mind of my own and hungry to have my voice heard as an emerging scholar, I appreciate Barry's fine balance between giving me the freedom to pursue what fired me up and reining in my imagination, when it got the better of me. At times it was necessary to drag this author kicking and screaming towards the goal. Words are inadequate to express my gratefulness to him for leading me to the "pillars" of youth ministry, upon which I now lean. Like Samson, the human clay is ready for the Potter's hand; and ready to fulfill the God-given mission in the field of youth evangelism. Dr. Gane is one of the

rare advisors that students dream that they will find. The reason why I now see a clear path in youth ministry is because I am standing on his shoulders.

I am also very grateful for having an exceptional doctoral committee, chaired by Dr. Skip Bell, one of the finest at Andrews University Theological Seminary. I also acknowledge Dr. Newton Cleghorne, who went far beyond the orbits of duty. He was instrumental in getting me enrolled in the cohort; he willingly gave me access to his library when there was a scarcity of funds to purchase the required literary arsenals. Newton was more than my second reader—he is a true friend for always. The warm reception always extended to me when visiting his office still glows in my heart. It was comforting to have him close as a consulting advisor. I am thankful to him for opening the doors of the Northeastern conference, and for providing the vast laboratory, in which the project was field-tested and evaluated; with a great degree of credibility.

In a time when families are disintegrating, mine has been very supportive and a constant source of encouragement and strength. Lorrie, my beautiful and gifted marital companion for decades, has made huge contributions to this project, the most of which is in chapter four. Indeed, she was the, “Wind Beneath my Wings;” as well as my inspiration in the midst of this perspiration.

It is expedient that mention is made of my current conference President, Elder Trevor H. C. Baker—when others saw in me just an obscure little shepherd boy; he saw a king. Rita Pusey, I could not have done this without you. You were my God-sent angel. Finally, I extend many thanks to all my teachers and colleagues who accompanied me on the journey—especially Edy, whose passive aggressiveness and covert hostility, unleashed the best out of me and made me more determined to succeed.

## CHAPTER 1

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

#### **Introduction**

##### The Dying Ministry of Youth Preaching

The content of this research embodies the growing consensus that the ministry of youth preaching in numerous churches in North America is dying and on the brink of being buried. Slowly decomposing in the “graveyard” of passive neglect, youth leaders are creating stifling bubbles instead of sustaining solid constant growth in youth ministry. Sincere reflections on its impending fate heighten the cause for deep concern.

Youth issues that have surfaced in recent years reflect complexities that are haunting, because we've never really worked through them. Postmodern youth ministers seem to be comfortable with their seasonal programs—youth camps and Pathfinder *camporees*, just to mention a few. They are at home with their “know-how’s”—with “papa’s trades,” and with “momma’s recipes.” They are comfortable with their youth congresses and youth specialties across the entire American landscape. Perhaps their greatest error is putting short-term gain over long-term consequences.

They resort to play it safe and waddle in the puddles on the beaches of mediocrity. Could it be that wedded to status quo and smallness in vision accounts for their intimidation at the prospect of launching the youth, by faith, out into the deeps of public

evangelism? Youth ministry is undergoing a period of redefinition and a fundamental shift; carried along by the swift currents of postmodernism. Methods adhered to for its revival is not only antiquated, but relics of the past. “Keeping the morning watch?” Dead! The original Missionary Volunteer Society died in 1978 and was replaced by the Adventist Youth Society. “Walk softly in the Sanctuary?” A good number of youth and teenagers are not even walking in the sanctuary. The consensus is that numerous end-time juvenile voices of the apocalypse are mute.

Youth evangelism in numerous churches is deceased and poised on the brink of extinction. The confluence of three socio-cultural climate changes of secularism, pluralism, and privatism has produced a “perfect storm” for teenagers. The arrival of this new, mutating, tri-accultured social pyramid, denominated as postmodernism, is a mausoleum for twenty-first century youth—the final resting place for the “living dead.” Coping with this postmodern juggernaut poses monumental challenges for youth ministers to shake themselves free from denial, part ways with the living dead, “get off their [comfortable] grandstands, and get down on to the playing field.”<sup>1</sup>

The sudden “cardiac arrest” of Voice of Youth campaigns has provoked a series of finger pointing within denominational circles. At one end of the spectrum, we have heard the implication that the youth are blaming the adults, claiming that they need to keep abreast with the rapidly changing youth culture. Adults are returning the favor, peddling the idea that the swiftness of their millennial children is the enemy of their optimistic enthusiasm. They cannot keep up with them. Adults embrace young people as

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<sup>1</sup>Kenda Dean, C. Clark, and D. Rahn, *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 203.

the leaders of today; they cannot figure out if they are to be followed or chased.

Blaming the local conference is a tempting option; yet others cling to the conviction that the solution lies in the Youth Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Too often the accusing finger is eventually pointed in the direction of church pastors, youth ministers, youth leaders, and parents. While we are sorting out who is to be blamed, it appears that many like the ostrich have buried their heads into the satin pillow of apathy—lulled to sleep by indifference and totally unaware of the enormity of the impact of the prevailing postmodern youth culture. They rest comfortably in the vain pursuit of economic success and look the other way, while the young are dying in the streets, dorms, and in the hallways of national and parochial educational institutions. In this postmodern age, the integrity of youth leaders is questioned who can sleep while young people are sinking into Christless graves; children are starving, and communities are collapsing. Perhaps it is a good thing that they sleep. This is the only time that negative attitudes, indifference, and apathy finally recede far enough for conscience to speak and the voice of God be heard.<sup>1</sup> To compound the matter, numerous youth ministers revert to an oppositional frame of reference. Juvenile delinquents are shunned like leprosy. Conventional programs are created and galvanized as gallant attempts to fan the flickering flames of youth preaching. These programs are not connecting with the youth. Too often they are superficial, with a leverage designed to assess and revive this

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<sup>1</sup>Bishop T. D. Jakes Sr., "Introduction to the American Dream," in *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran (USA: Warner Books, 1998), 44.



sagging ministry from a distance. Postmodern youth are drowning in the raging “rivers” of distorted ideas of secularism, pluralism, and privatism.

It is futile and unproductive for youth ministers to be pointing the blaming finger at others and shouting rescue orders from a distance, from the dry “river banks” of their comfort zones.

Recognizing that one is either part of the solution or part of the problem is why this project is not intended to perpetuate the finger-pointing drama—it proposes a solution. Its trajectory is a persuading tool, intended to convince youth ministers of the futility of adopting an adversarial stance, while negotiating the powerful swirling cross currents of postmodern culture. The treacherous “whirlpools” of postmodernity may purchase a one-way ticket to a “watery grave” for both youth leaders and youth.

It is a tragic mistake to view youth work as a sort of “popcorn stand” where one passes on the way to the main arena of church endeavor. This low estimate is reflected in the number of dollars appropriated for salaries and youth programs. All too often, youth ministries sit alone at the bottom of the economic funding strata.<sup>1</sup> When Wall Street takes precedence over Main Street, both will end up hurting.

Of most noticeable in importance, is the inclusion of what is denominated as, “The Banana Plant Syndrome.” A banana plant can only give one bunch of bananas. The existing plant is cut down the moment the young banana plant (sucker) sprouts. If allowed to stand, the sprouting plant will be deprived of vital nutrients and endowed with a reduced quantity of growth and development capital. More often than not, church

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<sup>1</sup>Merton Strommen, Karen Jones, and David Rahn, *A Youth Ministry That Transforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hopes, Frustrations, and Effectiveness of Today's Youth Workers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 72.

leaders have strong kinship ties to that of a full-grown banana plant. It is beyond dispute that youth and experience should compliment each other. However, the positive impact of adult leadership is not perennial and unending. In the dim mist of eternity, the leader has one service to render. Unless this principle is heeded, we are doomed to repeat a vicious cycle of bubble and bust over and over again. Staring death in the face seems to be the most effective catalyst to energize adult leaders to invest the future of the youth in the “banks” of opportunity—mentoring, training, and equipping them as youth preachers. Dying benevolence is no substitute for living sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the underscored message of this research is that the church should not lose heart. Grappling with the challenges of postmodernism is no small task. Notwithstanding, there are still some dedicated youth ministers and church pastors within the borders of numerous denominations, who are endowed with the uncanny ability to harness and resuscitate the talent and ingenuity of youth preaching in creative, compelling, and contemporary ways.

Conversant with the perspective and proportion of the postmodern innuendos, they are fully aware that, regardless of the era, the dynamic interplay of a resurrection never occurs from a distance. They are positioned to help the youth climb the ladder to upward mobility in successful gospel preaching.

The setting for this study was a combination of Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle SDA churches located in metropolitan New York. These churches were the laboratories in which the empowerment training module, to revive

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Christian Stewardship* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970), 326.

youth preaching, was tested, implemented, evaluated, and vindicated. The expected outcome of this research is to empower brave youth ministers and church pastors who dare to take on the sacred responsibility of mentoring youth preachers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Youth preaching is dead or dying—a relic of the past. Youth preachers are missing in action in a significant number of Seventh-day Adventist churches in metropolitan New York.

This important ministry is being strangled by gallant attempts of modern youth leaders to resurrect it from a distance. If this postmodern trend goes unchecked, youth preaching in the immigrant churches of the Northeastern Conference of SDA will spiral downward into the obscure corridors of oblivion.

### **Statement of the Task**

The task of this research is to design a program which will engage and empower church pastors, youth ministers, and local youth leaders, of the targeted churches, in the art of recruiting, training, mentoring, and equipping youth preachers of a postmodern persuasion. The targeted protégés should be motivated to and encouraged become gospel preachers themselves.

### **Justification of the Dissertation**

1. Across almost six millennia of both OT and NT, biblical history affirms that the public preaching of the gospel has been directly tied to young people. Theological contrast and comparison of Joel 2 and Acts 2, signals that the juvenile voices that preached the gospel at Pentecost (see chapter two), will be heard again in the last

days— before the coming of “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” Somebody must assess and mentor the youth for what will go down in history as their finest hour. This empowerment program, penchant for excellence, could be the backboard upon which youth preaching will rebound into the arms of success.

2. The cultural niches of the postmodern era poses fierce opposition and tough challenges for youth preachers. It is no small task to excel in an environment where the claims of absolute truth are promptly dismissed on the premise of intolerance, and where the young are viewed with suspicion, through the imprisoning stereotype lens of a hostile society—as gang-bangers, as living epitomes of animated disgrace—to the point that reality is distorted. The rehabilitating nature of this resource material could be helpful.

3. Young people are also summoned by Christ to preach the everlasting gospel. Notwithstanding, conventionalism in local churches has embraced the ethic of selfishness—favoring short-term gains over long-term consequences—and has negated them this opportunity. Therefore, this material is urgently in demand.

4. Distance brings apathy, while proximity fosters fellowship and relationship. If conference youth ministers are frustrated in their attempt to revive youth preachers from a distance, this material provides helpful suggestions in the dynamics as to how they can get close enough to mentor them.

5. If Voice of Youth campaigns are relics of the past in the local churches or conferences—blown away by the fierce winds of postmodernism—this material has the potential to reverse the tide and help in the discovery of the common stake we have in each other.

6. Postmodern spiritual vampires are sucking the spiritual lifeblood of the youth, who are leaving the church in massive droves. This project could reverse the tide and swing the momentum back over to God's side.

7. Adherents of pre-modern or modern persuasion often view with suspicion any concept or practice that bears the trademark of postmodernism. This empowerment model offers suggestions how postmodernism can be used as a stepping-stone, enhancing an effective preaching of the message of the three angels. It contends that, stripped of human fanaticisms and excesses, postmodernism is leading the charge back to apostolic times and to the basics of salvation (John 3:16).

8. If pastors in the metropolis of New York are searching desperately for the means by which they would be able to sharpen their recruiting and equipping skills, as well as those of the youth leaders in their respective churches, I recommend the findings of this material without reservation.

9. The concern of this project is that youth preachers are missing in action, desperately awaiting the arrival of a practical method of preparing sermons. This research—a simplified, effective, and practical technique to fine-tune the natural homiletic prowess of the youth and train them through the skillful use of the Hegelian dialectic method in the construction of the sermon itself, offers such an alternative. Youth preaching will be beneficially stimulated. If youth leaders help the young reach the crest of their mountain, they will be closer to the top themselves. The writer employs the metaphor of a voyage to highlight simple and practical steps involved in building sermons. It is safe to assume that the postmodern mind, having been subjected to the discipline of the travel curriculum, will find this method quite innovative and appealing

(see Method of Sermon Preparation in appendix B for more details). This empowering argument is unique for two reasons—it is long over due and its timing is crucial. In addition, there is not much written material in this neglected area.

10. The youth directors of Northeastern Conference face the annual challenge of recruiting, training, equipping, and mentoring youth preachers. This could serve as useful resource material.

11. Young adults between ages 18-32 have been targeted for study because numerous conferences in the North American Division emphasizes Pathfinders ministry—to the neglect of recruiting and training Adventist youth leaders. Jesus said, and I paraphrase, “This [Pathfinder ministry] you ought to have done, and not leave the other [Adventist youth leaders] undone (Matt 23:23 KJV). It seems that this age group connects more positively with the prevailing demands of a postmodern society. It is much easier to bend a twig than a full-grown tree.

12. The demand that the youth preacher possesses in-depth spirituality is non-negotiable and irrevocable. This curriculum advocates that sermon preparation hinges on the spiritual preparation of the preacher. The spirituality of the recruited youth preacher, exposed to this program, should be enhanced considerably.

### **Method of Collecting Data**

The substance of the theological precedence for equipping and recruiting youth preachers is provided in Gen 37, 39, 40, 41, 50; Heb 11; Jer 1; Joel 2; 1 Sam 3; Dan 2; Esth 4:16; Acts 2; and 2 Tim 4:2.

The bulk of the theological ammunition is fired from the biblical experiences of Josiah and Elijah, in 1 Chr 34, 35, and 1 Kgs 17 respectively. The vast resources of the

James White library, the Internet, and relevant principles in youth ministry, gleaned from the cathedras of my instructors, are also incorporated.

The researcher also drew from his personal experiences working in three world divisions of the SDA church—as youth leader in his local home church, as church pastor, as conference youth director, and as conference evangelist. He also worked as campus youth pastor, as associate college professor for homiletics, and as a conference field secretary. In addition, he was the pastor of two large churches in metropolitan New York over a ten-year period—from 1998, up until the writing of this material. The process that pulled data from the varying sources was challenging, rewarding, and meaningful. The dissertation process, intended to be one of responsible scholarship, and research, unfolded along these lines:

1. Portions of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, relevant to the empowerment of youth preachers, were carefully studied, assimilated, and engaged as a springboard for the research.

2. Contributions made on the subject by Seventh-day Adventist writers and scholars were justly identified, studied, and utilized. The principal text was Barry Gane's book, *Building Youth Ministry: A Foundational Guide*. Articles from Floyd Bresee, in the *Ministry* journal (1985-1996), were leaned upon heavily.

3. A wide cross section of non-denominational leading exponents in the area were also introduced; the principal of which was Duffy Robbins, *This way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*, and Jay Richard Akkerman's dissertation, "The Graphic Gospel: Preaching to a Post-Literate World."

These sources not only added depth, width, and height to the research spectrum, but also provided credibility to the entire process of recruiting and training youth preachers. It signals a clear communiqué that the contents of this research are not defined and driven by an oppositional stance towards those who subscribe to other Christian denominations and religions.

### **Delimitations**

1. This project only focuses on the techniques of sermon preparation. Limited emphasis is given to sermon delivery. Notwithstanding, as the wise football coach teaches all the fundamentals of the game to his team, this empowerment gives the nod to all the fundamentals of youth preaching.
2. The recruiting, training, mentoring, and equipping of youth preachers was confined to the young adults in the following immigrant churches in the metropolitan area of the Northeastern Conference: Emmaus SDA church, located at 1144 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11226; Christian Fellowship SDA church, located at 777-779 Schenectady Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11203; and Community Tabernacle SDA Mission, located at 626 Empire Boulevard, Brooklyn. This cluster of churches I pastored from 1998 up to the present.
3. The demographical make-up of this African-American community is overwhelmingly dominated by West Indian and other minorities. This is why the Caucasian culture was excluded. Most of the studies were concentrated along a West Indian and African American polarization, rather than along a linear ethnic continuum. However, the results will bear impact on all cultures. For, according to Rush and



Zimbardo, [young people] are almost the same anywhere.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the era, creed, race, or color, youth are culturally linked.<sup>2</sup>

4. The demographic strands of a number of immigrant church boards comprise of adults who subscribe to a pre-modern or modern persuasion, as opposed to adolescents with a postmodern mentality. Adults are constrained by an exclusivist mentality. Such frame of reference not only posed heavy limitations to the project, but also fueled a strong opposition to dispatching SDA youth preachers to conduct one-week revivals in non-SDA churches.

### **Research Questions and Assumptions**

1. Is addressing the youth in the empowerment seminar as preachers an enhancement for their enlistment as youth preachers? During the interaction of the training seminars, the protégés were constantly referred to as youth preachers. The assumption is that they will eventually become who they are repeatedly told they are.

2. Knowing and understanding that both Jesus and Paul embraced an inclusive mentality (John 4 and Acts 17; respectively), are young adults persuaded that the adoption of such a mentality is conducive to a more effective preaching of the message of the three angels of Revelation 14? The focus of question twenty-three in the post-training seminar survey was on their willingness to preach in a non-SDA congregation.

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Rush and P. Zimbardo, *Psychology of Life* (Mexico: Editorial Trillas, 1978), 315.

<sup>2</sup>Jay Richard Akkerman, "The Graphic Gospel: Preaching to a Post Literate World" (DMin dissertation, Aubury Theological Seminary, 2004), 4; [http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/dmin/current\\_students/research/dissertations/akkerman\\_j.pdf](http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/dmin/current_students/research/dissertations/akkerman_j.pdf) (05/07/07) (accessed June 7, 2007).

3. Would youth ministers, who embrace a postmodern youth culture by investing quality time to closely interact with the youth—making the church a safe place where they feel safe to tell their story—motivate them to preach God’s story? The data gleaned from both questionnaires answers this question.

4. Are the fierce and adverse winds of postmodernism more unforgiving among young people nurtured in a society that has forgotten God? Is the recruiting and mentoring of youth preachers less viable under such conditions?

5. The method of Christ, which consisted of first winning human confidence, take care of their physical needs, followed by taking care of spiritual needs, appeals to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism; therefore, is lifting up Christ in words, deeds, and sermons, the most effective method to enhance the preaching of the Loud Cry message?

6. Would a conscientious training in the area of practical techniques of preparing sermons, motivate teenage protégés to become gospel preachers themselves? If the goods are placed in the hands of the youth, will they find a way to deliver it? Acquiring the skills in sermon preparation, should enhance the desire of the young to be recruited as such.

7. Did adverse social conditions against immigrant minorities and the spirituality of the facilitator of the empowering training exert a positive impact on the spirituality of the homiletics protégés?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are either used throughout the project, or are working definitions in the manner in which they are used and understood in the context of this study:

### **Advent Movement:**

The Advent movement is a prophetic religious movement of destiny, brought into existence by divine providence at the completion of the 2,300 days prophecy in 1844 (Dan 8). The Advent Movement would defend God's law as being absolute and restore the truths that were trampled down by the enemies of God's cause.

### **Adventurers:**

This is a club for the infants in the SDA church, between the ages of six to nine years. Their law and pledge is their code of conduct.

### **Advent Youth:**

A person between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five is considered as a youth in the Adventist church.

### **Behind Closed Doors:**

The youth of Christian Fellowship SDA Church—between ages eleven to twenty-one—meet with the church pastor and AY leaders, on a monthly basis, behind closed doors, to discuss common youth problems.

### **Camporee:**

The Pathfinder *camporee* is an event in which clubs from an entire conference, given district, union, or division, come together for a period of two or more days; for

fellowship, and inspiration; for the exchange of ideas and experiences in camping skills; and other activities of junior youth ministry.

**Camp Victory Lake:**

Is the official camping grounds of the Northeastern Conference of SDA; this camping facility is located in Hyde Park, NY.

**Cradle Roll:**

Cradle Roll is the official Sabbath School class for the new born babies of the congregation.

**Christian Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church:**

This is a SDA church located in Brooklyn, NY. Christian Fellowship is numbered among the sisterhood of churches that constitutes the Northeastern Conference.

**Community Tabernacle Seventh-day Adventist Mission:**

This is a SDA Mission located in Brooklyn, NY. Community Tabernacle is numbered among the seventy missions of the NEC. This company will be organized as a church in the autumn of 2007.

**Decoying SOS Signals:**

Postmodern youth revert to certain external behaviors to conceal the deep inner problems they struggle with. This is what the writer is referring to when he employs the term, "Decoying SOS Signals." Drug addiction, gangs, jewelry, tattoos, enlisting in the Marines, etc., are classic examples of decoying SOS signals.

**Eager Beavers:**

This is one of the four classes for five year old infants in the SDA church.

**Ellen G. White:**

Ellen G. White is one of the principal founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church. She lived during the nineteenth century. At every critical point in biblical history, God has always had messengers to champion His cause. The SDA church numbers Ellen White among such messengers. She wrote many messages of admonition to God's people. She considered this revelation as the "lesser light" leading to the "greater light"—the Bible. She died in 1915 at the age of 88.

**Emmaus Seventh-day Adventist Church:**

This is a SDA church located in Brooklyn, NY; and is numbered among the sisterhood of churches that constitutes the Northeastern Conference of SDA.

**Field Preparation:**

Field preparation refers to the Bible studies, prayer cells, and distribution of flyers, etc., done in the vicinity of the evangelistic campaign, long in advance before it starts.

**Fighting Goliath in Saul's Armor:**

Fighting "Goliath" in Saul's armor occurs when adults insist that postmodern youth go about church business in exactly the same manner they did when they were young. This negative mentality is perhaps the principal catalyst for youth rebellion.

**Fourth Angel's Message:**

Revelation fourteen speaks of three angels presenting a last warning message to a dying world (Rev 14:1-12). Chapter eighteen of the same book speaks of yet another angel (fourth). The fourth angel does not bear any new message. His presence is to strengthen the messages of the three angels.

### **General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists:**

The General Conference of SDA (GC) embraces the world-wide organization of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

### **Generational Distinctive:**

One of the many annoying challenges that preachers face is the uncanny ability to assess the impact of cultural shifts such as postmodernism while they are in the midst of the transition. These challenges have not disheartened social scientists and demographers from tackling the intriguing covert ramifications of such prevalent social paradigms. They accomplish this by meticulous studies of changes in birth rates based on these observations and studies they have been able to stratify America's twentieth century generations into five groups (see table 1 below).

TABLE I

#### TWENTIETH CENTURY GENERATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

GENERATIONAL NAMES	BIRTH YEARS
Seniors	Before 1925
Builders	Between 1925-44
Baby Boomers	Between 1945-63
Baby Busters or Generation X	Between 1960-80
Millennialists	After 1980

**Generation X:**

Generation X is the third generation distinctive of the five twentieth century generations born between 1960 and 1980. They are also known as Baby Busters, Generations Y and Z.

**Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists:**

The Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (IAD) encompasses the inter-continental territory from Panama to Mexico, including Puerto Rico and the islands of the Caribbean.

**Immigrant Youth Preacher:**

In this discussion it will refer to the West Indian immigrants; not immigrants in general.

**Incarnational Youth Ministry:**

“Incarnational [youth ministry]” appears to be a relatively recent term used primarily among organizations involved in social ministry. “Incarnational [youth ministry]” is the emphasis on faith in action. Like many theological terms it can be understood correctly and incorrectly. The correct understanding is to look at the incarnation of Christ (God becoming man to save us) and to then imitate the mission of Christ, namely expressing concern for lives and souls (Mark 8:36; 1 Pet 2:21). It is the laudable translating of Christian faith into works (Jas 2:14ff). Incorrectly, and most commonly understood, is the hyper-emphasis on the social and charitable work of Christ without acknowledging the soul-salvation work of Christ. It is often characterized by a de-emphasis of Bible study to the veneration of acts of charity. One liberal Lutheran pastor once defended “incarnational [youth ministry]” in this way: “incarnational [youth

ministry] that is truly that; is being done in the trenches, not in scholarly books.”<sup>1</sup>

**Juvenile Corpses:**

This term used in this dissertation refers to spiritually dead young people.

**Land of Milk and Honey:**

This is a term used to indicate the prosperity of a class of people, a neighborhood, a society, or a nation. It refers to the prosperity of the United States of America.

**Loud Cry Message:**

The Loud Cry is a well known expression in Adventist circles. It refers to the final message of the fourth angel of Rev 18 that will light up the world with God’s glory and usher in the second coming of Jesus.

**Master Guides:**

The Master Guides belong to a club operated in the Youth Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through the enforcement of strict discipline, the sole purpose of this club is to prepare the senior youth of the SDA church for service in this life and for the life to come.

**Millennials:**

Is the last strata of the five twentieth century generations born after 1980. They are also known as postmoderns. They are also known as Generations X, Y, and Z.

**Modernism and Modernity:**

“The Renaissance, with its emphasis on the human being as the center of reality

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<sup>1</sup>CSC: WELLS TOPICAL: Q&A: OTHER INCARNATIONAL THEOLOGY, [http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic\\_topicID=47&cuItem\\_itemID=13762](http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?1518&cuTopic_topicID=47&cuItem_itemID=13762) accessed (February 19, 2009).



gave birth to the Enlightenment and the modern era that extended well into the twentieth century. Its emphasis on humanity's utmost confidence in reason, rationality, and the rejection of the supernatural resulted in a mind-set that boasted human autonomy from divine restrictions."<sup>1</sup> This study considers modernism a worldview that embraces reason, objective truth, human freedom, and inevitable progress. By the same token, modernity can be understood as the historical era when this outlook reigned supreme.

**Maternal Youth Ministers:**

Maternal youth ministers refer to the youth leaders who birthed the current programs of pre-modern and modern youth ministry.

**Middle Passage:**

The middle passage refers to the inhumane conditions under which the Negro slaves were transported by ship from the African coast to the New World.

**NET Satellite Evangelism:**

NET is an annual aggressive satellite evangelistic series of the NAD that encircles the entire globe, which is instrumental in leading many souls to Jesus.

**Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists:**

Being the largest of the nine regional conferences of the North American division, this territory encompasses: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists:**

The North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists encompasses the entire

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<sup>1</sup>Akkerman, "The Graphic Gospel," 14.

continent of North America, including Canada, and Bermuda.

### **One-Two-Three:**

The One-Two-Three refers to the points, or the divisions of the sermon. This is not suggesting that a sermon only has three points or divisions. A sermon with four divisions is denominated: One-Two-Three-Four.

### **Postmodernism and Postmodernity:**

In this research, postmodernism and postmodernity is literally defined as the era that follows the postmodern age, with its confidence in progress and knowledge.

*Postmodernism* refers to an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set. *Postmodernity* in turn, refers to an emerging epoch, the era in which we are living, the time when the post modern outlook increasingly shapes our society. Postmodernity is the era in which postmodern ideas, attitudes, and values reign—when postmodernism molds culture. It is the era of the post modern society.”<sup>1</sup>

This study defines postmodernism as a presently emerging ideology that made its debut after the modern era (the Enlightenment), that extended well into the twentieth century. It is the three-fold confluence of secularism, pluralism, and privatism. This undisputed king of all twenty-first century cultures questions human ability to rule objectively. Postmodernity is defined as the age in which this thought finds expression.

### **Postmodern Pied Pipers:**

Local youth ministers who connect with the youth on their own grounds.

### **Preaching:**

In this research, the task of preaching is understood as the presentation of the

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdsman, 2001), 12, quoted in Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 16.

message with the sole intention of persuading. It is helping people to receive a letter, an E-mail, or a phone call from God. It involves a message, a messenger, and the recipient.

Given this dynamic interplay, Phillip Brooks offers a classic definition of preaching as the “presentation of truth through personality.”<sup>1</sup> In the context of preaching, David Buttrick contends that “metaphor, icon, and image, have long been the language of culture. The language of preaching is essentially metaphorical.”<sup>2</sup> Melville adds to the discussion, “The world’s a ship on its passage out . . . and the pulpit is its prow.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Premodernism and Premodernity:**

In his book, *Bridging the Gap*, Bruce Norman defines premodernism as it is intended to be understood in this project.

The premodern worldview is sometimes referred to as the “theistic” or “revelational” view. It is based squarely upon the belief that God has revealed His will to human beings in the form of absolute statements of truth recorded in the Bible . . . Biblical truth is presented to the world in a “take it or leave it” manner.<sup>4</sup> Premodernity is defined as the age in which the above cultural thought prevails and finds expression. This prevailing postmodern culture—a shifting of culture, science, society, and

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<sup>1</sup>Phillip Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 5.

<sup>2</sup>David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 125, quoted in Jay Richard Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 9, 10,

<sup>3</sup>Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), 43, quoted in Charles Bradford, *Preaching to the Times* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 1994), 10.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce R. Norman, *Bridging the Gap: Reaching the Internet Generation: An Evangelistic Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Washington, DC: Church Resources Consortium, 2003), 22, 23.

institutions—is unlike anything the world has ever experienced.<sup>1</sup>

**Pathfinder Club:**

The Pathfinder club is a church-centered spiritual-recreational activity program designed for young people ten to fifteen years of age. The club is not built only around physical action, adventure, challenges, and group activities in God’s great outdoors; but also provides opportunities for the development of new attitudes and skills that produce personal growth, team or community spirit, and a sense of loyalty and respect for God, His creation, and His church. Pathfinders are appealing to both the needs and interests of this age group.

**Sabbath:**

Is the fourth commandment of the Decalogue and, according to Luke 23, is the day that comes after Friday and precedes the first day of the week (Sunday). This day is Saturday. How Sunday the first day of the week is associated with the Sabbath is inexplicable. The biblical term “first day of the week” (Sunday”) was what the pagans called the Day of the sun. This was the day on which the great sun god was worshipped and venerated.

**Seedbed for Sermon Ideas:**

Everyday interactions with God’s Word and nature—with people from the “market places of life”—with sermons from other preachers etc., will lead youth preachers to the discovery of an unending source of sermon ideas. These can be filed

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<sup>1</sup>Dee Hock, *Quotes by Dee Hock*, [http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR\\_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf) (accessed October 26, 2007).

electronically or manually according to the subject. An idea about love will be filed under the letter “L;” an illustration on faith would be filed under the letter “F,” etc. With time, many ideas will accumulate in the seed bed; many of which will “sprout” up into full-fledge sermons.

### **The Banana Plant Syndrome:**

Church leaders, like a banana sucker-plant, can only give one “bunch of bananas.” They only have one service to render to youth ministry. Therefore, the best and most lasting contribution they can offer to God’s cause is to mentor, guide, and train the young people in such a manner, that they in turn would successfully develop their entrusted talents and help others to develop theirs.

### **Three Angel’s Message of Revelation 14:**

The message of the three angels is a worldwide message that challenges mankind to keep all the commandments of God and to have faith in Jesus. This message is to prepare the way for the soon pre-millennial return of Jesus; known as the Second Advent.

### **Unknown God:**

The term “Unknown God,” used by Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17), is a strong reminder that religion is “a cultural resource,”<sup>1</sup> designed to lead its adherents to the discovery of the Ultimate Reality—Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God has made from “one blood” every nation on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26). Therefore, no particular religion is superior to any of the others. Those individuals who love God supremely, and their neighbors as themselves, are believers. The “Unknown God”

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<sup>1</sup>John Reader, *Beyond All Reason* (London: Aureus Printing, 1997), 22.

strategy used by Paul, demands that people consider other denominational constituencies as insiders and not outsiders, who are worshipping God ignorantly. The strategy of the “Unknown God” focuses on truth restoration—not on evangelization or proselytization.

**User-friendly Program:**

This is a program that is designed to provide empowerment to the individuals or organization to which it is presented.

**Valuegenesis Report:**

The Valuegenesis reports (V<sub>1</sub> and V<sub>2</sub>) are studies conducted by the youth department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists that explored the attitudes of Adventist students in grades 6-12 about church standards, dissatisfaction with the enforcement of those standards, and the degree to which those standards were enforced in the family, school, and church. However, the studies only addressed conviction and not the actual behavior. For example, one may be under the conviction that smoking is wrong, but still smoke. It is quite clear that what one believes may or may not impact what one actually elects to do.<sup>1</sup>

**Voice of Youth Campaign:**

Fits the description of a series of evangelistic meetings, in which the evangelist is a young person under age thirty-five.

**Workers Meeting:**

This is a convocation of the administration, departmental directors, pastors, Bible

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Dudley with V. Bailey Gillespie, *Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 256, quoted in Update Number 10—Value genesis 2 Information you can use, May 2003, <http://www.lasierra.edu/centers/hcym/media/images/pdfs/vg2-update-v10.pdf> (accessed June 28, 2007).

workers; and educators of a conference, union, division, or General Conference. These workers have fellowship, worship, pray together, and lay new strategies together for the advancement of God's work.

**Youth Advisory Council:**

This council consists of all the youth and Pathfinder federation leaders who work in conjunction with the youth department of the NEC.

**Youth Preaching:**

For the purpose of this research, youth preaching is done by the young people, as opposed to the other youth preaching which is done by preachers (adults or youth) preaching in a vernacular young people understands and that connects with them.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF YOUTH PREACHING

#### Overview

Through scientific genius, man has been able to dwarf distance—place time in chains, carve highways through the stratosphere, and construct skyscraping buildings with their prodigious towers steeping heavenward.<sup>1</sup> “We may paste name tags on our souls, or trace genealogies, but only theology can answer the question of identity.”<sup>2</sup> Theology is still the mother and flagship of all sciences. All the realities of life still have a spiritual control. Youth ministry is primarily a theological enterprise. “Divorced from deep intimacy and communion with God, youth ministry is a little more than vulgarity; the desired outcome will be less favorable. A ministerial education, whose sole focus is the mere acquisition of skills, the inculcation of knowledge, data and ideas, is detrimental to the formation of [youth preachers]. Youth ministry limited to the acquisition of concepts is similar to a course in sex education that only focuses on physiology.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 26.

<sup>2</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 16.

<sup>3</sup>Duffy Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 18.



A scientist could look to an accidental collocation of atoms for the origin of life. Any Pharaoh, who did not know Joseph, could ask the sarcastic question, “Who is the Lord that I should let Israel go?” (Exod 5) From the perspective of a poet, “life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but meaning nothing.”<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding, time, space, and youth ministry finds their origin in the contours of “In the beginning, God!” (Gen 1:1).

Newton Cleghorne, one of numerous ambassadors for youth preaching, penned these words: “Youth ministry devoid of a biblical and theological under-girding is suspect. For it to be legitimate and credible, it must be deeply rooted in the Word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

### **First Things First**

Kenda Dean uses the aquarium illustration to galvanize the point that theological foundations of youth preaching must be priority. In any aquarium, rocks are the first to be introduced, followed by sand and, finally, by water. If sand is introduced first, there will be room for the water, but certainly not for the rocks. Water could be introduced first, but there may be limited room for sand. Forget about the rocks. Primary collocation of rocks into the aquarium makes it more feasible to accommodate sand, water and other aquatic substances and animals.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Shakespeare, “Macbeth,” Act 5, scene 5, line 17, quoted in John Fowler, “God is Able,” *Ministry*, September 1991, 5.

<sup>2</sup>Newton Upanton Cleghorne, “A Twentieth Century Approach to Empowering the Youth of the Brooklyn Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 2003), 7.

<sup>3</sup>Dean, Clark, and Rahn, *Starting Right*, 15.

In like manner (that rocks should be foremost to be accommodated in an aquarium) it is imperative that theological foundations of youth preaching be top priority in the “aquarium” of this ministry. The dynamic interplay of the importance of rocks, water, and sand is not the focus of the discussion. It is scientifically proven that the importance of sand and water in an aquarium is unrivaled. The competing factor is the order in which these aquarium elements are introduced. Humankind makes her greatest blunder when she attributes to the sciences that which bears the trademark of theology. This cosmic imprudence is perhaps accountable for the global catastrophic calamities reaped by youth ministry.

Unlike the biochemist or geologist, whose work is more a factor of what they do, the work of the youth minister, who seeks recruitment, mentorship, and training of youth preachers, is largely a factor of who they are, and, more specifically, who they are as an expression of their relationship with God.<sup>1</sup>

There will always be those moments when youth leaders impulsively yield to the optimistic assumption that in their own strength, they are ready to negotiate and navigate the treacherous “rivers and tributaries” of youth ministry. All of a sudden, without any warning, someone, or some circumstance comes along to defy and deflate their arrogant dreams.

In matters of postmodern youth preaching, the most brilliant of us are not settled on our final destination and should not be ashamed to openly confess, “I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in” (1 Kgs 3:7 KJV). Here is the conclusion of

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This way to Youth Ministry*, 18.

this matter. Theology is not easily dismissed from youth preaching. Theology will not just fade away into the background—they were meant for each other.<sup>1</sup> Placing theological “rocks” first into the “aquarium” of youth preaching ministry paves the way for every other necessary element in that ministry.

### Theological Foundations

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28 KJV). With these words, Scripture introduces the young people as the premier protagonists in the proliferation of the end-time gospel. The implications of this text are not only awesome and staggering; they are also vital and compelling.

The pivotal word is “prophesy.” Its context seems to imply more than the reception of the Spirit, such as accompanies conversion. This divine unction, results in the display of supernatural gifts—the likes of prophesying and preaching. The Hebrew word employed for “prophesy” means “to speak forth.”<sup>2</sup> Drawing from Acts 2, Peter declares that the manifestation of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16, 17). Overwhelming evidence in the same chapter, affirms what Peter preached at Pentecost.

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, 11.

<sup>2</sup>W. E Vine and others, “Prophesy,” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 492.

The word “afterward” employed in Joel 2:28 (KJV) is trans-generational—it is not limited to the space and the time that it actually occurred. What was fulfilled in Peter’s day is a microcosm of a future fulfillment reserved for the last days.

This passage of Scripture contributes heavily to our discussion, as it establishes rapport that youth preachers of the apocalypse will duplicate a similar feat. God would pour His spirit upon all flesh, which will attend the preaching of the gospel. The enumeration of the various age groups that would share the spiritual blessings encompasses the youth, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” The “young men” working harmoniously with the “old men” underscores the message of Joel 2:28. God will use both. Old men shall dream; young men will see visions. No such thing as the young taking over from the adults is suggested. A dream, which is the final precipitate of some past experience, is dreamt when a person is asleep. To have a vision, the young person could be wide-awake.<sup>1</sup> The visionary specializes in the present and the future. It is of noticeable importance that in the biblical account, the dream precedes the vision. Young people play a dangerous game when past dreams of the older men and women are snubbed and despised, giving the nod to the distinctive indulgences of the millennial era. Past experience of adults is indispensable and conducive for the upward spiritual mobility of postmodern youth, as well as for expanding the horizons in the vast expanse of youth preaching. Young people are not makers of history; they are made by history.<sup>2</sup> The visions of the youth will be clearer and brighter, more creative and

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<sup>1</sup>Barry Gane, lecture notes, CHMN 765, “Youth Issues,” October 10, 2005, Andrews University Seminary, Berrien Springs, MI.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther King Jr. *Quotations by Author*, [http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Martin\\_Luther\\_King\\_Jr](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Martin_Luther_King_Jr) (accessed July 7, 2007).

compelling, their future prospects more optimistic if they stand on the shoulders of the past experiences and dreams of the older men and women. The old men should not manipulate dreams of past experiences to blur and eclipse the present and future visions of the young.

Social relationships are strained and take a spiraling divisive dive when adults manipulate the glories of the good old days to belittle and stifle the innovative efforts of the young. Refusing them ownership of their church on the subjective basis that they are too young, and asking them to fight modern “Goliaths” in “Saul’s armor,” are classic examples of how meagerly endowed cultural and social capital to the youth can blur their visions of the future. This infamous mentality that scours every new fad of music on MTV or YouTube for the latest evidence to justify the ever-widening generational gap, in turn exerts differential pulls on the allegiances of the postmodern generation.

It is unfathomable that such a powerful interpretation is dispensed and allowed to walk across the mortal stage of man’s imagination—yet local church leaders walk away recalcitrant, denying young people the privilege to be involved in the preaching of the everlasting gospel. A persistent continuum in this trend is fuel for deep concern. Young people will eventually lose interest in the church to which they are denied ownership. The moment is “ripe” to introduce some biblical protégés of both sexes, who were allowed to promulgate the preaching of God’s Word with power and conviction.

#### Biblical Youth Preachers in Action

*Jeremiah* was still a young man when called to the prophetic office, “Ah Lord God. Behold, I cannot speak. . . . Say not, I am a child: for thou shall go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command you, thou shalt speak” (Jer 1:6, 7 KJV).

*Daniel* was obviously a young man at the time he was taken captive. His total service in both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian courts span a period of at least sixty-seven years.<sup>1</sup> As a young ambassador of God's coming kingdom, he fearlessly defied a despotic king, hungry to perpetuate his kingdom forever, and preached that, "In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up [His] kingdom, which shall not be destroyed" (Dan 2:44 KJV).

*Joseph* was still a youth when sold into Egypt as a Hebrew slave. Notwithstanding, he preached everywhere he went. He was the undisputed crowned champion of youth preaching. He preached in some places and under certain conditions that defied human understanding. He preached in good times as well as in bad times. He preached in the most difficult place—at home. He preached to his father and brethren and "they hated him the more for his words" (Gen 37:1-8 KJV). He preached to Portiphar's wife, whose covert grudging admiration and sagging morals, tried to seduce him to compromise his moral principles. His sermon theme was, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God" (Gen 39:7-8 KJV). He left his trousers in her hands, but took his character with him. His message perforated the walls of his prison cell, and was heard in palace halls of King Pharaoh. The entire Egyptian nation was spared from national starvation. Perhaps his most powerful sermon was preached centuries after his death, by the command he gave concerning his bones. His transcending eloquence is that the true Christian will make it to the heavenly Canaan dead or alive (Gen 50:24-26).

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<sup>1</sup>*SDA Bible Dictionary* (1960), s.v. "Daniel."

*David.* Seen by others as just a shepherd boy, but was seen by God as a king. Even though he was a novice when he slew Goliath, the sermon he preached echoed across two millennia of OT and NT time: “Certain spiritual giants that are stalking and defying God’s cause, and have the adult membership on the run, trembling with fear, will only be slain by consecrated young people. What David did in the valley of Elah, was repeated in Sweden during the early 1840’s. Here is an account of what transpired:

Only those who were ministers of the state were permitted to preach, and when the Advent message reached Sweden in the early 1840’s, the state clergy refused to preach the second coming. Then children and youth, some of whom had not yet learned to read, preached the judgment-hour message and the prophecies concerning the return of Jesus. *The authorities did all in their power to prevent the young people from continuing their preaching; but it was to no avail. . . .* Two teen-age speakers, Ole Boquist and Erik Walbon defended their faith from the Bible and were finally released from prison due to the intercession of the king. They continued preaching the Advent Message until 1844.<sup>1</sup>

Of most noticeable importance is the reaction of David’s eldest brother Eliab (1 Sam 17:28). He was reluctant to engage Goliath in combat, but was the first to discourage David from battling the giant from Gath. The adult membership of our church is bewildered and confused by twenty-first century “Goliaths.” Notwithstanding, they are foremost in denying young people the opportunity to confront these postmodern, defying, giant challenges. While adults would hesitantly risk allowing postmodern youth to battle twenty-first century “Goliaths,” they want them to fight in “Saul’s armor.” An armor that was effective against the Amorites and the Jebusites is no match for the mutating millennial youth culture.

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<sup>1</sup>Youth Department of the General Conference, *Church Heritage: A Course in Church History* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, n.d.), 25.

Ancient Israel and modern Israel share a similar history. The bones of Israel's ancestry have long been bleached and whitened in the desert sands of Divine Providence. Their children, who they contended would become prey to the ferocious beasts in the wilderness, survived and led the nomadic church to a stable permanent dwelling in the Promised Land (Num 14:26-35 KJV).

The similarity is so striking, it can hardly be missed. Marking time at the crucial bend along the great historical and eschatological continuum of the apocalypse, adults still contend that the young people are easy preys to spiritual predators lurking in the dark recesses of church leadership. They are too young and inexperienced, and are not up to such a task.

It is of noticeable importance that the two temple officials Hilkiyah and Schaphan placed the rediscovered Law of Moses in the hands of a juvenile king Josiah who read it diligently and led Israel into one of the greatest revival and reformation in the long course of her history (2 Chr 36).

Adult youth leaders of the congregation have one final legacy to contribute—place God's rediscovered Word in the possession of the young people. One could never fully comprehend the enchantment that the Scriptures exert on young hearts. Like Josiah, they will read it and discover for themselves that one moral absolute still guides and constrains all the affairs of mankind—God's moral Law of the Ten Commandments

God's Word and His Law as a "lamp unto their feet" will light a path, guiding millennial adolescents to walk through the dark corridors of secularism, pluralism, and privatism—and through the gathering shadows of a promiscuous age. The fulfillment of Joel 2:28 will be inevitable.



Dee Hock, founder of VISA Corporation, lends this succinct contribution to our discussion: “We are at that very point in time when a 400 year-old age is dying and another is struggling to be born—a shifting of culture, science, society, and institutions enormously greater than the world has ever experienced.”<sup>1</sup> Demographers and socialist statisticians are predicting that by the year 2015, Generation Y (millennials) will make up 34 percent of the U.S. population.<sup>2</sup>

The ancestry of Adventism has died or is dying in the cosmic deserts of sin, rebellion, and ethical selfishness. This is the hour of the youth. It is their turn. The last revival is reserved for the millennials (Joel 2:28). They have become the international voice in the debate of the destiny of the church, the nation, and the world. The landscape of the twenty-first century is theirs to shape.

The Associated Press reported that in the Indiana Primary of Tuesday May 6, 2008, “Nearly one in five people who cast votes in the Democratic primary were under age 30, with most—six in 10—favoring Obama, according to exit polls of nearly 1,900 voters who were part of Tuesday's record turnout.”<sup>3</sup>

William Shakespeare wrote of a “high tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows

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<sup>1</sup>Hock, *Quotes by Dee Hock*, [http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR\\_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf) (accessed October 26, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Jon, posted in “All Our Jobs Belong to uhh . . . Them!” May 16th, 2006, <http://www.blametheboomers.com/blog/?cat=1> (accessed October 26, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>The Associated Press, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0508/10200.html> (accessed May 10, 2008)

and in miseries (4.2).”<sup>1</sup> Obama is recalcitrant in his quest to ride this high youth-tide all the way to the White House in November 2008. The spiritual roots of this millennial generation will penetrate deep into the soil of practical godliness and will eventually lead God’s church to the promise land.

Therefore, Joel 2 and Acts 2 should not be viewed through the “lens” of favoritism. It is not some cosmic plan orchestrated on the camouflage of the holy precincts of the divine Godhead, to replace the adult leadership of the church with vibrant juvenile energy.

These biblical narrations are accurate reports and the writing of history well in advance to its unfolding. These passages are biblical eschatology at its best. They allow the reality of the end to return to the present, shaping it for the glory of God. Supporting the youth cooperates with a history that has already been decreed to happen, based on the choices men and women make in life.

*Queen Esther.* Her outward beauty was no match for her inward beauty of character. Displaying the decorum of one dispatched by the King of kings, her powerful sermon, “If I Perish, I Perish,” confounded the plot of an evil conspirator and delivered God’s people (Esth 4:15-17 KJV). This brave and unprecedented dictum indelibly stenciled on the annals of history, is a divine reminder that there is ample room around God’s Welcome Table for female preachers. Such posture should not fuel opposition

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<sup>1</sup>William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*; Scene IV, Act 2, <http://homepage.eircom.net/%257Eodyssey/Quotes/Written/Shakespeare.html> (accessed May 10, 2007).

from the pew, considering that 65 percent of the North American Division of SDA church membership is of a female persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

God is no respecter of persons. Joel 2:28 makes reference to “sons and daughters.” To deny female protégés access to youth preaching is to deny the historical existence of Esther. If young women cannot be a part of God’s army of youth preachers, then Joel 2:28 is a sham—the final precipitate of some prophet’s fickle imagination. Joel spoke about “sons and daughters” [preaching] and “young men” seeing visions, prophesying, etc. This resonates with the trend of most religious, civic, and political enterprises, which have been shouldered and set a foot by the diplomacies of young ambassadors. To deny them their rightful position reserved around the table of youth preachers seems to be incongruent with the divine mandate.

#### Youth Preaching—An Ear Tingling Drama

The prophetic horizons and ramifications of Joel 2:28-31 expanded in dramatic fashions on the Day of Pentecost. Manifestation of divine grace, which will attend the closing work of the preaching of the gospel, will signal the culminant fulfillment.<sup>2</sup> Young preachers will be at the center of this outpouring and manifestation of unbridled power. This was what the Lord told Samuel, “And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle” (1 Sam 3:11 KJV). Although the above text is primarily concerned with divine judgment

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Oswald Euwell, Lecture, Personal Ministries Seminar, Christian Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church, July 15, 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1959), ix.

against the house of Eli for the covered up sins of his sons, it may also serve as the basis to describe the apocalyptic fulfillment of the preaching of the three angels messages. This powerful unprecedented promise is portable. It is not only for the biblical “Samuels,” but can be claimed by every Christian youth down through the corridors of time. The flames of youth preaching may be flickering, but certainly have not been extinguished (1 Sam 3:3 KJV). These flickering flames will be reignited. Youth preaching will make a comeback. This ear-tingling drama will be the Lord’s doing.

### **Biblical Models of Mentoring the Young**

Biblical examples of adults mentoring the young are numerous and manifold: we could think of Jethro and Moses; Moses and Joshua; Eli and Samuel; Samuel and David; Elijah and Elisha; Paul and Barnabbas; Barnabbas and John Mark; Paul and Timothy; Eunice and Lydia, just to mention a few. The experiences of Josiah and Elijah not only disclose the identities of a few outstanding youth mentors, but also serve as buffers to subsequent generations, as to how adults can connect with the youth and recruit and mentor them as youth preachers.

### **The Josiah Model for Mentoring Youth Preachers**

This mentoring model is “not a starting point for an aimless stroll”<sup>1</sup> through the ancient precincts of Bible times; it “forces us to see beyond what we are doing to what we might do.”<sup>2</sup> The “Josiah Model” is a theological paradigm potentially viable to

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Naden, “Preparing Your Sermon,” *Ministry* (October 1984): 13.

<sup>2</sup>Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry: A Foundational Guide*, foreword by V. Bailey Gillepsie (Riverside, CA: Hancock Center Publications, 2000), 13.

reweave the recruiting, mentoring, and training fabric of youth preaching. It challenges youth ministers of all ages to confidently hide God's rediscovered Word in young hearts; then witness an unprecedented rebounding comeback of youth preaching (2 Chr 34:8-16 KJV). This biblical empowerment for youth preaching finds roots in the second book of the Chronicles, chapters 34, 35. Concerning Josiah, it is written: "And in the twelfth year of his reign, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places" (2 Chr 34:3 KJV). Without much fanfare, Josiah is introduced into the annals of history as one of the greatest reformers of all times.

#### Importance of the Josiah Story

A focal point in the trajectory of this discussion is that a revival in youth preaching would virtually dwindle away into anonymity, without adult input. Having adults close by is very comforting to postmodern teenagers. Young people would perform fearlessly high up on the trapeze of life, providing that the adults of the church bond to form a "safety net" upon which they can land in the event of a spiritual fall. Adult mentorship of the young is perhaps the greatest argument in favor of Christianity. An army of youth, "rightly trained,"<sup>1</sup> guided and equipped by adult youth ministers, is most likely to ignite the greatest reformation in the history of youth preaching. Bishop T. D. Jakes predicts that, providing adult leaders supply the gentle "breeze" of support to youth preachers, the "sails" of youth preaching will be full of the winds of destiny.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1930), 196, quoted in Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry . . .* (2004), 14.

<sup>2</sup>T. D. Jakes, *Woman, Thou Art Loose: Healing the Wounds of the Past* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), v.

Three adult mentors will now be introduced, who provided such a gentle “breeze” of spiritual pivotal support to Josiah. His spiritual “sails” were so filled with the “winds” of destiny that he sailed into the atriums of biblical history as one of the greatest reformers of all times.

### **Maternal Support**

Of Josiah it is written, “and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chr 34:2). Reminiscent of postmodern niches, Josiah was born in a very challenging environment, where corruption, evil, and wickedness incessantly bumped into each other. Yet his spiritual “petals” remained unblemished. This spiritual fortitude certainly was not a legacy from his father, Amon, who went down in history as one of the most corrupt kings of Israel (2 Chr 33:21-24). Perhaps Josiah’s strongest spiritual support came from the most obvious source—his mother. Even though she is anonymous in the Scriptures, the Josiah Story nods in agreement that a father’s faith and a mother’s prayer are a child’s priceless treasures. W. R. Wallace made a lasting contribution to the discussion, when he eloquently expressed truth in this statement, “The hands that rocked the cradle are the hands that rule the world.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Pastoral Support**

Josiah was only eight years old when he succeeded his father as the undisputed King of Israel (2 Chr 34:1 KJV). Obviously, he was a boy-king. Without the strong and unwavering support provided by Hilkiyah, the High Priest, all his efforts would have been

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<sup>1</sup>Samuele Bacchiocchi, “The Call to Motherhood,” *Ministry* (May 1986): 5.

short lived. His uncanny ability to support Josiah was not only unprecedented, creative, and compelling, but also worthy of emulation.

The top-quality mentorship provided to the young king is a paramount example of what must be done on behalf of youth preachers if they are to successfully climb to the crest of youth preaching. Hilkiah did not allow any extrapolations of personal greed and avarice brooding in the spectrum of his dark purposes to usurp the throne from this naïve young king. He took the eight-year old boy-king into custody. There were no manifested semblances of gradations of covert, political power play lurking. As was depicted in Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, Hilkiah is seen as wisdom personified,<sup>1</sup> guiding the infant king through a very difficult transition period of his life.

It is the responsibility of church pastors and leaders to create such an accommodating spiritual atmosphere, in which the young feel safe to tell their story and also listen to God's story.<sup>2</sup>

One of the greatest obstacles in youth ministry is the question of confidentiality. Young people are afraid that if they confide in youth ministers and church pastors, it will end up as a sermon illustration or an anecdote somewhere.

Blessed is the church that has such pastors and leaders in whom the youth can confide their deep inner struggles. Blessed is the pastor or youth minister who has won the confidence and trust of the young.

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<sup>1</sup>D. Keith Cowart, "The Role of Mentoring in the Preparation of Church Planters of Reproducing Churches" (DMin dissertation, Aubury Theological Seminary, 2004), 16; [http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/dmin/current\\_students/research/dissertations/cowart\\_j.pdf](http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/dmin/current_students/research/dissertations/cowart_j.pdf) (accessed June 29, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Dean, Clark, and Rahn, *Starting Right*, 206.

Blessed is the church pastor, who even though committed to perform across a wide array of pastoral tasks and duties, can still salvage quality time to recruit, train, mentor, and equip youth preachers. “Ministers of the gospel should form a happy acquaintance with the youth of the congregation. The minister’s first responsibility is to learn how to work for young people and train them for service.”<sup>1</sup> With such an army as that of our youth, church leaders cannot afford the luxury to be found guilty of neglecting this great work. Mentoring and recruiting this great army of youth preachers, equipping them, and training them in the neglected area of youth preaching, is not an option, but a divine mandate. The church pastor should pose the all important question to every ministry in the church, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” (2 Sam 18:29 KJV). Are the young people safe in Sabbath School? Are they safe in the Adventist Youth Society? Are they safe in the Adventist Junior Youth Society? Are they safe in the Children’s Bible Hour? Are they safe with their class teacher? Are they safe in the Pathfinders, Master Guides, Adventurers, Eager Beavers clubs, as well as during the divine hour of worship? The personal, private, and confidential matters they confide to their pastor, is it safe? A negative answer demands persistence in asking the same question over and over again; a willingness to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe,”<sup>2</sup> leave no stone unturned, and count no project too expensive until, the only acceptable answer is heard: “Yes, they are safe.” A million churches

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1943), 207, 210.

<sup>2</sup>John F. Kennedy, “Inaugural Speech,” January 1960, <http://www.jfk-info.com/jfkinaug.htm> (accessed August 14, 2006).



could be built and even decorated with fine tapestry, lush carpeting, ornate artifacts, and pipe organs. Notwithstanding, it is imperative that the youth hear that loving voice of encouragement and feel that gentle “breeze” of technical support from adult church leaders within the hollowed walls of the church. If not, they will pass through unchanged by our gospel gimmicks and religious rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> The churches will eventually become irrelevant social clubs: without spiritual or moral authority, intellectually unrespectable, and emotionally dissatisfying. It would not be long before their pews are empty.

#### Self-Support from Josiah

Perhaps the greatest source of spiritual support afforded to the novice king came from within himself: “For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, [Josiah] began to seek after God” (2 Chr 34:3 KJV). Before Josiah could reform Israel, he had to first reform his life. His sixteenth birthday found him consecrating his life to God. There is an enormous quantity of pretentious romanticism displayed in religious circles. It is possible for reformers to affirm the importance of spirituality with their lips and not a trace of it is manifested in their lives. They say with their lips that they believe in God, but live as if He never existed. Reformers should practice with integrity what they preach. Before the flames of revival and reformation of youth preaching can burn in the church, the said flames must first blaze in the hearts of the reformers. The person who seeks the transformation of human hearts must be sure that his or her heart is first transformed. Numerous preachers, young and experienced, make their greatest blunder in attempting to straighten out the church before first straightening out their individual

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<sup>1</sup>Jakes, *Woman, Thou Art Loose*, 25.

lives. A personal spiritual reform is the necessary fuel Josiah needed to take the reformation to another level—to his people. When he was twenty years old, he “began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and carved images” (2 Chr 34:3 KJV).

A key word is *purged*. Undigested food particles remaining in the large intestine, tend to form toxic poisons. These toxic substances should be purged out of the system in order to avoid the development of malignant tumors, and other physical illnesses. The “toxic” influences of worldliness and immorality are taking roots among God’s people, slowly poisoning the ecclesiastical services and ministries of the church, leaving many with chronic, spiritual “constipation.”

This is the generation in which the ability to reason is so waned, the tenderness of conscience is so impaired, that the sense of God is obscured, and the authority of the body is increased over the mind. The purging of these philosophical enclaves precedes any semblance of hope for resuscitation and reformation in youth preaching. Purge away that demoralizing mentality that the young people are not ready to preach. They will be ready if they are mentored, postponed, and liberated to accomplish the task.

They will be capable if they are trained and empowered. Purge away the “playing it safe” mentality, and the fear of failure. Fear is the dark room in which all the negatives of life are developed. Purge out all those putrefying programs, and that “toxic” mentality that our young people are not spiritual and, therefore, cannot be trusted.

#### The Support from Youth Leaders

Another adult of noticeable importance, who provided strong support for young king Josiah, was Shaphan, the Scribe. When Josiah was twenty-six years old, Shaphan

was dispatched . . . to repair the house of the Lord his God (2 Chr 34:8 KJV). While the supervising team, headed by Shaphan, was overseeing the repair of the temple, “Hilkiah, the priest, found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses” (2 Chr 34:14). Hilkiah gave the book of the law to Shaphan, the scribe, who promptly placed the law into the hands of Israel’s juvenile king (2 Chr 34:15, 16).

The scriptural account “pulls us into [a] dry dock and scrapes off . . . fantasy bloated ambitions,”<sup>1</sup> to be confronted by the full impact of the brunt of this ecclesiastic blunder stratified in consequential terms; God’s Word was lost in the temple because of the carelessness of adult leaders.

It is a sad day, for those that bear the name of Christ, when God’s Word is lost in our homes, at school, and in the church. Our youth lose so much when God’s Word is lost in the AY society, its pages gathering dust—the “morning watch” is not kept, Bible games are eliminated, and Bible Bowl contests are written in the past tense.

It is a great fiasco for youth preachers, when the keepers of the gospel flames lose God’s Word in the pulpit. The enemy steals a march on God’s people when the “pulpit elevates style over substance and inadvertently redefines preaching as primarily a matter of sincerity and not truth.”<sup>2</sup> The style of the message should flow from the substance. Youth preaching is retarded when “the truth of the message is not ignored, but

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Petersen, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 80, 81.

<sup>2</sup>Reid S. Thomas Jr., “Evidence in the Gospel of the Preaching to Postmoderns: A Study of the Sermons of Leading Preachers” (DMin dissertation, Aubury Theological Seminary, 2005), 14, [http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/dmin/current\\_students/research/dissertations/thomasr.pdf](http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/dmin/current_students/research/dissertations/thomasr.pdf) (accessed June 5, 2007).

obscured.”<sup>1</sup> Instead of serving fresh “bread” from week to week, preachers substitute it with the stale loaves of tradition, speculation, personal opinions, philosophy, and social politics. Youth preaching becomes bankrupt when religious culture commercializes every aspect of the church’s life, auctioning its preachers to the highest bidder and marketing its crosses.

Perhaps nothing is more precious to God than to have youth leaders take His re-discovered Word and entrust it to mentored youth preachers, and to have that Word preached with power and conviction. Pharaoh entrusted Egypt to Joseph, and all Egypt was spared from a national famine (Gen 41).

#### Postmodern Pied Pipers (Youth Mentors)

In the book, *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry*, the authors make a powerful analogy between the work of youth ministers and that of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Careful analysis of this tale of yesteryears—which embodies uniqueness and universality—has bequeathed some valuable insights as to why dueling with youth ministers is playing a dangerous game. They are not the “Pied Pipers of Hamelin.” These are the “Pied Pipers” of the twenty-first century and beyond. They command the confidence, the respect, and trust of the youth. With an unprecedented boldness, these daring ambassadors of the young fearlessly step into the mine fields of promiscuousness, help shape the postmodern landscape of youth ministry, and lived to tell the story. They serve as buffers between the legalistic conservatisms of modernism and the permissive

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 14.

liberalities of postmodernism, as well as to bridge the pervasive generational gap. They are perceived by the youth as fellow travelers on the journey. They have made the church a haven of rest, where the young can rest in calm repose. These men and women only have to “pipe” the right tune on the postmodern “pipes” of youth ministry and the plague of the vermin of drugs, illicit sex, gangs, and peer pressure dissipates—no longer to plague and harass our young people. Youth leaders should be taken seriously and not to be trifled with. It is a tragic mistake to take these youth leaders for granted, promising them “one thousand guilders” and only coming up with “fifty” instead. They only have to change the tune, and the same pipe that destroyed the rats can bring them back again; this time, however, drowning our young sons and daughters in the fantasy “rivers” of abused substances, worldliness, and promiscuity. Young people are easy targets for the devil. All it takes is for some fancy “Pied Piping” youth leader to come along on the highway of life with some good music, adding a little change and beat to the tune, and there go the young of the congregation dancing off to sure destruction.<sup>1</sup>

The truism holds fast: it is not who is doing the piping, but rather what the piped tune is all about. Youth ministers should be treated with respect. The Elijah model for mentoring youth preachers needs careful examination.

### **The Elijah Model for Mentoring Youth Preachers**

Elijah is another classic biblical example of an adult leader who was a tower of support for the young. This biblical precedence begins with a tragedy: “Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. His

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<sup>1</sup>Dean, Clark, and Rahn, *Starting Right*, 202.

sickness was so serious and severe that “there was no breath left in him” (1 Kgs 17:17 NKJV). He died. As was expected, his mother looked around for someone to blame. She blamed Elijah. Even though the prophet had done nothing to deserve such a hostile reaction, yet she is blaming him. That is a natural reaction. Sometimes people blame those who have done the most to help.<sup>1</sup>

A short while before, both the widow “and her son had been sustained miraculously each day, thanks to Elijah and the power of his God”<sup>2</sup> (see 1 Kgs 17:8-16). Elijah did five things that are indispensable to resurrect dead or dying youth preachers in the immigrant churches of the Northeastern Conference, or in any church for that matter: (1) he was willing to accept the blame, (2) he was willing to accept the boy even when he was dead, (3) he was forced to take the dead boy from his mother, (4) he was willing to cry and pray over the dead child, and (5) he was willing to get close to the juvenile corpse.

To resuscitate the sagging ministry of youth preaching and take it to another level, youth ministers should go and do likewise. Doing business as usual will perpetuate the problem.

### Accepting the Blame

The Christian maturity of Elijah is to be commended. Somehow he senses that nothing said could remove the dark clouds of grief floating around in the mental skies of

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<sup>1</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 60.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

the grieving mother. He knew well that no words could soothe her stricken spirit. He does not argue with her. He does not reprimand her. He does not rebuke her. He does not try to reason with her. He accepted the blame.

Local, regional, and world denominational youth leaders should be mature enough to lay aside their wounded egos and accept the blame for the sudden “passing away” of youth preaching. They should embrace the burdens of the past in such fashions without becoming victims of our past.

Thirst to resuscitate youth preaching must not be satiated by drinking from the bitter “cup” of blame. Pointing the condemning finger of blame is not only equated to passing on the legacy of failure to future generations, it pales in comparison to placing these juvenile corpses into the loving arms of Jesus—training and equipping them as youth preachers.

#### Give Me Your Dead Son.

Returning to the Elijah story, the widow is standing there holding the lifeless body of her son in her arms. At that very precise moment Elijah holds out his arms and quietly says, “Give me your son” (1 Kgs 17:19 NASB).

This is the “swing vote” that elects Elijah as the greatest mentor of youth preachers of all times. His love for young people was deep and irrevocable; he wanted them even when they were dead.

In her book, *Listening for God*, Renita Weems presents the legend of Baal Shem Tov. Perceiving that he was dying, Baal Shem Tov called for his disciples and challenged them to continue his work. If they would go to the same place where he used

to go, light a fire as he did, pray the same prayer he prayed; do all these things, and then God would come.

A short while after, the Baal Shem Tov died. The first generation of disciples followed his instructions to the letter and, sure enough, God always came. The second generation had forgotten how to light the fire in the manner how they were instructed. However, they still made the pilgrimage to the special place and said the prayer they had been instructed to pray. Sure enough, God showed up. The third generation had forgotten how to light the fire, and had no clue as to where the prayer retreat was located. They said the prayer as they were instructed to do.

Again God showed up. By the fourth generation, no one was around who remembered how to light the fire, where the place was located, and neither could anybody recall the prayer the Baal Shem Tov had instructed his followers to pray.

“But there was one person who remembered the story about the fire, the forest, and the prayer and delighted in telling it over and over. And sure enough, God came.”<sup>1</sup> Many denominational experts, with tears and lamentations, have long given up on the strange and mutating youth culture of postmodernism. If they walk away now—if they simply retreat into respective corners—they will never be able to come together and advance solutions to these monumental challenges in youth preaching.

Many denominational experts, with tears and lamentations, have long given up on the strange and mutating youth culture of postmodernism. This research serves as a summons to all youth ministers, who understand that in the final analysis, it is not the

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<sup>1</sup>Renita Weems, *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1991), 28, 29.



words of the enemy that have the most devastating effect upon youth ministry; it is the appalling silence of [youth leaders].<sup>1</sup>

Those who answer this call should be prepared to vividly recall the story about the fire, the forest, and the prayer. Most importantly, they should be versed in the understanding of how to light the fires of youth evangelism. Not only should youth leaders be willing to tell the story over and over again to our young sons and daughters, investing quality time in recruiting, mentoring, training, and equipping youth preachers must be top priority.

It will be a short walk before the fires of youth evangelism is rekindled in the tender but flammable “cinders” of their young hearts. Nobody is pretending that the bold attempt of working with postmodern youth, in attempt to revive youth preaching, is purely a pleasure cruise. Certainly, the writer is not advocating that the teenage years are the best of years. Too often youth ministers, parents, or academicians discuss adolescence and youth with the optimism and hopefulness of people viewing the scene of a traffic accident.

Duffy Robbins warns that “teenage years are not an accident. It may be the scene of some accidents, and it certainly offers its share of flashing lights and near misses. It may well be that the shifting lanes of [postmodern youth] culture and the accelerating drives of early puberty [and pressures generated by peer pressure] have made the journey [of reviving youth preaching] more difficult. . . . Adolescence is a gift—God’s gift and it

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., Quotes, [http://thinkexist.com/quotes/martin\\_luther\\_king\\_jr](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/martin_luther_king_jr) (accessed October 11, 2007).

must not be squandered in complaints or stoic resistance.”<sup>1</sup>

Adolescence years is the birth of the future; that juncture where the varying aspects of life—birth and death, failure and success, doubt and belief, joy and pain, healing and salvation—are given balance and harmony in the great cosmic crucible of Divine Providence.

This is the époque of life when prevention of dying pales in comparison to instructions as how to live. Youth ministers should not complain about the noise that comes from the knockings of adolescence on the ecclesiastic windows and doors of opportunity. Winston Churchill observed that “the pessimist see difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”<sup>2</sup> Youth leaders—who will successfully cope with postmodern woes and ignite a revival and a comeback in youth preaching—must be willing to say, “Give us your young sons and daughters just as they are, dead in trespasses and sin. Give them to us, with all their worldliness and jewelry.

Give them to us, when they are indifferent and irreverent. Give us the young of the congregation, with their drums and rap music; with their baggy jeans and with their Rastafarian dread locks; and we will ‘transform the salient misdeeds of the unguided into

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 178.

<sup>2</sup>Winston Churchill, Quotes, [http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR\\_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf) (accessed October 11, 2007).

the calculated good deeds of orderly citizens.<sup>1</sup> Give them to us, with their agnosticism and their alienation from the Christian church.

Give them to us, when authoritarian church leaders have washed their hands and have given them up for dead. Give them to us, even though seventy percent of their parents, through a recent Ann Landers survey, indicated reluctance to have children if given a second chance.<sup>2</sup> Give them to us, when the pall of spiritual death is on their brows and their minds are fevered with lust and passion.” The tragic mistake parents, pastors, and youth ministers make is that their interaction with teenagers has kinship to that of the “carrot and the stick” method. When they are good, they are rewarded with the “carrot.” When they do otherwise, they given the stick, scolded, and shunned as second class-citizens. History nods in agreement that young people of the most recalcitrant bent will be transformed by unconditional love. Embracing youth preachers, when the moral impact of their lives is impeccable, is an enticing commodity. However, mentoring them as youth preachers in the promiscuous niches of postmodernism is another matter. Perhaps Duffy Robbins was thinking along these lines when he wrote that “there is a strong conviction, substantiated by centuries of devout thinking and faithful living, that everything given to us is raw material for holiness.”<sup>3</sup> Many technocrats in youth ministry refuse to embrace and endorse postmodern youth on the

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 48.

<sup>2</sup>Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, 3.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 178.

premise that the “old ways” are superior to the “new ways.” This negative and selfish mentality is perhaps the single most plausible reason why many youth have adapted oppositional frames of references against anything the church promotes.

### Taking Away Spiritually Dead Youth

Most Bible students tend to gravitate to the idea that the mother of the deceased youth willingly placed his juvenile corpse into the arms of Elijah. However, this position is dramatically opposed to the biblical account; which clearly indicates that Elijah “took him from her bosom” (1 Kgs 17:19 (NASB)).

“Maternal” youth leaders were the ones who “birthed” pre-modern and modern youth programs. This adequately justifies why they cling tenaciously to these “dead” approaches and strategies to mobilize the dormant forces of youth preaching. It is human to love until death those to whom we gave birth.

History is the long reliable saga that privileged groups seldom relinquish their privileges without strong resistance, and they seldom do it voluntarily. Old habits, programs, and strategies die hard.

Conventional youth leaders too are frightened of change—fearful of what God can do through His army of youth, rightly, recruited, mentored, equipped, and given ownership and participation of their church. The times of most change, always hold the most possibility.

If the trajectory of the current trend persists along the social lines of this demographic continuum, it will be no small task to wrest spiritually dead youth preachers from the firm and unrelenting grip of the traditional and conventional mindsets of modern youth ministry.

Modern “Elijahs” (pastors and youth ministers) will have to find a way of wresting away spiritually dead young people from the “maternal bosom” of this dying ministry if youth preaching is to make a reviving rebound in the churches in question.

### Tears, Prayers, and Resurrection

Then Elijah, the man of God, climbed the stairway to his “upper room,” and there, standing alone in the shadows with God, where the decisive battles are fought and won;<sup>1</sup> and “he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?” (1 Kgs 17: 20). “*And he cried.*”

This is not alluding to just a mere sniffing of the nose with a handkerchief. This is not the private mourning that is done within the comforting confines of a secret chamber. Involuntary waves of emotional convulsions rocked the body of this full-grown man back and forth.

At this spiritual junction, again, Elijah is declared as the all-time undisputed champion for youth mentorship. His love for this young lad is so deep, so intense, and so profound, he was willing to weep and pray over his dead body. Church pastors and youth leaders who seek to resuscitate dormant youth preachers and return them to the waiting arms of the church are summoned to do likewise.

The spiritual depravities that prevail among postmodern youth should drive them to their “upper rooms” and to their knees in tears and supplication. Those who are not prepared to do this will find themselves in a difficult bind, and should tender in their resignation from youth ministry, effective immediately.

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<sup>1</sup>Swindoll, *Elijah*, 64.

A paraphrased version of a Ronald Reagan quote is applicable: “[The ministry of youth preaching] is never more than one generation away from extinction. We can’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. [Youth preachers must be recruited, mentored, trained, and equipped], or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like when [youth preaching was the last best hope for God’s church].”<sup>1</sup>

### Resurrection at Point Blank

In the upper room of that humble cottage, Elijah is gripped by the enormous gravity of the moment. He lays the dead boy on his bed. He bends over the juvenile corpse with superhuman intensity; mouth-to-mouth, nose-nose, eye-to-eye, leg-to-leg, and heart to heart—transferring life. He will either warm this child with his life or be chilled by his death. In the pulpit, the young preacher is “standing between the dead and the living” (Num 16:48). This is not the time or the place for the tolerance of ambiguity or for frivolity and jesting.<sup>2</sup> Youth preachers, who are bent on being pulpit clowns, should go and join some circus. The craft is bigger than life and as solemn as death. Too often, the example from seasoned preachers is not encouraging. Some colleague preachers equate effective preaching with recycling some pre-historic pulpit joke. The tragedy of it all is that too often the preacher’s sense of humor makes no sense at all.

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald Reagan, “Quotes from Reagan on America, Freedom, and War,” comp. by John Hawkins, <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2004/reagan/stories/speech.archive/challenger.disaster.html> (accessed October 2, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Charles D. Brooks, “Preach What You Believe,” *Ministry* (November 1984): 1.

Humor has its place in preaching, but it should be injected sparingly. According to the Leviticus law, prohibition against touching a dead body was not limited to the carcasses of unclean animals. Clean animals were also included, as well human corpses (see Lev 11:39, 40; Num 19:11).<sup>1</sup> The longer period of uncleanness applied to that of a human carcass.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Elijah was not too particularly thrilled with the idea of a mouth-to-mouth artificial respiration to a dead boy. He indulged in this apparently degrading act because he understood that the resurrection of a young person would never occur from a distance. It is difficult to evangelize effectively from a distance.

It is frustrating and virtually impossible for any youth minister to attempt understanding youth culture from a distance. This is equated to a weatherman trying to gauge the temperature by looking through a window, or a doctor trying to do a physical by looking at someone's photograph. Youth culture is best understood through presence, moving beyond the theoretical to the geographical—the ministry of presence.

The advantage of interacting with teenagers is not just the information they gives us, but also the relationship they offer. Like so many creatures in God's universe, "[the postmodern adolescent] is not an arithmetical expression; he [she] is a mysterious and puzzling being, and his [her] nature is extreme and contradictory all through."<sup>3</sup> They are harder to be loved and understood from a distance.

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<sup>1</sup>"Leviticus," *Seventh-day Adventist Commentary*; ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-57), 1:754.

<sup>2</sup>"Numbers," *Seventh-day Adventist Commentary*; ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-57), 1:887.

<sup>3</sup>Dostoevsky, quoted in Nicholas Berdyaev in *Dostoevsky* (New York: Living Age Books, 1957), 53.

Making statements of ecclesiastical authority, affirming with the Three Angels' Message, shouting orders in a dramatic Adventist Youth program, or the parading and believing of "certain theological constructs that intersect life at no practical junction, simply is no way to [recruit, equip, and train youth preachers]."<sup>1</sup>

Youth ministers from the metropolitan SDA churches in Brooklyn, as well as in other SDA churches across America, are summoned "to remove [those thick] lenses of [their] exclusive perspectives,"<sup>2</sup> and do what they have been shunning all these years—put an end to antiquated programs that seek youth resurrection from a distance. Nothing short of a miracle will empower them to take the dying ministry of youth preaching into the full bosom of their arms, lovingly carry it up to their upper rooms, lay it out before God in supplication and prayer, and breathe new life into the juvenile "bier" of this seemingly hopeless situation. Reformation and revival among youth preachers in question will be inevitable.

There is yet another related aspect in the story that many theologians have not been able to unravel. Elijah "stretched himself upon the child three times" (1 Kgs 17:21). Here is a suggestion that is in accord with the intent of this research. Youth preaching in postmodern youth ministry is swiftly becoming a relic of the past. This defunct ministerial activity should be revived and empowered when youth ministers set aside quality time to equip, train, mentor, and empower youth preachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, iv.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, ii.



However, the long awaited revival of youth preaching may not become a reality with the first or second attempt. It may take as much as three attempts. The worst scenario, it may take an entire lifetime.

Paraphrasing the words of the late John F. Kennedy, “Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of [youth ministers] born in the twentieth century, tempered by [a postmodern youth culture, and brought by the Holy Ghost ‘to the kingdom for such a time as this]’ (Esth 4:14).

Let the word go out to all [youth ministers] involved in this difficult task. Let these [consecrated servants of the Most High God] be aware that few have been summoned to [revive youth preaching] in the hour of maximum danger. Let none shrink from this awesome responsibility. The challenge must be welcomed.”<sup>1</sup>

Youth ministry is a journey—a journey whose destination after all these years still lies before us. Youth preachers, like embroidery, are formed stitch by stitch—no stopping until you get there. The good news is that the end of the journey is closer than ever before. Be advised that revival and reformation of youth preaching in Adventist circles may not become a reality in the “next 100, 300, or 1000 days.” My fellow youth ministers, “Let us begin.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The History of Adventist Youth Mentorship**

From its earliest days, “many of the SDA pioneers were young people—the likes

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<sup>1</sup>Kennedy, “Inaugural Speech.”

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

of James White, Ellen White, John Loughborough, and John. N. Andrews.<sup>1</sup> They have shouldered the responsibility ever since.”<sup>2</sup> The high incidence of young people found in the metropolitan immigrant churches of Northeastern Conference makes them potentially viable to carry God’s work to its completion. Numerous expositions of the history of the SDA Church credit seventeen-year-old Harry Fenner and fourteen-year-old Luther Warren as the founders of the first youth organization in 1879, in Hazelton Township, Michigan.

While it goes uncontested in SDA history that the Fenner and Warren duo are the unrivaled known founders of the first Adventist Youth Society, it was actually spawned by concerned adults of the Hazelton congregation. The old church records indicate that the turning point came at a board meeting. Parents were concerned about the safety of the young people and discussed various ways among themselves how they could help them.<sup>3</sup> It is of noticeable importance that the parents and the local church board led out together in the initiative—home and church. Against all predictions to the contrary, this powerful coalition was the winning combination. We must not yield to the temptation to view God’s church as being the sum of its parts—out of many, we are truly one. This research is concentrated along the relational continuum, that a dying ministry of youth preaching in the targeted churches (Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community

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<sup>1</sup>Emma Howell Cooper, *The Great Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1968), 16-18.

<sup>2</sup>Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 14.

<sup>3</sup>*Manual de Ministerio Juvenil* (Youth Ministry Manual), ed. A. Garcia Marenkko, trans. by Anthony L. Usher (N.p.: Inter American Publishing House, 1988), 7.

Tabernacle) will revive to youth ministers, pastors, and parents, who humbly accept the blame for its demise and indiscriminately take youth preachers into the loving bosom of their arms, from whence they will fervently pray over them with tears and supplication, and recruit, equip, train and mentor them as youth preachers. To revive the dormant forces of youth preaching, it is imperative that youth ministers, like Elijah, get close because successful resurrection never occurs from a distance.

### **Summary**

The postmodern society is unique in that its citizens desire spirituality without church and religion minus doctrine. They sense a need for God but would prefer to define that God on their terms rather than by biblical principles. Theological foundations therefore are inseparably and inextricably bounded to youth ministry.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Overview

Intentional mentorship of the young is tragically lacking in the Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle SDA churches. A conscientious effort to understand the challenges of postmodern youth culture is vital and compelling for enhancing a comeback in youth preaching.

#### Creeping Shadows of Postmodernism

Sebastian Junger described the perfect storm that claimed the six-crew members of the 72-foot sword fishing boat *Andrea Gail* on October 1991. The 120-mile-per-hour winds, with waves that were ten stories high, were too much for Captain Billy Tyne and his crew.<sup>1</sup> The *Andrea Gail's* last radio call came at 6:00 p.m. Neither boat nor crew was ever seen again. This unprecedented storm resulted from the confluence of three massive storm systems. Meteorologist Bob Case, surveying the monster storm from the vantage point of his computer models and satellite imagery, had only one way to describe the nightmare unfolding a couple hundred miles to his east, "My God, this is the perfect

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<sup>1</sup>Sebastian Junger, *The Perfect Storm* (New York: Doran, 1992), 35, quoted in Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 175,

storm.”<sup>1</sup> From the Academy to pop culture, our society is in the throes of change, rivaling the birth of modernity out of the decay of the Middle Ages. We are now moving from the modern to the postmodern era.

But what is postmodernism? Current research on postmodernism seems to advocate that the threefold conglomeration of secularism, pluralism, and privatism has created the perfect spiritual storm for the teenagers of the above mentioned metropolitan immigrant churches. The youth find themselves in the cellar of this new distinct, shifting, mutating, tri-social, hierarchal pyramid. Boasting of progress and knowledge, postmodernism is not to be condemned as being “non-modern or even anti-modern, but seen as that which not only comes after modernism but also through it.”<sup>2</sup> The norms of this secular culture are often accused of being too “soft” on sin, and tend to minimize the sinful nature of mankind. Jonah Goldberg, editor at large of National Review Online and author of *Liberal Fascism* describes postmodernism as an “enormous intellectual hustle [in which] there is no such thing as capital-T “Truth.” There are only lower-case “truths.” [The pretense of postmodernism is that] our traditional understandings of right and wrong, true and false [is a controlling social construct] to keep the Coalition of the oppressed in their place. . . . And so the postmodern seek to tear down everything that ‘privileges’ the powerful over the powerless. [Postmodernism] claims to liberate society from fixed meanings and rigid categories.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Akkerman, 14.

<sup>3</sup>Jonah Goldberg, “Obama, the Postmodernist,” *USA Today*, August 5, 2008, sec. I, p. 11 A.

## Secularism

Secularism assumes that the world—the material world—is all there is.<sup>1</sup> The materialistic capital of the world is swiftly depleting; get what you can and “can” what you get. Eat, drink, and be merry, because tomorrow it will all be gone.

## Pluralism

Pluralism is the natural outgrowth of secularism. Truth and error is divorced from each other in the courts of public opinion. Another related expression of pluralism is relativistic ethic—the attitude that right and wrong is merely relative. Pluralism is complicated, as it deals with the existence and availability of a number of worldviews.

Chuck Smith Jr. wrote: “Postmodernity combines ‘the old and the new,’ not in an attempt to produce a ‘wonderful blend’ but rather in a playful irony that tends to flatten the chain of command, undermine power structures, and invent new realities. Unlike modernity, postmodernity rejects the integrity of a single style.”<sup>2</sup>

These world views possess appealing intricate values, each hungering for the allegiance of individuals with no single dominant worldview.<sup>3</sup> Unraveling the ironies of postmodern worldview, one quickly discovers that no “foundational, final, or fixed

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 293.

<sup>2</sup>Chuck Smith Jr., *The End of the World As We Know It* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2001), 46.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, 298, quoted in Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us from Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1996), 70-71.

interpretation is available.”<sup>1</sup> It's hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it's not clear exactly when postmodernism begins.

For youth preachers to be able to promulgate a gospel birthed in premodernity and coupled with the age of Enlightenment—in such a manner that enhances authentic experience of God and His truth in a postmodern society—it is vital and compelling that ambidexterity become their closest ally.

However, the advocates of pluralism have the tendency to display a narrow-minded bias toward those who are oppositional. Pluralism hinges on “tolerate everything except intolerance. Every opinion is equally valid, except for the opinion that every opinion is not equally valid.”<sup>2</sup> Pluralism is perhaps one of the subtlest setbacks to the preaching of the eternal gospel. Superficially, the pretenses of pluralism, like lukewarm water, seem so fair, objective, and relaxing. Beneath the surface of this distinctive social paradigm flows a turbulent underlying principle that is spurious and cunningly deceptive. The track record is that human beings often find it difficult to identify cultural changes with much precision when these creep incrementally into their lives.

Today's youth preachers face the unique challenge of assessing the impact of cultural shifts such as postmodernism, while they are in the midst of the transition. The adherents of pluralism end up believing anything and everything.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Jay Oord. “Postmodernism—What Is It?” *Didache*, [http://www.nazarene.org/iboe/riie/Didache/Didache\\_vol1\\_2/index.html](http://www.nazarene.org/iboe/riie/Didache/Didache_vol1_2/index.html), 14 (accessed November 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Alan Wolfe, *One Nation after All* (New York: Putnam Penguin Books, 1998), 54.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 298.

As Michael Polanyi observes, "Its incandescence has fed on the combustion of the Christian heritage in the oxygen of Greek rationalism, and when the fuel was exhausted the critical frame work burned away."<sup>1</sup>

The pluralistic society rides on the premise that if humans create all truth, and the Bible declares that all humans are created equal by the Creator, then all viewpoints are equally true.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding, a good number of observers are reluctant and less sanguine in accepting that all truth is created by human design. It is therefore a fatal mistake to caricature postmoderns (millennials) as irrational.

They plead guilty to the crime that "they question the ability of human reason to hold objectively all the answers to life's questions."<sup>3</sup> They also reject "the premise that all truth can be defined by science."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this is why Tom Beaudoin penned these words, "Xers (Generation Xers) make great heretics."<sup>5</sup> Ravi Zecharias frames the postmodern landscape in consequential terms, observing that one of the first causalities of pluralism is disdain for shame. Why should anybody be ashamed if there is no law, no

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1974), 265, quoted in Akkerman, "The Graphic Gospel," 22.

<sup>2</sup>Robbins, 300.

<sup>3</sup>Akkerman, "The Graphic Gospel," 15.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Slaughter, *Out on the Edge* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 31, quoted in Akkerman, "The Graphic Gospel," 15.

<sup>5</sup>Tom Beaudoin's, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 121, quoted in Akkerman, "The Graphic Gospel," 15.



right and wrong?<sup>1</sup> There is an eleventh commandment that resonates in our society, from sea to shining sea: “Thou shall not judge.”<sup>2</sup>

### Privatism

Privatism is the union of secularism and pluralism; it is the legal enforcement of a clean fission of our private lives from our public lives. The phrase “legally enforced” is not employed in a jesting manner.

The amended Privacy Act of 1974, enacted by the US Congress,<sup>3</sup> has woven the social fabric of the American society. Any moral conclusions applied to the lives of others, or to public policy in any way or form, are a legal infringement of insensitivity and unfairness. Issues of moral and ultimate meaning are relegated to the sphere of private life.<sup>4</sup>

On this innocent declaration hinges the spurious assumption that people who are dishonorable and immoral in their private lives will somehow find a way to be moral in public.

This is why Chesterton wrote, “We laugh at honor, but are shocked when there

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<sup>1</sup>Zacharias, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 64-65, quoted in Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 303.

<sup>2</sup>Wolfe, *One Nation after All*, 54, quoted in Robbins, 299.

<sup>3</sup>The Privacy Act of 1974: 5 U.S.C. 552a, as amended, <http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/privstat.htm> (accessed April 24, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>G. K. Chesterton, *Today's Pastor in Tomorrow's World* (Calian, NY: Hawthorn Books, 1977), quoted in Robbins, 303.

are thieves in our midst.”<sup>1</sup> When these very same people succumb to dishonesty and public indiscretions; when presidents of the republic have the audacity to lie under oath, desecrate hallowed national memorials, and indulge in sexual imprudence, and manipulate intelligence to start a war, we are outraged.

When CEO’s cheat the system, juggle the numbers, and are the perpetrators of all manner of unspeakable atrocities, people are shocked. When church members and youth preachers engage in the spreading of all manner of vicious lies and gossip against other people—trying to pull them down in order to pull themselves up—they are speechless, bemused, and bewildered. Yet the collective opinion, legally supported by the government, is, supposedly, that personal morality cannot invade the arena of everyday life; postmodern psychologists insist that morally, the human kind is getting better with the passing of time. Provided that knowledge continues to increase, and given sufficient space and time, the human race will eventually become morally sound without the aid of any law or creed.<sup>2</sup>

### Overlapping Destinies

According to Bruce Norman, “The center of the postmodern worldview is the individual person in relationship with other individuals.”<sup>3</sup> Current research reinforces the theory that community is of utmost importance to the postmodern mindset; sectarianism and denominationalism pales in comparison to making a difference in people’s lives. In

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, 27.

the postmodern niche, the fatherhood of God (the Creator) and the brotherhood of humanity are paramount. The fabric of humanity is woven with different stories, but all hold common hopes. The varying ethnicities may not have originated from the same place, but the universal desire is to move in the same direction. Cultural backgrounds are diverse and colorful, but love is the universal language that resonates in every village and hamlet; and in every city and province. The common consensus underscored along the great continuum of human commonality is “not only to recognize the common humanity of all in all our particularities, but it is also recognizing the international impact unleashed working together with one another to produce those [socio-religious] conditions without which we cannot be human and which we can only create together; not separately. . . . No one is indeed free unless all are free.”<sup>1</sup> Our destinies are tied up in each other’s destinies. Martin Luther King Jr. penned it rather succinctly in writing that “all men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.”<sup>2</sup> Cross Daman wrote in Richard Wright’s *Outsider*, “I wish I had some way to make a bridge from man to man. [Beside God], man is all we’ve got.”<sup>3</sup> The millennial generation which comprises a huge chunk of the US population strongly objects to war in any form. Perhaps this justifies

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<sup>1</sup>Anselm Kyongsuk, *Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 137.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., *Quotations by Author*, [http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Martin\\_Luther\\_King\\_Jr.](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Martin_Luther_King_Jr.) (accessed July 2, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>Bolton, Robert, *People’s Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to others, and Resolve Conflicts* (New York: Simon and Shuster; 2001), 3.

why Senator Obama landslide victory over Senator McCain in the 2008 Presidential elections was driven by young voters.

### No Easy Task

There is plenty of evidence supporting the argument that the postmodern mind is a difficult one to contend with. Gane views the emergence of the Industrial Revolution as the cause for birthing a separate youth ministry.<sup>1</sup> Hostile and skeptical, postmodern youth are bombarded by an unrelenting barrage of top quality entertainment. Rapidly changing infantile bodies, surging hormones, changing winds of culture, and the increasing pressures of peer relationships, have made adolescent culture very stormy; it is the most challenging, the most unique—yet the most wonderful to address. When they reach the end of the rope, they hope that adult mentors would tie themselves into a “knot” onto which they can hold on to. A radiant luminous “sky of adults” behind young people tends to illuminate the path before them. Their individual goals “bow down” to the demoralizing forces of peer pressure. Standing up for their convictions is challenging, since the majority of their peers may not be doing it. The prevailing resonating rationale is, “See, everybody’s not doing it, so it must be wrong. And since everybody is doing it, it must be right.” It’s a sort of numerical interpretation of what’s right . . . a group consensus . . . a sort of Gallup poll of the majority decision.<sup>2</sup>

This generation leads the parade of this revolutionary moment that is relentlessly bombarded by media disseminations of entertainment and graphic images. These tailor-

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<sup>1</sup>Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 21.

<sup>2</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 11, 27.

made social intrusions awaken dormant passions and lust in discouraging dimensions. Nude females pose beside automobiles to increase sales.

Barry Gane defines the situation in graphic, chilling, and staggering terms, “Youth are exposed to “more than 14,000 acts of sexual [or] implied intercourses [that] were broadcast on prime-time television last year in the USA. Teenagers listen to [four] hours of Rock music every day, and they watch MTV for up to ten hours per week; it has been estimated that [sixty percent] of music videos contain themes of sex and violence.”<sup>1</sup> Making full use of a juxtaposition of images in both high and pop cultures (e.g., MTV videos), adolescents are bombarded with incongruous, even clashing images, that call into question any sense of objective meaning.<sup>2</sup>

Then there is the challenge of Internet pornography; the click of a computer mouse-button “radically changes one’s relation to space and time by compressing [high definition digital nude graphics] twenty-four hours a day within a screen at arm’s length,”<sup>3</sup> and commands a whopping 57 billion dollar worldwide industry. This juggernaut enterprise boasts of over 4.5 million websites. Pornographic revenue is larger than all combined revenues of professional football, baseball, and basketball franchises. Child pornography generates 3 billion dollars annually. Eighty-nine percent of sexual solicitations that engage the youth are carried on in the chat rooms on the Internet. The average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is eleven. The largest consumers

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<sup>1</sup>Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 20.

<sup>2</sup>Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 26.

<sup>3</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 11.

are between twelve and seventeen years of age. Most of the viewing is done while doing home work online.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is understood why the famous poet and writer, H. C. Arden, is renowned for this succinct penned contribution, “Take down the stars, put out the sun, and dismantle the moon; for men love darkness more than they do the light.”<sup>2</sup> However, “there is not enough darkness in the world to put out the light of even one small candle.”<sup>3</sup> The darker the night the better the stars are seen.

The occasion is momentous for adults to spearhead a methodological and substantive mentorship program, which assures that the youth will “never allow the transitory evanescent demands of manmade institutions to take precedence over the eternal demands of Almighty God.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Incarnational Youth Ministry

Robbins contends that understanding youth culture is a passport to get people in and out of such a culture. Jesus was incarnated to reach humans. “This movement into our world as a human—who lived in a specific culture, as a member of a specific ethnic group, who supported Himself in the carpentry trade—gave Jesus the distinct advantage

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<sup>1</sup>Pornography Statistics, [http://familysafemedia.com/pornography\\_statistics.html](http://familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html) (accessed April 5, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Calvin Butz, “Of Towers and of Lights” (keynote address presented at the Annual Evangelism Council, Oakwood College; December 3, 2006).

<sup>3</sup>Robert Alden, “Light Quotes;” <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/light> (accessed September 26, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 28.

of fully comprehending what it meant to be human.”<sup>1</sup> God incarnate stepped down into the human predicament. He embraced the human culture, suffering, sin, grief, and guilt. Successful mentorship of teenagers demands that youth ministers understand that it is virtually impossible to mentor or evangelize in a cultural vacuum. Nobody has been able to come up with a gospel reduced to a few culture-free axioms, which are universally intelligible.<sup>2</sup> The obvious reason is that the gospel has always been dressed in the culture of the people to whom it is directed. Consequently, the mindset of most teenagers has been galvanized by the prevailing cultural niche in which they have been brought up.

Even though the incarnation of Christ goes far beyond the wildest scope of human imagination, yet it is possible to glean some principles from Jesus’ earthly life that can be applied to youth ministry. Just as Jesus took on Himself the form of a human being, we must take on the “form” of a young person. The central fact of the incarnation is that while we were still sinners, Christ came to save us (Rom 5:8). He did not wait for us to find Him. He did not wait for us to ask Him to save us. He took the initiative to come to us. So, too, we must make the initiative to go to where young people are, and make the effort to understand them and the world within which they function. “We cannot stand aloof from those to whom we speak the gospel, or ignore their situation, their context.”<sup>3</sup> To reach teenagers with the gospel, and encourage them into becoming gospel preachers, it is imperative that pastors and members connect with them in their operational culture.

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 262.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 247.

<sup>3</sup>John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 349.

Graeme Codrington adds this to the discussion:

Notice, however, that in taking on human form, Jesus did not relinquish His divinity. Neither can we ever fully become young people again. In fact, that would not be incarnational. Our aim must be to understand, imbibe, and function within the world of the young people, integrating and identifying with them, while still remaining adults, in an adult world, with age-bought wisdom. We cannot be what we are not. We must not act childishly, or try to function as a teenager—our bodies and minds will not allow this, in any event. The level to which we can identify with young people will be determined by the specific situation we find ourselves in, but the fact remains that we must identify without losing our distinctiveness as an adult.<sup>1</sup>

The incarnation involves God coming to man. “Hence, the underlying thrust of the biblical witness concerns a movement by God towards man. The Father sends the Son. The Word becomes flesh. God was in Christ. At root, to save us God came not in His full glory as God but rather as a man; as a baby . . . as a condemned criminal on a cross. He hid His glory; He limited himself.”<sup>2</sup>

Being incarnational does not merely involve some intellectual identification with young people. It requires us to physically be with them. This will require us to go to the places they frequent, such as rollerblading rinks, movie theatres, bars, clubs, small group sessions, shopping malls. We are to go out into the “highways and byways” (Luke 14:23) and become “friends of sinners” (Luke 7:34). We are to go to them when the average age for puberty in the USA stands at 9-11 years.<sup>3</sup> When sexual hormones start acting up for married couples, “marriage is honorable in all, and the bed is undefiled”

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<sup>1</sup>Graeme Codrington, *Toward a Theology of Incarnational Youth Ministry*, [http://www.youthpastor.com/lessons/index.cfm/Theology-Towards\\_A\\_Theology\\_of\\_Incarnational\\_YOUTH\\_Ministry\\_12.htm](http://www.youthpastor.com/lessons/index.cfm/Theology-Towards_A_Theology_of_Incarnational_YOUTH_Ministry_12.htm) (accessed February 16, 2009).

<sup>2</sup>R. W. A. Letham, “Incarnation,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 333-335.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.



(Heb 13:4). Unbridled sexual hormones running loose in the bodies of thirteen year olds are equated to walking the tight rope to self-destruction.

We cannot wait for the sinners to come to us; we must go to them. Stott refers to this as “holy worldliness.” His was the perfection of “holy worldliness.”<sup>1</sup> Now he sends us out into the world as he was sent into the world (John 17:18; 20:21). We have to penetrate other people’s worlds, as he penetrated ours - the world of their thinking, the world of their feeling, and the world of their living. Such an understanding, puts youth ministers in the driving seat, extending to them the ambidexterity of living in the world but not of the world (John 17:16-17).<sup>2</sup> Pete Ward stated that Christian youth workers should be culturally bilingual, skillfully maneuvering in both cultures.<sup>3</sup> Graeme Codrington makes yet another contribution to the discussion:

John Stott refers to a book written by James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* emphasizing the fact that we must make every effort to understand how the people we are trying to reach actually think. Due to many influences, including *lateral thinking*, made popular by deBono, video and computer games, and the Internet, young people these days actually process thoughts and information in a very different way to their parents. They do not process information logically and sequentially, but rather through a complex matrix. This will influence how they grasp new ideas. In order to effectively communicate with them, we must learn to think the way they do, and to structure our message in such a way that they can actually understand it.<sup>4</sup>

This is one of the greatest struggles we will have; we live in sinful bodies, yet we must constantly ensure that we keep ourselves pure, yet we must not be scared to enter the dark world as a shining light. Our only hope of power is the same source of power

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<sup>1</sup>Codrington, *Toward a Theology of Incarnational Youth Ministry*.

<sup>2</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 256.

<sup>3</sup>Pete Ward, *God at the Mall* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 80.

<sup>4</sup>Codrington, *Toward a Theology of Incarnational Youth Ministry*.

Christ had: the Holy Spirit, who will “protect us from evil” (John 17:15-19). Love must be the underlying motive of all incarnational ministries. First Corinthians chapter thirteen is a model of the ministry Jesus had on earth, and it is our model as well. Specifically, “it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Cor 13:7-8). This does not mean that we condone everything that a young person might do (cf. 1 Cor 13:6). Jesus again was our model. He practiced “accepting without approving”<sup>1</sup> in the examples of his meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-30), His acceptance of and banqueting with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), and his wonderful restoration of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Notice that he always urged them to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11), but always did so from a context of love and acceptance of the intrinsic worth of the person. We would do well to love unconditionally, as Jesus did. Both science and creed affirms that “if postmodernism is indeed the prevalent, philosophical viewpoint of our day, then it’s our duty [as youth leaders] to understand and be conversant in it.”<sup>2</sup> Such an understanding, puts youth ministers in the driving seat, extending to them the ambidexterity of living in the world but not of the world (John 17:16-17).<sup>3</sup>

### Postmodern Woes of Immigrant Churches

Current research supports the argument that the American Dream was meant to be

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<sup>1</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Robbins, “The Call of the Wild,” 27.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 256.

elusive to immigrating minorities. They dream it at night, but cannot live it in the morning. "Rising tides don't lift all boats, particularly those stuck at the bottom."<sup>1</sup> Immigrants, who come to America with a pre-modern or modern mind-set, must also come with a plan and with God, if they are to be successfully incorporated into the new society, and survive the oppressive social conditions imposed by diplomatic slavery.<sup>2</sup>

It is beyond dispute that immigrating minority ethnic groups are no longer confined to the back seats of buses; they are still seated in the "back seats" of the salary scales. The annual median income of Blacks and Whites with the same educational degree is \$32,000 and \$45,000 respectively.<sup>3</sup> Nobody would object to sitting in the back seat of a bus, if the said commuter would earn \$13,000 more annually than a fellow commuter who sits in the front seat. Millennial voices cry out in terms lifted to cosmic proportions, "Lord, give us this day our own buses." There is no necessity to bus black students to a college all the way in Little Rock, Arkansas; Negroes in America still have to contend with the challenges of Affirmative Action.

While it goes uncontested that there are those who scratched and clawed their way to get a piece of the American Dream, and the crack of the slave master's whip no longer lacerates the backs of Negro slaves, that "cat-of-nine tails" of the credit bureaus still whip the sons and daughters of former slaves with many economical "stripes." Negroes in

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<sup>1</sup>Jesse Jackson, 1994 Democratic Convention Speech, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jessejackson1984dnc.htm> (accessed August 14, 2006).

<sup>2</sup>Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, 27.

<sup>3</sup>Jawanza Kunjufu, *Solution for Black America* (Chicago: African American Images, 2004), 5.

America, like George Washington Carver, are no longer sold for the price of “a racing horse”<sup>1</sup> on the “slave blocks” of racial discrimination; yet, they find themselves sitting alone in the cellar of the U.S. social and economic strata. The fear of public lynching no longer resonates in society. This does not detain the enlargement of jail complexes to accommodate minority juveniles for trivial reasons. It is no secret and surprise that there are more blacks languishing in prison without hope or prospects for the future, than there are in colleges and universities combined together. One of three African American males is involved with the penal system.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in non-violent fashions, advocated for the table of brotherhood, around which the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave masters would sit.<sup>3</sup> There is no sign of any such a table on this side of heaven. It is true that the scientific genius of the Internet has made of the world a neighborhood; it has failed to make of it a brotherhood. It is obvious that there are more “hoods” than “brothers.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the greatest problem facing the postmodern person is that material means by which most live have outdistanced the spiritual ends for which people are to live. Mentality has outrun morality, and civilization has [divorced] herself from culture.<sup>5</sup> Osterman wrote, “The more things change, the more they remain the

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson Gate, *The African American Almanac*, 7th ed., reproduced in Biography Resource Center, [http://www.gale.com/free\\_resources/bhm/bio/carver\\_g.htm](http://www.gale.com/free_resources/bhm/bio/carver_g.htm) (accessed on April 10, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Kunjufu, *Solution for Black America*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>King, *A Call to Conscience*, 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ron Halverson, (sermon presented at the Annual Evangelism Council, Oakwood College, December 5, 2006).

<sup>5</sup>King, *A Call to Conscience*, 6.

same.”<sup>1</sup> William Faulkner once wrote, "The past isn't dead and buried. In fact, it isn't even past."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., penned this valuable contribution, "Every thing that we see is a shadow cast by that, which is not seen."<sup>3</sup> We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice and disparities in society; "Black people have always been, still are, and will continue to be [lost in] America's wilderness in search of the Promised Land."<sup>4</sup>

Many sociology experts agree that the sweltering heat from the manacles of diplomatic slavery is a hellhound that gnaws at the Negroes in every waking moment of their lives, to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them.<sup>5</sup> While the entire civilization should have denounced the inhumanness of the slave trade, through the middle passages, which degraded men and women into the likeness of animals, bear in mind that people pay for what they do and still more for what

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<sup>1</sup>Eurydice V. Osterman, *What God Says About Music* (Huntsville, AL: AWSAHM MUSIC, 1998), 32.

<sup>2</sup>Barak Obama, "A More Perfect Union" (Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-t\\_n\\_92077.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-t_n_92077.html) (accessed on March 18, 2008).

<sup>3</sup>King, *Martin Luther King Jr. Quotes*.

<sup>4</sup>Cornel West, *Nihilism in America*, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmquotes1.html> (accessed June 10, 2007).

<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., "Quotations," Speech given to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, August 16, 1967, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmquotes1.html> (accessed on August 14, 2006).

they have allowed themselves to become.<sup>1</sup> The human community can become whatever it chooses to become. Human destiny can only be written by the pen of humanity. No weapon in the arsenals of the world is as formidable as the will and moral courage of civilized men and women.

No one had the clue that all these antecedents were in line with the unfolding work of Divine Providence—the manacles of social injustice, mental, diplomatic, and economic slavery has upgraded slaves into men,<sup>2</sup> totally dependent on God for survival.

Perhaps this adequately justifies why the challenges of postmodernism are not as vicious against immigrant youth preachers of the metropolitan churches of the Northeastern Conference,<sup>3</sup> as they are against the youth in the Caucasian and African American communities.

Current demographic trends are signaling that Asian and Latino groups “will eventually exchange their immigrant niches and assimilate into the dominant white ways of thinking, and be much less likely to ally themselves with Blacks.”<sup>4</sup> These ethnicities should brace themselves for the negative sanctions that accompany such an ethnic merge.

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<sup>1</sup>James Balwin, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmquotes1.html> (accessed April 10, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Federick Douglass, “Blackthink, 1970,” <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmquotes1.html> (accessed on April 10, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (New York), First Quadrennial and Twenty-Third Regular Session, Camp Victory Lake, Sunday, June 6, 2004.

<sup>4</sup>David G. Embrick, *West Indies and Caribbean Immigrants Earnings in the USA: The Penalties Associated with English Proficiency and Racial Self Identification* (2004), 3, <http://paa2006.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=60693> (accessed April 6, 2007).

However, denominational experts are shouting that within a few years the creeping postmodern shadows would have fully engulfed these vibrant churches of metropolitan New York, and they in turn will begin to experience a downward spiraling mobility.

Scholars and demographers, the likes of Yancey, insist that in spite of the progress made in this dialogue, demographic trends are dictating that, in the stride for racial equality, segregation of Blacks in the United States is an unending continuum.<sup>1</sup>

As long as the manacles of diplomatic slavery are held fast in our society, immigrant churches will be forced to cling to God for survival. If the premise of this dissertation holds true, then the signing of the emancipation from slavery by Abraham Lincoln dealt the deadliest blow to the Negro slaves. There is evidence supporting the argument that the Negro no longer needed God for survival. He was "free." Today, look at the Negro rapping on MTV, bathed in the flashing brilliance of psychedelic lights, rocked by the pulsating rhythms of the electronic beat, stimulated by the gyrations of the go-go dancers; and saturated in gold, wine, sex, drugs, lust, and greed—a living epitome of animated disgrace. The brighter side is that the fire of pre-modern and modern youth preaching ministry has not been extinguished among the immigrant churches of Northeastern Conference. The flames are flickering, but they still burn. The assumption is that diplomatic slavery is a blessing in disguise and a golden opportunity for the youth ministers of the Northeastern Conference to foster youth preaching.

If the leaders of the North American Division are looking for some churches

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3.

within her borders where the fires of youth evangelism conflagrates among the “dry cinders” of postmodernism, it would do them well to take a serious look at the metropolitan churches of the Northeastern Conference. Her beacon of success is not attributed to her preachers, her retirement plan, her meticulous planning, her deep analysis, her high-tech budgeting, her sleek strategies, her detailed organization, her keen objectives and goals, her modernized training, her decisive control, her timely evaluations, and her precise coordination. What signals the difference is that, caught up in the midst of the shifting winds of diplomatic oppression, these immigrant churches have no alternative but to cling to God for survival. It seems that the woes that accompany postmodernism lie within the very heart of the Constitution of the Republic, “for the people, of the people, and by the people.”<sup>1</sup> There is no room for God in this human paradigm. Postmodernism seems to take a heavier toll in societies that have forgotten God and left Him behind. Therefore, it would appear that the first honest response to the pressures of postmodernism is to make sure that God is in the center of all our efforts.

### **Mentoring Postmodern Immigrant Youth**

A growing trend that is noticeable and distinguishable among postmodern teenagers is that they harbor a deep-seated, chronic, and recalcitrant anger, which shows no sign of fading away into the background. They are anxious about their futures and see

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<sup>1</sup>*New Standard Encyclopedia*, 1993 ed., s.v. “The United States: Government.”



their dreams slipping under the surface of the watery grave of a stalemate and stagnant era, in which the ambitions and dreams of politicians thrive at their expense.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding, these denigrating expressions could be reversed as the opening wedge for the shaping of the homiletic landscape of youth preaching. At times, this anger is misunderstood and exploited by peers, parents, and politicians. To label them as misguided without recognizing that their actions are grounded in legitimate concerns—widens the generational divide, and blocks the path to understanding. Energies are expended, unmasking promiscuities and the bogus claims of postmodernism in the very presence of the story and glory of the good old days; while dismissing a legitimate discussion of the real issues. A popular affirmed conviction is that the greatest crime against postmodern youth is not the unrelenting denigration of their promiscuous portfolio. The culprit is the stereotypical rhetoric which assumes that no progress has been made in the dialogue.

This is how then Senator Barack Obama weighs in on the issue, “The anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the [generation gaps].”<sup>2</sup> These resentments aren't always expressed in polite company. Too often, they find public expressions in drug addictions, rebellion, gangs, jewelry, tattoos in diverse places, and enlistment in the Armed Forces. The first step in the direction of helping our youth is acknowledging that what ails them is not the final precipitate of a

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<sup>1</sup>Obama, “A More Perfect Union,” 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

fickle imagination—they are real and must be addressed. Not just by words, but by deeds.

The tendency among the young is to conceal the real nature of the lurking encoded issues they are grappling with when they approach adult mentors for help. These are referred to as decoying SOS signals. Understanding of the dynamics of the interplay of differentiating between what is encoded and what clamors for decoding is potentially viable to reweave the cultural fabric of youth evangelism. Successful mentorship of postmodern youth demands that adult-mentors learn to differentiate between such decoying signals and the real problem. Too often they pursue the signals and fail to detect the real issue lurking precariously in the background. Failure to differentiate between the twain could result in a retarded relationship with the young—answering questions they are not asking, scratching where they are not itching, and putting out fires that are not burning.

Duffy Robbins warns that too often the focus is on the intricate problems of youth ministry and not on the youth themselves. The real skill in reading the water surface of a river is in understanding the features beneath the surface of the water. Youth leaders are challenged to focus on the river, and not on the rapids. It is possible to become so preoccupied with the splashes, waves, and dips of postmodern youth culture, that we lose sight of the basic features of human experience that are deeper down beneath the surface.<sup>1</sup>

There is a biblical precedence found in 2 Samuel, chapter three. Samuel was sleeping in front of the ark when he heard a voice calling his name. He had heard Eli's

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 322.

voice many times and knew that this was not his. This was no ordinary voice; this was the voice of God. Samuel asked Eli, "Did you call me?" This was a decoying question. The real question should have been, "Is it God who is calling me?" Eli's casual, superficial response indicates that he fell for the decoy, "I didn't call you, go back to bed, son; we both need some rest; I don't have the time." Effective youth mentorship has fallen on hard times. The young people are sound asleep on the "soft velvet pillows" of secularism, pluralism, and privatism.

Finally, they are awakened by the voice of God to the solemn realities of life and, in desperation, come to an adult mentor, the likes of Eli, only to find that he or she is also asleep. Then, in a dozing stupor, the mentor says to the young mentee, "Go back to bed, young people; keep on sleeping."

Like Samson, "the spirit of the Lord [is beginning] to move" some of our young men and women in the direction of becoming youth preachers (Judg 13:25). With optimistic enthusiasm they come to their church pastor or youth minister, the two houses that should stand, to share the good news and to seek spiritual guidance. The answer they hear from the voice of the living dead is, "Go back to bed, young people. Keep on sleeping. We are not too sure that this is what God wants you to be. After all, you are still so young."

Unless youth mentors are first awakened from their spiritual slumber, it will be an assiduous task to instill the principles of homiletics in the hearts of the protégés. The very same spiritual virtues must first be manifested in the lives of mentors before these

could be identified in the lives of the mentored. Said Gandhi, “Be the change you want to see in the [adolescents you mentor].”<sup>1</sup>

Allen was a few months shy of his eighteenth birthday. He was one of the stalwart senior pathfinders of his club, as well as the lead drummer in the drum corps team. He was a witness of his mother’s deep struggles and hardships as a single parent of three, without the support of a father. Allen’s older brother was tried and convicted of drug trafficking and at the time was looking at fifteen years to life. He reconciled with his father who had abandoned him, his mother, and his two siblings for another woman. A few months later tragedy struck, Allen’s father died. His death was devastating to him. He became depressed spiritually and perforated the left lobe of his ear and put in an earring. He attended a Pathfinder Club meeting with the earring. The club director, who had always been like a father to him, saw the earring and called him into question publicly. Unfortunately, the director only saw a decoying earring and missed the message it conveyed: “Director, my brother is incarcerated, my mother is struggling, and my father had just died; I need you to be there for me. Please be my dad.” The director never got that message. All he saw were Adventist standards. Allen was suspended from the club and from the drum core team. This crushed him. The club staff had their day of discipline, but they lost both Allen and his mother. They both walked away from church. To the chagrin of his mother and church family, Allen got enlisted in the U.S. Army during the time when President Bush deployed 20,000 more troops to stabilize Iraq.

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<sup>1</sup>Mahatma Gandhi, [http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR\\_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/leadershiporganizationdevelopment/4003PR_WestVASupesPM6-28-07.pdf) (accessed October 26, 2007).

Here are two reasons why this case was badly mishandled: (1) Any disciplinary action that will crush the disciplined should be restrained, and, (2) the director never dealt with the real issue. The director could have called Allen aside and, making no mention of the earring (which is difficult in a Caribbean immigrant church), say the following: “Allen, I got your message.” Most likely Allen’s response would be, “What message are you talking about, director?” The director could then have said, “The real message the earring conveys; that you are having a spiritual problem. Do you want to talk about it, Allen?” At this point, it would be no surprise if Allen would break down and decode the message, “Director, my father died. You have always been there for me. Can you replace him in my life? Will you be my dad?” All that Allen needed was an answer in the affirmative, a hug, and a prayer, and gone would have been the earring; perhaps forever. The enemy steals a march on us when Pathfinders and the Adventist Youth Society are viewed as an army. It is then only a short walk to take the very same institution designed by God to save our youth and manipulate it to destroy them. Youth ministry takes a spiraling downward mobility, when young people are sacrificed in the name of some great principle. There can be no principle greater than the youth for whom Jesus died.<sup>1</sup> Mike Yaconelli’s conviction was that the church should not be doing youth ministry; the entire church should be youth ministry. True youth ministry occurs when

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<sup>1</sup>Larry Kirkpatrick, “Ordination Ceremony to the Gospel Ministry,” Springfield, Utah, June 23, 2001, 10, <http://www.greatcontroversy.org/reportandreview/kir-ordination.html> (accessed April 27, 2007).

all the adults decide to connect with all the kids and do church together.<sup>1</sup> In this ministry, the church pastor has the luxury of having all the adult members as assistant pastors.

### The Fellow-Traveler Effect

In mentoring the young, even the big questions get played out on the small stages of individual lives—in the small local theater of the family, workplace, neighborhood, and school.<sup>2</sup> Heart communication is not a discipline taught in a classroom, or picked up at a supermarket on the way back home. This is a virtue that springs naturally from the character and passion of the youth minister. However, there are different ways to develop that character and tap into that passion. In 1991, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development released a landmark study which revealed that “significant adult-youth relationships, forged in religious youth work, had more positive impact on youth development than any other youth ministry delivery system.”<sup>3</sup> Young people seem to respond positively to the individuals who have previously invested quality time to develop a significant relationship with them. James W. Fowler must have been thinking along similar lines when he wrote in *Stages of Faith*, “[Young people] look for something to love that loves [them], something to value that gives [them] value, something to honor

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<sup>1</sup>Mike Yaconelli, “A Better Idea Than Youth Ministry,” *Youth Worker*, September /October 2002, 40.

<sup>2</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 279.

<sup>3</sup>Kenda Dean and Ron Foster, *The God Bearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 83.

and respect that has the power to sustain [their] being.”<sup>1</sup>

Numerous youth ministries scholars agree that it is no small task keeping one’s feet on the ground, in tune with the current and ever changing world of today’s youth. The prayer of the postmodern youth seems to be, “Lord, lead us not into temptation, tell us where it is, and we will find it.”<sup>2</sup> Nor does it get any easier dragging one-track minded youth leaders “kicking and screaming into the ‘real’ world.”<sup>3</sup> The presuppositions of the youth, their value systems, the ways in which they think, the degree of their receptivity, and resistance to new ideas and change, are all determined to a great extent by their cultural inheritance.<sup>4</sup> The youth minister’s job is precarious; he or she must not only chart a course that avoids all the spiritual whirlpools, pitfalls, deep holes, and stumbling blocks for postmodern youth, merging one’s intentions with a measure of self-criticism. Enough leverage must be allowed to maintain and uphold the biblical mandate.

One may possess all the knowledge of the mysteries of the sciences; interpret, and have the ability to apply the survey data of both Valuegenesis reports (V<sub>1</sub> and V<sub>2</sub>) at the wink of an eye. Yet the consensus in youth ministry is that youth leaders, who are not perceived through the eyes of the young people as being a “fellow traveler,”<sup>5</sup> may find

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<sup>1</sup>James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 5.

<sup>2</sup>E. C. McKenzie, *14,000 Quips and Quotes* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2000), 575.

<sup>3</sup>Gane, *Introduction to Youth Ministry*, x.

<sup>4</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 248.

<sup>5</sup>Dean and Foster, *The God-Bearing Life*, 129.

themselves in a difficult bind, in quest of recruiting, mentoring, and training them as youth preachers. John Maxwell wrote, "People [the young included] don't care how much you know, what position you hold, how much power you have, until they know how much you care. Leadership begins with the heart, and not the head."<sup>1</sup> "In youth ministry, a good brain must be joined by a courageous spirit and a warm heart."<sup>2</sup> If not, teenagers will hear preaching, but they will not be listening to the preacher; the gospel may be clearly presented, but not understood.

Ken Davis hints that taking on the status of being a fellow traveler demands that the youth ministers intentionally familiarize themselves with the culture in question, listen to their music, and immerse oneself into the people of that particular culture.<sup>3</sup>

Youth ministers who will claim success in recruiting and training youth preachers should first understand and identify with them in their cultural niches. Davis goes on to say:

[Youth leaders] will be able to identify with the needs of teenagers only when we see them where they live—if we see their homes, attend their games, chaperone their dances, attend their plays, listen to their humor, and so forth. If we live where they live, they will open their circle wide to welcome us. We will not be left behind. If we become only a facilitator of programming or a researcher of youth behavior, we will lose touch and our audience will change. The youth will perceive such preachers as a bunch of old-fashioned speakers; hired and enjoyed by old-fashioned people, but alienated from a new generation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader within You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 247, 248.

<sup>3</sup>Ken Davis, *How to Speak to Youth and Keep Them Awake at the same Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 24.

<sup>4</sup>Davis, 24.



Successful mentorship of youth preachers demands that youth ministers be convicted that they “[are] sent from God to live with [young] people, talk with them, listen to them, feel what they feel and only after he [or she] has been through the dusty streets,”<sup>1</sup> that they are positioned to fulfill this noble task.

### Bridging the Generation Gap

Another related difficulty is that youth ministers are reducing their vocation to individual performances—being in the right place, doing the right thing,”<sup>2</sup> and neglecting the “weightier matters of the law;” namely, youth ministry.

Pastors are in deep trouble when they come across to the youth as some sort of quality control engineer in the [church] factory, but totally disconnected from them.<sup>3</sup> So much is lost when church pastors and youth ministers reduce their calling to care for the youth to that of controlling the youth—and become cheap imitations of sideshow barkers.

Many have become “institutionalized into blandness [and have evolved into mere] religious businessmen who work hard for the company. Their enthusiasm in running an efficient religious store [is not an enticing commodity for postmoderns].”<sup>4</sup> They get so busy trying to save their jobs, that they forget how to do their jobs.

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<sup>1</sup>James C. Barry, ed., *Preaching in Today's World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1984), 151.

<sup>2</sup>Petersen, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 161.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>4</sup>Petersen, 120.

It is a sad day for the young people of any congregation when zealous church pastors or youth ministers tear down the youth in order to lift up church standards, and fail to connect with them. There is this false premise that as long as the pastor plans and organize enough, good youth ministry will happen.”<sup>1</sup>

Youth ministry is not a matter of budgeting, publicizing, and organizing; youth ministry means loving teenagers, spending time with them, and helping them [hear] and [understand] the gospel of Christ. By nature, “teenagers appreciate the faith that operates outside the pool; they don’t want to get wet.”<sup>2</sup> Success in youth ministry demands that they get into the pool; the most effective manner of doing this is for youth leaders to get into the pool [with them] themselves.

Better yet, the youth minister’s position is at the bottom of the well and, with rolled up sleeves, pass the “bucket,” that contains youth ministries, from the bottom up to the top.<sup>3</sup> Post-modern youth, unknowingly, are drowning in the raging “rivers” of their self-destructive ideas and peer pressure.

Youth ministers, who desire success in mentoring youth preachers, cannot avoid youth culture anymore than fishermen can avoid water. This is where young people live.<sup>4</sup> It is imperative that they jump into the water and swim along with the cultural currents until they and the drowning youth can climb on to a “floating log.”

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>3</sup>Dean, Clark, and Rahn, *Starting Right*, 204.

<sup>4</sup>Robbins, *This way to Youth Ministry*, 279.

From this vantage point they can both strategically and tactfully position themselves to “chart a course to safety, which avoids the pitfalls and deep holes; at the same time still maintaining biblical principles, Christian standards, and mandate.”<sup>1</sup> It is foolish and dangerous to swim against the powerful currents of postmodern youth culture. Youth ministers and the youth could be drowned in the “watery graves” of frustration, rejection, and mistrust.

Eugene Peterson, drawing from his study in the Book of Jonah, observes that when Jonah began his proper work in Nineveh, he went a day’s journey into Nineveh. Jonah did not set up a NET satellite TV broadcasting system in order to evangelize the inhabitants of Nineveh.

While this approach has its manifold virtues, it is also laced with its fair share of disturbing undertones. Neither did he stand at the edge and preach at the inhabitants. He entered into the midst of their living. He “heard what they were saying, smelled their cooking, picked up the colloquialisms, lived ‘on the economy,’ not aloof from it, not superior to it.”<sup>2</sup> He understood that the evangelization of the inhabitants of Nineveh does not occur from a distance.

It is widely accepted among youth ministry experts, that youth ministers be attuned to the shifting trends and changes in youth culture. Each new kind of music, new fad, and new advertising pitch, is a challenge to those who will successfully mentor youth preachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 279.

<sup>2</sup>Peterson, *Under the Predictable Plant*, 148, quoted in Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 280.

Duffy Robbins quoted Peterson, declaring that “[a] sound theology of youth culture demands that one be in touch with the spirit of the times. Fidelity to Scripture and creeds, relevance to the times, and integrity of self are the threefold responsibilities of Christian youth theology.”<sup>1</sup>

Failure to widen the horizons of tolerance to embrace today’s mutating youth culture has earned a one-way ticket to the quagmire of pastoral stress and distress; this has retarded ministerial performances in a good number of churches.

Newton Cleghorne, former youth director of the Northeastern Conference, came up with this interesting equation, which punctuates the all important relation between the three “R’s”: *Rules–Relationship=Rebellion*.<sup>2</sup>

The home, school, or church that is destitute of love—where the moat of generational gap is not eliminated—is at risk to become the breeding ground for rebellion. With the elements of Cleghorn’s social equation firmly in place, youth ministry was no longer an option, it became a fierce necessity.<sup>3</sup>

Roger Dudley, who is highly respected among SDA scholars, made a statement that could be very helpful in mentoring and recruiting youth preachers, and reverse the pendulum and give the momentum back over to the side of righteousness, “We also need to examine our own hearts and weed out any judgmental tendencies. We should not

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 246.

<sup>2</sup>Newton Cleghorne, “The Church’s Greatest Asset” (seminar presented at the Youth Convention of Northeastern Conference, Stamford, CT, January 13-16, 2005).

<sup>3</sup>Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 19.

judge a young person, who [dresses] differently from us, listens to music that is not our taste . . . therefore, less . . . Christian.”<sup>1</sup>

### Capitalizing on Postmodernism

Postmodernism must not be given a free pass. According to Anselm Kysongkuk, “The existence of the thinking self is the first truth that doubt cannot deny.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that postmodernism be confronted and engaged critically when it interferes with God’s modus operandi in saving sinners, or is in opposition to His moral absolute—His law. Notwithstanding, youth ministers must be open to the current teachings of postmodernism, if youth preachers are to be effectively articulated and trained. The Church’s challenge in this emerging era is not to necessarily embrace a postmodern worldview, but to discover new ways of conveying the message of Scripture to postmodern people of all ages in a society that is rapidly changing incrementally.<sup>3</sup> The timeless message of the gospel should be communicated “in ways that penetrate the fluidity of the culture while at the same time remaining grounded in the biblical and theological bedrock of the faith.”<sup>4</sup> The task of the youth minister is to capitalize on this communal affinity of the postmodern youth to mentor them as youth preachers. Postmodernism provides the stage upon which the closing drama of earth’s history will

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Dudley, *Why Teenagers Leave the Church in Droves and Never Look Back* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 59.

<sup>2</sup>Kyongsuk, *Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, 136.

<sup>3</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 22.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

unfold, and God's law and character, the moral absolute of the universe, will be eternally vindicated. Therefore, in the purest sense, postmodernism must not be viewed as an arrogant demolition of the past; it builds on the past to go beyond. This challenging twenty-first century humanistic paradigm is not stealing from the past, but steps into the future. Those in command of sound understanding of the challenges of postmodern youth culture are summoned to use it to lift up targeted young people, through strong mentorship, training, and formative programs. Postmodernism is here to stay; it is not going away anytime soon. The challenge of the church is to find a way to survive its unprecedented demands. Properly utilized, this obsession for community can retaliate against the excesses and misuses of capitalism. How often the masses have been robbed of their necessities, to give luxuries to the high classes. "God never intended for one group of people to live in superfluous inordinate wealth, while others live in abject deadening poverty. Postmodernism has adapted an adversarial stance against the abuses of capitalism; there is more to life than money. All humans are born within a web of overlapping identities and group affiliations, with our destinies tied up with the destinies of all living on this planet.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mentoring Postmodern Immigrant Youth Preachers**

God's great "army of workers, as our youth, properly trained,"<sup>2</sup> will have a key role in the preaching of the gospel. It will ride to a glorious finish on their shoulders. Robert Folkenberg was probably thinking along these lines when he addressed over

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<sup>1</sup>Kyongsuk, *Solidarity*, 136.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1930), 196, quoted in Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 14;

60,000 delegates and members of the SDA Church in his inaugural sermon at the General Conference Session in Indianapolis, Indiana, "If we give our young people a piece of the pie, they might just hang around for dinner."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it is more productive to take them into the kitchen to help in the making of that pie. Here are some valid reasons why it makes sense to include young people in the preaching of the gospel:

1. In the Great Commission recorded in Mark 16:15, 16, there is no indication that youth preachers are excluded.
2. A young person can more effectively witness to another young person.
3. The courageous testimony of the youth will exert an awakening effect on the sleeping church.

#### Youth Inclusive in Gospel Commission

Strong evidence in the book *Desire of Ages* page 145 suggests that perhaps one or all of the disciples were young. Youth were inclusive in the Gospel Commission. Denying young people their rightful places around the huge "table" of gospel preachers is a tragic mistake and working contrary to the will of the Master.

#### Youth Influencing Other Youth

The extraordinary hardness of diamonds has bequeathed to us a methodological and substantive clue for upward mobility in youth ministry—it takes a diamond to shape another diamond.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert S. Folkenberg, "Sabbath Sermon by GC President," *Adventist Review*, July 1985, 13.

David Buttrick expounds on the dangers that face the young person living in the postmodern world in sobering terms, stating that “the late twentieth century seems to [have been the] turning point of the post-modern youth. All of a sudden, the young people find themselves in a society where everything seems to be up for grabs. The sciences, the arts, the humanities—are all undergoing profound revision. Surrounding cultural turbulences are no longer merely a matter of mild social changes, but a revolutionary moment. Youth culture is strange and constantly mutating.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Tony Campolo, “There is no single youth culture in the technological urban industrialized societies of the western world. Instead, there are a variety of sub-cultures existing side by side, each with its own language, value system, and worldview.”<sup>2</sup> The options and choices, dangers and snares, and risks and adventures are so numerous for teenagers; these tend to become blurred in the asphalt jungles of adolescence. The right choices are not always clear, and the possible options are not always appealing for the youth.<sup>3</sup> It will take a diamond to shape another diamond. “Preachers advanced in years, cannot have one half the influence upon the young that the youth, devoted to God, can have on their associates.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect: Effective Communication through Identification*, foreword by David Buttrick (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 9.

<sup>2</sup>Tony Campolo, “The Youth Culture in Sociological Perspective,” in *The Complete Book of Youth Ministry*, ed., Warren S. Benson and Mark H. Senter III (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 37, quoted in Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 18.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 211.

<sup>4</sup>White, *Messages to Young People*, 204.



### The Courageous Testimony of the Youth

A nineteenth century writer stated that “the Church is languishing for the help of young men and young women who will bear a *courageous testimony*; who will with their ardent zeal stir up the sluggish energies of God’s people, and so increase the power in the world”<sup>1</sup> (emphasis mine).

Members of Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle SDA churches, as well as a selective sample of the metropolitan immigrant churches of Northeastern Conference, yearn for the arrival of consecrated young preachers who, rightly trained, will bear a courageous testimony that will stir up the sluggish energies of sleeping saints. Paraphrasing W. E. Burghart Du Bois’ reference to slavery in his literary masterpiece, *The Talented Tenth*, “If [youth ministers] fail to lift up [their youth], they [the youth] will pull them down.”<sup>2</sup> Here is the success formula for recruiting and equipping youth preachers, “And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli.” Unless strong adult mentorship is provided to the youth, they would never be able to declare, “Speak Lord, your servant heareth” (1 Sam 3: 10). Postmodernity is the generation upon which the end of the world has come; many drummers are drumming, many fiddlers are fiddling, and many preachers are preaching what seems “right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25 KJV). The many voices that are calling can be very confusing

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<sup>1</sup>White, *Messages to Young People*, 25.

<sup>2</sup>W. E. Burghart Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth;” *The Negro Problem* (New York: James Pott and Company, 1903), 45, quoted in Thomas Wren, *The Leader’s Companion: Insights on Leadership through the Ages* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 80.

to the young, facing the challenges of a postmodern world. Many are in dire need of encouragement.

### **Mentoring Spirituality in Youth Preachers**

Long before the sermon is written, youth preachers are summoned to first stand before God with their flawed broken spiritual lives and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse their souls. Not only should ministers believe the message preached; they should read themselves full, think themselves clear, pray themselves hot, and then turn themselves loose.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Standing before God**

God, through Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (Exod 18), instructed Moses to select seventy elders and bring them to stand in God's presence in front of the tabernacle (Num 11:16, 17). This biblical episode of yesteryears is an alarm—a trumpet blowing in Zion—summoning every youth minister and youth preacher to first stand before God with their flawed broken lives, before they stand up to preach.

#### **The Spirituality of the Youth Preacher**

A good number of contemporary writers concur that accepting the call to become a youth preacher is more solemn than death and much bigger than life. Roger J. Allen affirms that “because spirituality embraces the whole life, preaching is not distinct from

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Bresee, “Emotions in Preaching,” *Ministry* (March 1984): 10.

spirituality.”<sup>1</sup> Spirituality and the preacher were meant one for the other. Separating spirituality from the youth preacher is as improbable as trying to separate sweetness from sugar. Spirituality in the life of the preacher should not only be deep, but distinct and noticeable. The preacher’s spiritual life is not only the greatest illustration of the message preached, but also living testimony to the truth and power of that message and the very foundation of its effectiveness. Therefore, youth preachers incessantly are engaged in preaching from the “pulpit” of their lives; all their actions say something of the preaching vocation.<sup>2</sup>

Floyd Bresee observed that “the preparation of the sermon begins with the spiritual preparation of the [youth] preacher.”<sup>3</sup> A person sending a message by fax from one end of the globe to the other classically illustrates the relationship between the message transmitted and the messenger transmitting it. This craft is quite distinct from that of an office secretary. The recesses of the sender’s heart may be darkened by immorality and the character may be a replica of Lucifer’s. The preacher may have been conceived in spiritual darkness—deceit and treachery may be his daily bread. Notwithstanding, if the right combination of keys is activated, most likely the fax message will blaze across the horizons of the borders of the oceans to its final desired

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<sup>1</sup>Roger J. Allen, *Preaching and Practical Ministry* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1998), 127.

<sup>2</sup>David Edwards Rocks, “Collation of Material Received: In Response to the Survey on the Charism of Preaching” (2005), <http://www.domlife.org/PreachingResources/InternationalCommissionSummary.doc> (accessed May 7, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>Floyd Bresee, “Sermon Resources—II: Yourself,” *Ministry*, February 1992, 24.

destination. The character and the lifestyle of the sender have no impact whatsoever on the message sent.

It is distinct with the preacher. In the pulpit, the spiritual behavior of preachers speaks so loud, the audience cannot hear what they are saying. James Crane could not have made it any clearer when he wrote, "Just as a clean container will influence the liquid content, in a similar manner, the character of the [youth] preacher affects the purity and power of the message."<sup>1</sup> One's spirituality has far more formative arsenals for sermon preparation than other factors do. Floyd Bresee is adamant that "it is not what you say that counts, but rather what the audience thinks of you, while you are saying it."<sup>2</sup>

Intentional, quality time set aside for systematic Bible study within the context of a disciplined life devoted to prayer and meditation, and for the reading of the great devotional literature of the ages, is indispensable for success in youth preaching. Youth preachers become what they are called to be by prayer. The life of prayer, the practice of prayer, is the very core activity of the youth preaching enterprise. The gospel preacher, who shies away from these devotional moments, is on a collision course with the rude awakening of discovering that the sense of "awe and mystery which commanded his or her entrance into the gospel preaching ministry will be forgotten in the onrush of daily affairs. The note of spiritual excitement will be hushed in both sermon and conversation."<sup>3</sup> A young preacher, who neglects his or her spiritual life, is easily

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<sup>1</sup>James Crane, *El Sermon Eficaz* [The Efficient Sermon] (El Paso, TX: Baptist Publishing House, 1993), 31.

<sup>2</sup>Floyd Bresee, "Sermons Are Seen," *Ministry*, September 1988, 25.

<sup>3</sup>John Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996), 201.

discouraged by the obstacles normally encountered in ministry and is setting up for a fall sooner or later. I was a young intern pastor and had just waxed great in a sermon. I was standing in the church vestibule, when a then retired minister whispered this timely counsel in my ear, "Brother Usher, if you are to embrace long lasting success in the ministry, stay away from Adventist women and Adventist money."

Youth preachers should wake up to the chilling reality that the preaching profession places them in the middle of a cosmic experiment and realize that the prince of darkness has stationed at least one man or woman in the congregations where they minister the Word. These emissaries of darkness are under the conviction that they have been divinely appointed to satisfy their every spiritual, emotional, and social need. Woe to the youth preachers who touches them. The spiritual "ripples" triggered off by the preacher guilty of immoral indulgences has far more damaging and far-reaching effects than the same sins committed in the pew. Show me a wristwatch marking the wrong time, and I will show you only a few individuals affected by this delinquency of time. In contrast, the entire British community in London will become hypocrites of time if Big Ben marks the wrong time. This by no means advocates that spirituality is relegated solely to the lifestyle of the youth preacher. Deep spirituality should resonate in the life of every individual who bears the name of Jesus Christ. However, it is undeniable that the public, prominent figure of the preacher increases the magnitude of responsibility and accountability. Evans warned that "the preacher will be powerless in the pulpit if he is not clean in his private life. It will be difficult to face the congregation with confidence if he knows that he is not living up to the standard where he should be. The mere

confidence of the people will be a rebuke to his hypocrisy.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, living what they preach is the most eloquent argument youth ministers can make in recruiting and mentoring youth preachers.

### The Starting Point of Genuine Spirituality

The youth preacher who seeks genuine spirituality is summoned to cast a lingering glance at the biblical episode of the seventy elders (Num 11:16, 17). The criteria for their election were not impeccable characters. The very same sins that beset all mankind had tainted the fabric of their spirituality.

While this makes them a theoretically interesting group, it is obvious that, at this stage, their spirituality could be regarded less as “evidence” than as well informed hunches. They were not spiritual. Their election was a down payment of better things to come—the imbueing of the same spirit that Moses had. It was at this point that they would become spiritual.

In the dim mist of eternity, God does not elect spiritual youth preachers to proclaim His Word. He chooses young men and women who have defects of character to whom He is willing to bestow the same spirit Moses had. He does not call the equipped; He equips the called. Any other approach and nobody would have a chance. Notwithstanding, God does not arbitrarily force His Spirit on youth preachers against their will. Once recruited, they are invited to willingly stand before God and allow the Holy Ghost to clean up all ungodly behavior.

Therefore, accepting the call to join the ranks of those entrusted with the gospel

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<sup>1</sup>William Evans, *How to Prepare Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 23.

flames of youth preaching is an automatic confession and acceptance of the reality of flawed and broken spiritual lives. This is the starting point of genuine spirituality. This became a reality for Peter when he publicly confessed, “I do not know the man” (Luke 22:31-32).

Peter’s confession fuels the conclusion that being a preacher is not equated to an automatic upward spiritual mobility. Here is the reason why genuine spirituality often does not keep company with church leaders and preachers, and why many observers are less sanguine about the spirituality of preachers. It is expected that a preacher be spiritual.

Nobody wants to be looked upon as a spiritual fraud, especially in religious circles. It will then only be a short walk to hypocrisy and false pretense—act as if God is in control when He is not—give the impression that all is well spiritually, when it is not.<sup>1</sup> “How many times we have found ourselves in the position where it’s our job [as youth leaders] to act spiritual—even though we are not feeling spiritual.”<sup>2</sup>

Preachers are famous for giving commands in their heads that just does not function in their lives. They condemn sin by proclamation, but taste of its allurements by their practice. They preach one thing but live another. They command the marriages of their parishioners to work, but theirs is not working. They command faithfulness in stewardship, but often they are unfaithful. They command with their lips that

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<sup>1</sup>Mike Yaconelli, *Messy Spirituality: God’s Annoying Love for Imperfect people* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup>Laurie Polich, “The Danger of Becoming White-washed Tomb,” *Youth Worker*, July/August, 2005, 30.

parishioners refrain from gossip, but they gossip. Until sins are confessed and brought into the open, genuine spirituality will be elusive (see Dan 9:3-6).

There are two basic reasons why it is so assiduous to make open confession of sins: (1) the erroneous concept that Jesus is disappointed with our messy spiritualities, and (2) the transgressors have no intention of forsaking these sins. There is strong evidence in the book *Desire of Ages* that sincere Christians should emulate how Jesus related to Judas in the Upper Room—refraining to publicize the sins of others.<sup>1</sup> The admonition in Matt 18 is to go to our brother or sister that is in sin. This is why spiritually depraved individuals are encouraged to associate with at least one spiritual counselor to whom they are spiritually accountable.

Laurie Polich makes this contribution on spiritual accountability, “If you don’t have at least one person who knows everything about you—one who will stand with you as you struggle through temptations and who will support you as you confess sin—you are in trouble as a youth minister.”<sup>2</sup> The person will know that the sinful indulgence is in the open; at least one person knows. This should provide enough spiritual latitude to forsake the sin in question.

A young preacher who confides his shortcomings to a pastor simply seeks to get his or her sin into the open. The young person knows that the chance of quitting then becomes optimum.

It is ludicrous to think that Moses and the seventy elders were commanded to

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1940), 378.

<sup>2</sup>Polich, 31.



stand before God in front of the Tabernacle, in order for the flaming eye of divine scrutiny to bust and relieve them of their call. God knew of all their imperfections long before their election.

Yaconelli wrote, “How utterly sweet is the knowledge that our heavenly Father knows us completely? No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that is against us.”<sup>1</sup> God knows us completely. Therefore, the life of the youth preacher, who stands before Him, is an open book. On this premise, it is vital and compelling for church pastors and members to understand that the function of the nominating committee is not to deny leadership roles to unconsecrated leaders. Its sole function is to set the stage and cultivate a spiritual platform, upon which the nominated sinful church leader (all elected officers are) could stand before God and allow His Spirit to do the much needed cleansing work.

#### Unconverted Youth Preachers

The youth preacher must first stand before God and allow the Holy Spirit to clean up his or her act before preaching God’s Word. Failure to make this the first responsibility will result in a spiritual fall sooner or later. One of the greatest setbacks in mentoring youth preachers is the poor spiritual example they see in the lives of the mentoring preachers.

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<sup>1</sup>Yaconelli, *Messy Spirituality*, 57.

There is one fatal mistake most preachers make, like Peter, they attempt to stand before the congregation and preach, before they stand before God and allow the Holy Spirit to clean up their act. An unconverted preacher will weaken the brethren.

### **What Is Spirituality?**

Spirituality is not a test, it is not a formula. It is a relationship.<sup>1</sup> “And this is life eternal; that they might know me the only true God; and Jesus Christ; whom you have sent” (John 17:3 NKJV). Spirituality is not about being fixed spiritually; it is having the presence of God in the midst of our flawed, broken lives. It is not about perfection; it is about a connection. “I am the Vine; you are the branches. Without Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Without the presence of Christ there is “zero” spirituality. Like salvation, spirituality is not something that is achieved by works, “lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8). It is a free gift imputed and imparted to those who are willing to stand before God and open their hearts to the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost allowing Him to take full possession of their lives.

Here is a helpful illustration: A young woman is trapped in a raging flooded river and is fighting helplessly against the swirling currents. A member of the rescue team spots her and throws a lifeline. The lifeline is free. However, it is absurd to assume that it is the responsibility of the rescue team to obligate the young woman to take hold of the life line. She will have to make that choice. The same is true with spirituality. God will never arbitrate, enforce, or impose spirituality on any individual. It is the youth preacher’s choice to allow the Holy Spirit to take full possession of his or her life.

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<sup>1</sup>Yaconelli, 13.

Another related optimistic assumption is that attempting to isolate spirituality from obedience is futile. Spirituality can never be obtained nor maintained without obedience. Because it is a free gift from God, obedience is not necessary in order to receive spirituality. Obedience is necessary to maintain spirituality. The drowning young woman must keep holding on to that lifeline to be pulled to safety. Young preachers maintain a spiritual life through obedience, daily connection and interaction with God; through prayer, Bible study, and the sharing of their faith.

### Obtaining Genuine Spirituality

Here is a summary of the steps that must be taken before a youth preacher can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and is declared spiritual:

1. Youth preachers should recognize the sinfulness of their flawed spiritual lives. This is the first giant step in the direction of becoming spiritual.
2. Youth preachers should stand before God just as they are and be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to do His cleansing work, preparing them to stand clean before God's people as they preach.
3. Youth preachers should recognize on a daily basis that their only work is to conscientiously remain connected to Christ; the Vine (John 6:29).
4. Youth preachers should stand still, keeping their flawed, broken lives under the constant outpour of Jesus, the Water of Life, allowing Him to fight their individual and collective battles. This is the sign of spiritual maturity.
5. If youth preachers can find a way to avoid leaks, spirituality will be inevitable. The overflow of spirituality will touch the lives those around them.

Youth preachers, filled with the Water of Life to the overflow, run the risk of taking credit of being the source of the overflow Water of Life that touches other lives. This is the reason why many well-intentioned youth preachers and pastors end up in the “ditches” of self-righteousness.

### The Youth Preacher’s Check List

Below is a short list of six things that youth preachers should be sure of:

1. Youth preachers should be foremost to first kneel down before God before standing up to preach. This is crucial for success in gospel preaching.
2. Youth preachers should be sure they are converted before they stand up to preach. Walking around and in the pulpit with dirty spiritual “shoes” should not be the practice of youth preachers. Unless these shoes are removed, the “Bush” will burn, but it will never be consumed.
3. Youth preachers should guard against allowing a taste of God to be overpowered by the desire to be God. The more human hands handle divine oracles there is a danger to believe that they are God. Moses said, “Must we fetch you water from the rock?” (Num 20:10). When did it become “we”?
4. The preaching profession is perhaps one of the few that comes with a success guarantee; every young preacher should be ready to handle the success that is bound to come. “The more success men achieve the tendency is to pray less.”<sup>1</sup>
5. Guaranteed success in youth preaching is not to say that one preacher may

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1957), 633.

not be more gifted than the other. Around the vast gospel table of preaching the youth preacher is considered a prince or princess among princes and princesses. The commonest form of self-deception is not paraded furtively in the dark cathedrals of the underworld, but flourish under the bright lights of acclaim and glory.<sup>1</sup> Anchored in this conviction, the young preacher will not be moved to envy and jealousy when church people begin to sing that popular little tune, "Saul" has slain his thousand, but "David" has slain his ten thousands in favor of another. The youth preacher will never be truly blessed until he or she learns to rejoice with the blessings of others.

### **Believe and Live What You Preach**

It is imperative that the youth preacher believes the message preached. If the preacher does not thoroughly believe his or her sermon, there will be no fire in the pulpit. There will be no transference of spiritual life. The young preacher who does not believe the gospel is a consummate fraud, playing a most dangerous game. Sermons preached must show that the preachers are saved, or they will be embarrassed. Such sermons must be constructed upon deep personal experience, or they will sink in the mire of human contrivance. In addition, no candy coating of eloquence will hide their ineffectiveness.<sup>2</sup> The young preacher who believes the message enough will live it. Preachers who do not live what they preach will not survive the pulpit. Most preachers are in one accord that "the most effective communicators we know—those who get results—are not necessarily the most eloquent, but instead are those who believe in their

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<sup>1</sup>Petersen, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Brooks, "Preach What You Believe," 27.

message enough to live it and deliver it with passion.”<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon once said of his preaching, “After I have fired off my shot and delivered all my matter, I have often rammed my soul into the [gospel] gun and fired my heart at the congregation, and the discharge has under God won the victory.”<sup>2</sup> One cannot preach like that with shifting conviction. Duplicity is fatal. The youth preacher who lives the message preached will deliver it with passion and power. Preachers who do not practice what they preach will not have much to preach about. Those who live well will preach well. The youth preacher who is preaching well, most likely, is living right. The preacher who is living right is a powerful catalyst in the mentorship and training of youth preachers.

### **Read Yourself Full**

The great apostle Paul understood that “knowledge is like crawling backwards through a funnel,”<sup>3</sup> when he wrote this counsel to young Timothy, “Till I come, give attendance to reading” (2 Tim 4:13). His desire is that youth preachers, the likes of Timothy, put an end to waddling in the “shallows and puddles” of mediocrity, and launch out into the bottomless “deeps” of progressive knowledge and develop into intellectual giants. It will then only be a short walk in preparing sermons that will reach the hearts of the young and inspire them to be recruited as youth preachers. It goes uncontested that the young preacher, who stands up to preach, must have something to offer. There is no profession in which performance depends so much upon the accumulation of insight and

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<sup>1</sup>Davis, *How to Speak to Youth*, 31.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Brooks, 27.

<sup>3</sup>George Knight, class notes, CHMN 507 A History of SDA Theology, Atlantic Union College, March 12-30, 2001.

information like that of preaching. Good preaching (which will effectively motivate young people to become youth preachers) is a matter of the overflow—of having one’s mood and spirit so primed with reading and experience that those in the immediate environment are touched by the overflow.<sup>1</sup> Research has been conducted on the importance of fire in sermons. Martin wrote, “An altar with nothing but ashes cannot set the church or the world on fire.”<sup>2</sup> William Barclay is in accord: “If we cannot put fire in our sermons, we should consider putting our sermons in the fire.”<sup>3</sup> Frederick Douglass adds to the discussion about fire: “It is not light we need [in our sermons], but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”<sup>4</sup> There is much more written about fire, but it suffices that the fire that will burn in the young preacher’s pulpit must first burn on the flammable pages of his or her young heart. A fire that will burn in the pulpit must first be lighted in the preacher’s study. The price of mastery in any field is preparation.

Martin makes yet another addition to the discussion, “If the preacher behind the pulpit does not have a message in mind, no sacred flame in the heart or on his lips, he

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<sup>1</sup>Killinger, 189.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent Q. Tigno Jr., “The Wise and Wherefores of Worship, *Adventist Review*, October 10, 1985, 8, quoted in Linford E. Martin, *The Empty Pew: A Pastor’s Guide to Improved Church Attendance* (Lincoln, NE: Churches Resources Distribution Center, 1992), 76.

<sup>3</sup>William Barclay, *Preaching to Today’s World*, comp. James C. Barry (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1984), 151.

<sup>4</sup>Federick Douglass, Famous Quotes of African Americans, <http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/federickdouglass1/a/fdouglassquotes.htm> (accessed October 4, 2007).

might as well keep silent.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, youth preachers are summoned to intentionally position themselves “constantly in contact with and be exposed to the sources of preaching material related to their craft and profession.”<sup>2</sup> The livelihood of preachers leans heavily on their preaching prowess. They should leave no stones unturned and count no project too expensive; in pursuit of the development, refinement, and fine tuning of this profession. In turn, their sermons will be more homiletically viable to enhance the youth to become gospel preachers themselves.

Koller was on target when he wrote, “A [young] preacher will not hold the interest of his people if he preaches only out of the fullness of his heart and the emptiness of his head.”<sup>3</sup> A youth preacher who studies his Bible prayerfully, thoughtfully, regularly, and systematically will build up a reservoir. He will find himself preaching from the overflow. Powerful, persuasive, incendiary sermons that motivate young people are reserved for preachers who have developed the habit of studying and reading widely, even if there is no sermon preparation on the agenda. The primary purpose in Bible study is not to find something to say to others, but rather to find something that will change the preacher. It is crucial that the Bible should be read, not so much as preachers on a

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<sup>1</sup>Martin, *The Empty Pew*, 76.

<sup>2</sup>Charles E. Bradford, *Preaching to the Times* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Graphics, 1994), 24, 26.

<sup>3</sup>Charles W. Koller, *Expository Preaching without Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), 44, quoted in Bradford, 30.



sermon “safari,” but as human beings in search of food for their own [hungry] souls.<sup>1</sup>

If the preacher’s sermon does not first satiate his hungry soul, it will be a steep climb for it to satiate the spiritual hunger of the audience. The people will travel no farther than the preacher has already traveled. Shakespeare and preachers have this one thing in common, “To be or not to be.”<sup>2</sup> There is no hiding place in the craft of preaching. If the preacher’s message did not vibrate the chords of his soul and moved him, it will not move the audience.

Youth preachers who resolve to edge in fifteen minutes for reading widely on a daily basis should reap great dividends at the end of the year. This enhanced proficiency empowers gospel preachers to speak with authority, to make solid, viable spiritual applications, and enables them to connect and interact with all classes and cultures. Too often, many preachers are lazy.

A young pastor was waxing great in a ministerial meeting of the Evangelical Church in Germany. He was expounding the virtues of his new approach in extemporaneous preaching. He emphasized and dramatized that he no longer had to spend long hours in sermon preparation. He simply walked into his pulpit and depended solely on the Holy Ghost to direct him as in regards to what he should say. An elderly retired minister arose in disagreement saying, “The Holy Ghost never spoke to me in the pulpit.” Then he reflected for a brief moment and said, “Yes, I do remember that the Holy Ghost did speak to me once. I was invited to preach at a Baptist church. After

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<sup>1</sup>Bresee, “Sermon Resources—II,” 24.

<sup>2</sup>William Shakespeare, “To be or not to Be;” from *Hamlet* Act III, Scene I, <http://www.artofeuropa.com/shakespeare/sha8.html> (accessed October 4, 2007).

preaching a poor sort of sermon, I was going down the pulpit steps when the Holy Ghost spoke to me. He only had three words for me. He said, "Heinrich, you're lazy"<sup>1</sup>

History has been shuddered by potent sermons that have ricocheted in pulpits and are still reverberating around the world today. A good number of these keepers of the gospel flame of preaching now sleep in the dust.

The memoirs of their moving homilies and expositions will long live on in the storerooms of our retrospect, and continue to make heavy impact on postmodern preaching. These potent expositions persuaded millions and kept these evangels burning in the pulpit decade after decade. The sermons were so potent in persuasion and convincing in their content, that the entire Methodist community would leave the comfortable, warm, confines of their homes as early as four o'clock in the morning, hear John Wesley preach, and then go about their daily routines after.

Adventist tradition has it that when George Vandeman Sr. preached about hell, the listeners could actually see the sparks and smell the smoke. They had differing and varying phenotypes, but the fabric of their impressive trajectories were interrelated by the common spiritual genotype of systematic devotion to prayer and Bible study. They discovered that the secret is to remain connected to the Vine (John 15). Day by day they were willing to stand still and maintain the "cup" of their spiritual lives steady under the constant "pour" of Jesus, the Water of Life. They were preaching from the "overflow."

The spiritual implications are numerous and of noticeable importance: physical "countenance will be altered" (Luke 9:29 NKJV) and the general texture of the sermon

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Bresee, "Sermon Resources—III: Your library File," *Ministry* (March 1992): 27.

will change. When the young preacher prays, screams will change to appeals. Sarcasm will give way to generosity. Pulpit bashing will be eclipsed by visitation, and peacemaking will replace “stone throwing.” Tell it like it is will become tell it as it should be told, feeding the little “lambs” will take precedence over feeding the “giraffes,” and scolding will be changed to exhorting. The young people will be kept awake and many will join the ranks of the army of youth preachers.

### **The Safest Place on Earth**

A young stranger to the Alps was making his first climb, accompanied by two stalwart guides. It was a hard climb—steep and hazardous. They climbed for hours, and finally reached the summit. The lead guide, wishing to permit the first view of heaven and earth to the stranger, moved aside to let him pass. Oblivious to the gales that would blow across those summit rocks, the young man leaped to his feet to take in the full panoramic view of the majesty of what lay below. The chief guide quickly dragged him down, “To your knees, sir!” he shouted, “You are never safe up here except on your knees”<sup>1</sup> To your knees; in this ministry no other place is safe. The “summit rocks” of success are just ahead. The treacherous and powerful crosswinds are roaring and can blow you away into oblivion. The safest place in youth ministry is on your knees. There is a place of quiet rest, and it is near to the heart of God. That place is on our knees.

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<sup>1</sup>George Vandeman, *Amazing Prophecies*, It is Written Classics, ed. Ken McFarlane (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1986), 134, 135.

### Summary

The church flirts with grave danger sticking its head in the sand of denial that the world has changed. Adolescents are the ones that will be trampled under the iron feet of the emissaries of darkness. Therefore, adult mentoring is not an option; it is a fierce necessity. Yet, this much needed mentorship is tragically lacking.

Recruiting and equipping postmodern youth preachers is no small task. It will take more than sermonizing, giving to the youth a piece of the pie, scheduling four youth days on the church calendar, placing the leadership of the church into young hands. Postmodernism demands that adults and youth ministers make a conscientious effort to first understand this new youth culture. How the profile of a metropolitan immigrant SDA congregation enhances or inhibits the recruiting and mentoring of youth preachers is the subject of discussion in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROFILES OF EMMAUS, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, AND COMMUNITY TABERNACLE ADVENTIST CHURCHES; THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND THE YOUTH EVANGELISTIC CAMPAIGNS

#### **Overview**

This profile of Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle, and similar West Indian immigrant churches, considers the key factors that account for the concentrated pockets of West Indian membership in such congregations on the US northeastern seaboard. It also enhances a better understanding of the reason for an exclusive mentality toward other religious bodies is prevalent and noticeable among the said ethnicity. Such a mentality is not only bad news and public enemy number one for this project, but is a risky liability that endangers the effective preaching of the message of the Loud Cry. The good news is that the method of Christ appeals to four of the most prominent religious bodies in the world: Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. Lifting up Jesus in our sermons will draw all men unto Him.

#### **Historical Background of Churches in Study**

After spending over six years at Emmaus, on January 1, 2004, the writer was assigned to Christian Fellowship SDA Church and Community Tabernacle Mission. The combined book membership at the time was one thousand, two hundred and twenty-nine. Before staking any claim to reap the social, mental, and spiritual rewards from this

research, it was necessary to secure and present a relevant profile, along with a specific demographic composition of all three congregations. Such history offers suggestions as to why a West Indian dominance amassed and persists in metropolitan New York. The aforementioned congregations are acculturated by a common historical idiosyncrasy and share a similar profile and demographical background as the other immigrant churches in the metropolitan area of the Northeastern conference. Negotiating the challenges of youth ministry and harnessing data along such cultural continuum posed quite a challenge, but was also rewarding and meaningful. The citizens of third-world countries look to America as the “land of milk and honey.”

For Bruce Norman, immigrants come with a pre-modern or modern mindset.<sup>1</sup> Separated from relatives and friends, the immigrant is more susceptible to the gospel than a person who grew up in the prevailing American culture. In America, as in many other countries, affluence tends to shun religion.<sup>2</sup>

The overwhelming influx of West Indian immigrants into the United States increased their numbers dramatically in socio-religious circles. The new immigrants exert a telling impact in reweaving the economic, social, and political fabric of American cities on the northeastern seaboard.

Metropolitan SDA congregations did not go unscathed. Increase of immigrant membership, brought about by both immigration and by the embracing of the gospel,

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<sup>1</sup>Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, 27.

<sup>2</sup>David Callahan and David Heintz, eds., *The Quality of Life 2000: The New Politics of Work, Politics, Family, and Community* (A Briefing Book, August 2000), 5, [http://www.demos-usa.org/pubs/Quality\\_of\\_Life\\_2000.pdf](http://www.demos-usa.org/pubs/Quality_of_Life_2000.pdf) (accessed September 3, 2007).

fueled other complications. The West Indians, encouraged by their overwhelming and increasing numbers, embedded their religious culture in the very heart of that of the American, which was riddled with the “bullets” of postmodernism. It is a steep task for West Indian immigrants to “become American” under conditions that fundamentally differ from the prevailing cultural niches back home. An old system that has been seared into the Caribbean genetic make-up, will always confront opposition, when operated in a new setting. Old institutions cannot adequately oversee new practices. Old rules might not be congruent with the direction the American dream is leading. As anticipated, this ethnic merge took a downward spiral mobility, and the “highways” of the SDA churches on the Northeastern seaboard became “littered with the wreckage” from a head-on collision between the immigrating West Indian culture and that of the prevailing American culture.

#### Biblical Leadership and Democracy

In the Caribbean, pastors have more religious autonomy, authority, and control in the church than they do in America. Caribbean pastors subscribe to the biblical style of leadership (Exod 17:1-5). The leader is foremost spiritual. The Spirit indicates when democracy, paternalism, bureaucracy, charisma, and autocracy prevail. It would appear that the prevailing influences of an intense democratic society, which is the cradle of Adventism, have overpowered the SDA Church of North America. The unwritten code which rules and reigns from sea to shining sea, from union to union, from conference to

conference, from church to church, and from pulpit to pulpit is, “For the people, of the people, and by the people.”<sup>1</sup>

However, democracy, which is perhaps superior to most current existing governments, seems to have two problems: (1) it is often accused of not living what it preaches, and (2) there is no room for God in this human paradigm. Such an idiosyncrasy is not only sociologically untenable, politically unsound, it is morally wrong. It sets the table for the deteriorating and declining relationship between laity and clergy, in numerous West Indian immigrant churches in the North American Division.

Exodus 17:1-5 seems to advocate a unique type of leadership, in which the leader leads by divine indications and not by a democratic vote. The divine mandate was for Moses to take the “rod” of God’s divine unction and, along with the supporting cast of elders, lead the people. The leader, whose leadership style is constrained by the principles of this biblical paradigm, will constantly be in opposition and clashing with a democratic mind-set hungry for coronation.

The advent of the Caribbean immigrant church members to America preceded that of the coalition of immigrant pastors. Their arrival, found the membership well versed in the discovery of the “New World”—the supremacy of democracy. Members juggle and play with the two ecclesiastic systems of democracy and dictatorship in church governance as a child plays with a toy.

There is a trend evolving in the American immigrant churches—to remove a pastor, the concerted “growl” of the mob is “dictator.” To enforce their personal agendas,

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<sup>1</sup>*New Standard Encyclopedia*, (1993 ed.), s.v. “The United States: Government.”



they shift to a higher “gear” and in unison shout for “democracy.” Conference officials, who tend to view the biblical leadership style of Exod 17 through the suspicious “lens” of dictatorship, will have sympathetic ears for complaints against pastors who exercise such a leadership style. It is then only a short walk from the church door to that of the conference office; the pastor is branded a dictator, and condemned to spend the rest of his life being transferred from church to church, until there is no more church. This could be the reason why the average stay time for pastors in Emmaus, at the time the author was the church pastor, was two years and three months.

#### Exclusiveness—Adventist Style

The constituencies of Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle, and the overwhelming majority of Caribbean SDA churches in the NEC, come to America resolved in an exclusive and hostile mentality toward other denominations. The prevalent and popular consensus is that adherents of other religious bodies will only become truly saved when they abandon their current religious beliefs and practices and embrace Adventism.<sup>1</sup> The immigrant membership in question is hesitant and reluctant to receive the emblems of Holy Communion, administered by other Christian denominations. Inviting non-SDA ministers to preach in a SDA pulpit is unheard of. An Adventist minister can go and preach in a Baptist church, but the Adventist pulpit is off limits for a Baptist preacher. Adventists can rent a Methodist church for Sabbath services, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Mahatma Gandhi, “*Mahatma Gandhi Album: Gandhi and Christianity*,” <http://www.kamat.com/mmgandhi/christian.htm> (accessed January 13, 2007).

Methodists cannot rent an Adventist church for Sunday worship services. They can read our books, but we must not read theirs. This mentality seems to prevail more predominantly among the adult membership. In a gallant effort to break down religious and denominational barriers, as well as to facilitate the preaching of the message of the three angels, the aim and purpose of this research project intended to dispatch youth preachers to the pulpits of neighboring non-SDA Christian denominations, to conduct one-week revivals during Easter. A strong adversarial stance against this effort is reason for concern. Success in this unprecedented venture will be conducive to an upward mobility in effectively preaching the message of the three angels to other denominations.

#### Youth Preachers Outlawed

A former youth ministry director of Northeastern Conference introduced a project that had the potential to revolutionize the mentorship of the young people in the local churches. Each elected officer would select a young person, and mentor that individual in the leadership of that particular church office. This gallant and noble effort was met with incremental resistance, rejection, and resentment from local leaders. They contended that the covert dark purpose was to substitute the adult leaders and populate the church with young ones—a leadership for which they are not prepared.

Employment of such incendiary language and derogatory flamboyance, potentially widens the generational divide, denigrates the potential of the youth, contributes to the erosion of youth preaching, and provokes massive youth exodus from the sacred precincts of the church.

However, the question is not whether leadership could be entrusted to the youth; the question is whether it could be afforded not to do so. During the years I was the

Pastor of the Emmaus SDA church, I cannot recall the local leadership altering the surface of the playing field to allow young adults to preach in the divine worship service. On special days (youth days included) there was an irreversible decree (the law of the Medes and the Persians) that the invocation, the pastoral prayer, and the offertory were reserved for pastors and elders only.

Female elders and preachers were outlawed. The ones who manage to slip through the cracks, via guest speakers for special days, were obligated to use a hat as covering, a cultural demand that in no way interferes with how God saves sinners, or is in conflict with the moral absolute of the universe—His Law.

#### The Root of the Problem

Another unfolding factor that exerts a significant impact on the recruiting and training of youth preachers is that, in the Inter-American Division, it is common practice for a pastor to have an average of seven to ten churches; the local congregations are the eminent domain of the elders. Such a practice is not endorsed in America, where the “one pastor per congregation” norm prevails.

Taking advantage of my pastoral experience at Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle in Brooklyn, New York, I am persuaded that this reversal in the American ecclesiastic structure sets the stage for some serious power struggles and political wrangling between pastors and local church elders. There is a subtle and spurious assumption that runs through the veins of the immigrant ecclesiastic system in America—the head elder is in charge of the elders; all the elders, including the head elder, are under the leadership of the church pastor.

Working in this environment could be challenging and very difficult at times. A good number of the pastor's initiatives are ignored or looked upon with disdain and indifference. By contrast, similar initiatives from local leaders are welcomed. The baptismal candidates that the Bible worker recommends to the church board are accepted without discussion. Candidates that the pastor prepares must undergo an additional examination by the board of elders.

Beneath these hierarchal and positional distinctions flows yet another social current related to the same issue in question—"an unusually high percentage of the immigrant newcomers had held white-collar occupations, mostly young professionals, with little hope of advancement in the static economy of the Islands."<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise that James Weldon Johnson wrote that the West Indian immigrants "displayed a high intelligence, many having an English common school education, and he noted that there was almost no illiteracy among them."<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding, this is not enough in America. Survival in the American society demands that these brethren be schooled in its educational system. A good number of them start at the GED level and proceed on to a college degree. Even though the average pastor in Northeastern Conference holds a Masters degree, a college degree provides sufficient educational prestige and latitude for the immigrant church leader to start equating himself with the church pastor.

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<sup>1</sup>"Black Experience in America," chap. 9, *The New Negro*, <http://www.rit.edu/~nrcgsh/bx/bx09a.html> (accessed April 6, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Increased educational status is equated to considerable salary increase. The tithe-and-offering income from the churches in study is indicative that the income of the average church member surpasses that of a pastor. The reason is obvious—church members can work overtime, and can do two, three jobs. In contrast, moonlighting is condemned within Adventist ministerial circles.

The majority of the immigrant males from the Caribbean arrive in the United States with a trade; they are capable of building their own homes and of taking care of all the miscellaneous repairs on the house and the automobile. In contrast, pastors pay for almost every domestic expense: They set the example by sending their children to church school, which by far is more expensive than the public school. The children of the local church members attend public school. These factors contribute to shrinking pastoral economic resources. Higher income in the pew than in the pulpit dictates that church members not only drives better cars, but also lives in better homes. Equating themselves with the pastor, in both domestic as well as ecclesiastic matters, is inevitable. The pastor attends Workers Meeting and is exposed to all the operational policies, innovations, constitution, and bylaws of the conference. Acting as liaison between the conference and the local church, the pastor initiates the implementation in the church. The local leaders, equating themselves with the pastor, would adopt an oppositional stance against pastoral indications. Unless the communiqué is subsequently endorsed by the conference administration, it is viewed with suspicion.

In the 2005 edition of the Seventh-day Adventist *Church Manual*, the church pastor is an ex officio member of the nominating committee. He or she has the option to

sit as the chairperson of the committee, or allow the chairmanship to another member.<sup>1</sup> Woe to the pastors who indulge in the first option. The church leaders in discussion use the *Church Manual* as a tool; they honor it with “with their lips” when it is to their convenience, and discard it when it is necessary to advance their personal agendas. It is my personal conviction that the solution resides in the offices of our conferences.

Administrators should be more assertive in implementing the decisions of the General Conference in regards to this matter. A conference president, who, with one hand upholds the decision of the General Conference and with the other literally prohibits pastors to sit as chairpersons of the nominating committees, is sending a wrong message to the constituency. He is guilty on all counts of, according to Radio talk host Rush Limbaugh, “weaseling ambiguity.”<sup>2</sup> The enemy steals a march on God’s church when the church pastor is denied the chairmanship of the nominating committee. Reducing the role of the pastor to that of an overseer opens the door for devastating power plays, power struggles, and political wrangling between pastors and local church leaders. Interacting with other colleague pastors indicates that this seems to be a common practice among a good number of these immigrant churches in question. At the moment when the nominating committee’s report is voted by the church, the errant practice is to demand that the chairperson of the said committee, not the pastor, presides.

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<sup>1</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 17<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 154.

<sup>2</sup>Rush Limbaugh, comment made on his Radio Talk Show *AM 770*; New York, October 10, 2006; at 11:30; in the aftermath of Senator John Kerry’s infamous statement that was interpreted by the media as being that the US military is comprised of uneducated personnel.

There is yet another bend in this demographical road that is fuel for concern—the evolving trend of a steady incremental widening gap between the local churches and the conference. The vote of the conference executive committee to assign pastors to churches is easy. The installation of these pastors in their new pastorates is another matter. This resistance is perceived as rebellion and the first step in the direction of congregationalism. I hold a different position. My oppositional frame of reference has roots in reality. By definition, congregationalism occurs when operating revenue (tithes and offerings) is received and is spent according to the desires and dictates of the local congregation. The local congregation hires and fires. This definition is incongruent to the situation in discussion. The churches in question return tithes and other custodian funds to the conference; these churches recognize that it is the conference, and not the local church, that employs and fires workers. There is no semblance of congregationalism. What is denominated as congregationalism and rebellion is in reality, according to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “the silent language of the unheard.”<sup>1</sup> The social niches that prevail in postmodernism fundamentally differ from those of premodernity and modernity. Postmodernity demands that the voice of the local people be heard in their own words, not via interpretation or translation by a representative isolated from them. The church makes her greatest blunder when she attempts to bridge the widening gap between laity and clergy by legislation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., Quotations taken from a speech given in Birmingham, AL, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmquotes1.html> (accessed August 14, 2006).

<sup>2</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Esther: A Woman of Strength and Dignity* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing House, 1997), 31.

History is a silent reminder that rules and regulations, without relationship, often lead to rebellion. Throwing a policy book into the “faces” of a local church, reminding them who has the power, is not the way to combat congregationalism. Dialogue and close interaction are better alternatives to settle this challenge. If God, the Sovereign Ruler of the universe could reason and dialogue with Moses and yielded to His argument, “the Lord repented of the evil He thought to do unto His people” (Exod 32:14), conference administrators should do likewise.

### The Casualties—the Young and the Precious

The tragedy of it all is that, such measures often proved counterproductive. While pastors and elders are engaged in their power struggles, the young preachers, caught in the middle of the crossfire, become victims of the middle squeeze, and are left unattended.

This ungodly passive aggression has sabotaged their rap sessions, retarded their efforts to be enlisted as youth preachers, denied them leadership and ownership of the church on the premise that they are too young, and denies the pastor the opportunity to become a “fellow-traveler” to them. This has enhanced what could be interpreted as an exploitative youth-adult relationship. Our youth attend spirit-filled prayer retreats, where their lives are touched; the human clay is now ready for the divine Potter’s hand. Impressed by the dedicated labor of our youth leaders from superior organizations, they return home with optimistic enthusiasm to enroll in gospel ministry, only to be deflated in the middle of a jam packed divine worship service by the angry outburst of a church elder hungry for power. His sole purpose was to embarrass the pastor, the congregation, God, and himself. The youth witness this fiasco and walk away recalcitrant in their decision never to become pastors or youth preachers.



## Demographics

Whether traveling via the Belt Parkway, the Jackie Robinson Parkway, or the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, en route to downtown Brooklyn or to Queens, it is expedient that one pass by a citadel of hope, known as the Emmaus SDA Church. This ecclesiastic facility is located at the crossroads of a very busy intersection that is buzzing with ceaseless pedestrian and commercial traffic. People literally walk from off the sidewalk and into the church vestibule.

On July 4, 1965, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. said that what impressed him the most when he visited Jamaica was the country's famous dictum and motto, *Out of many people, one people*. "Here in Jamaica we are not Chinese, we are not Japanese; we are not Indians, we are not Negroes, we are not Englishmen, and we are not Canadians. We are all one big family of Jamaicans."<sup>1</sup>

The demographic genotype of the metropolitan immigrant churches in Northeastern Conference consists of a wide cross section of Africans, Belizeans, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, Panamanians; people from El Salvador, Honduras; and immigrants from all the Islands of the Caribbean. The ideal is to view God's churches as more than the sum of its parts—that out of many, we are truly one. Adapting Jamaica's motto would be conducive to upward mobility among these churches. Reality condemns such a naïve mentality, and is also a stumbling block for any similar foolish ambitions. There is a narrow gap between the promise of the ideal and the reality of contemporary life.

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<sup>1</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 91, 92.

The prevalent nationalistic spirit among the various component nationalities has turned these churches into perennial battlegrounds for ecclesiastic power—harbingers for cliques and polarizations. It is almost impossible for the church pastor to avoid the rippling effects generated by these polarizing paradigms.

In this humanistic enterprise, that defies understanding, self is conundrum. The fabric of pride, contention, and envy, too deeply woven within us to follow separate strands,<sup>1</sup> has raised its ugly head in the very heart of the church elections process. Even though the founding fathers of Adventism intended that the *Church Manual* be used for proper church guidance, let the word go out that wherever there is a policy book, loopholes are sure to be lurking in the shadows. Snakes will never become extinct. They will always find a silly victim, and a hole in which to hide.

Martin Luther King Jr. adds this to the discussion, “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”<sup>2</sup> It is easy for the cliques in these congregations to discover loopholes in the nomination process. The strategy is to have the large committee be selected from the floor. Manipulating those who comprise the nominating committee would be easy

The new name of the game is “you elect me and I will elect you.” In this game rapidity rules—the hands raised first, or a worst scenario, the hands recognized by the chairperson. The key strategy is to get as many of the clique members on the large committee; they in turn would nominate fellow clique members to serve on the

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<sup>1</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 16.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., *The Strength of Love*, 1963, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmquotesl.html> (accessed August 14, 2006).

nominating committee. This is a neat plan, but highly manipulative. Pastors, who resort to an oppositional frame of reference, will quickly find themselves in a difficult bind.

### **Methodology**

The facility with which the youth preachers were recruited and attendance to the empowerment seminars were reciprocal to the respect or disrespect the local leaders have for pastoral leadership.

With the Youth Department of the Northeastern Conference at the vanguard, close to two hundred youth preachers from SDA metropolitan churches of New York City were recruited, equipped, and trained. Of this number, 115 were trained at Emmaus, Christian Fellowship and Community Tabernacle churches. These were the laboratories in which the training empowerment was field tested and eventually would be vindicated.

A PowerPoint user-friendly program was developed, executed, and evaluated in the above churches. The empowering seminar, that was rich with vivid imagery and connected effectively with the youth preachers, was an enhancing tool during the tenure of the training. It is true that faith comes by hearing. It also comes by seeing. The empowerment seminars at the various locations were announced with great anticipation. These were held in three different locations over a four year period—from 2003-2007.

This is a detailed description of the recruitment process as reported by the writer:

Scientifically, the research gathered data through the completion of two similar researcher generated qualitative and quantitative survey questionnaires that consisted of some twenty questions each. The completed pre- and post seminar survey questionnaires were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the training seminars, and were the sole pre-

requisite to be a part of the training course (see appendix A for a sample of both survey-questionnaires instruments).

Of the ten hours used to present the training seminars, two were allocated to an in-depth spiritual formation of the youth preachers. The focal point of emphasis in this opening seminar was that sermon preparation begins with the spiritual preparation of the youth preacher (see chapter 3). The youth preachers were admonished that God did not call them because they are sin-free. It is imperative that they stand before God with their flawed broken spirituality and allow the Holy Spirit to clean them up (Num 11:16, 17). It was pointed out to the youth preachers that hidden, un-confessed sins have kinship with cancer; it feeds on the body politic of spirituality and alienates the sinner from God.

There are two basic reasons why individuals shy away from public confession of sins: (1) the erroneous concept that Jesus is disappointed with their messy spiritualities, and (2) repentance is the last thing on their minds. The admonition from Jesus in Matt 18 is to go to the one in sin. Now, at least one person is privy to the shortcomings of the erring one. This should be enough to forsake the sin in question. The youth preacher who confides his or her shortcomings to the pastor or youth minister is not seeking church discipline or pastoral rebuke. The individual merely seeks to get the transgression into the open. The chance of quitting then is optimal (see chapter 3 for more details).

The remaining eight hours were dedicated to the Voice of Youth campaign—the preparation of the field and the sermon (see appendix B for weekend empowerment schedule).

Overwhelming evidence signals that the postmodern mind is visual. Perhaps this is why David Buttrick observed that “faith is formed in a nexus of image, symbol, metaphor, and ritual. Therefore, the language of preaching is essentially metaphorical.”<sup>1</sup>

Even though the world is becoming ever more locked and linked into a global video network yet, even in the early years of the twenty-first century, the church’s communication clusters around the audio channel to the neglect of the more interactive, multidimensional spectrum.<sup>2</sup> In order to engage visually oriented, postmodern people, young preachers are urged to upgrade their homiletic arsenals beyond words and sentences only; they should also include the use of metaphoric images as well.

Jay Akkerman observes that “throughout history, important shifts in human beliefs, lifestyles, values, and even styles of learning have been triggered by technological change.”<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that the evangelical church in quest to be a people of the Word has long [portrayed] a literary bias that elevates the written and spoken word nearly to the exclusion of all other communication modes. The ramifications of this bias are that too much “of our Protestant [preaching] is suffering from verbal overdose.”<sup>4</sup> By the same token, critics of the primacy of imagery find strong footing in that metaphor use

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<sup>1</sup>Buttrick, 125, quoted in Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Webber, *Worship Phenomenon* (Nashville, TN: Star Song, 1998), 88, quoted in Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 32.

It was presented in the training seminar that the travel route on a map, the rudder of the sea craft, the steering wheel, the rotating bar of the tail fin of an aircraft or spacecraft, have the same role as that of the sermon theme or thesis. They dictate the path of the journey of both the transport as well as that of the sermon.

Effective sermon preparation is done in four steps: (1) state the point (theme), (2) explain the point, (3) illustrate the point, and (4) apply the point. This material offers valuable suggestions as to how to arrive at the point (theme). See Seminar I in appendix B.

At this homiletic junction, under the supervision of the sermon theme, the untried protégés discovered how to break up the theme into the one-two-three, or the most, four points (*sermon outline or skeleton*). This was when the homiletic skeletal outline is covered with “muscles,” “tissues,” and “flesh” of supporting texts—ideas, arguments, illustrations, analogies, and applications, congruent with the sermon theme.

A list of thirty-seven selected sermon theses were placed in the hands of every trained youth preacher. Working with the instructor, the subjects were encouraged to use the list of sermon themes to develop sermon outlines. During the time that I have taught homiletics, I have found that this method is perhaps the most viable in sermon preparation (See appendix C for the list of sermon theses). The beginning of the voyage functions very much like the sermon *introduction*, while the end of the voyage is likened to that of the sermon *conclusion*. The various stops while traveling are compared to the *smooth transition* from one main sermon point to the other. The flight, bus, seat number, or the name of the cruise line, is compared to the *sermon title*. Traveling first, second, or third class, is compared to the three basic types of sermons: *topical, textual, and expository*.

The driver, the pilot, or the astronaut is a rather feeble and inadequate representation of the role of the Holy Ghost in the preparation of sermons that will motivate the young to join the ranks of gospel preachers (See Method of Sermon Preparation in appendix B). Here is a detailed description of the progression of the training seminar in Emmaus, Christian Fellowship SDA churches, and Community Tabernacle SDA mission.

#### Emmaus SDA Church

The recruitment and training of youth preachers was quite an exciting adventure at Emmaus. The empowerment seminar, scheduled for May 16-18, 2003, was advertised with great anticipation. Almost forty young preachers completed the registration survey, pledging their attendance. The Pathfinder director, who was very influential among the youth of the church, scheduled a Master Guide training course on the very same weekend of the empowerment seminar. Needless to say, attendance was sparing.

#### Christian Fellowship SDA Church

Emmaus was a learning experience for the writer. When he was assigned to the new pastorate at Christian Fellowship, he subscribed to a new approach, which was meaningful and rewarding. The training seminars were slated to begin on May 13, 2005.

Recognizing that young people will never be effectively recruited as youth preachers from a distance was the reason why the first three months of his new pastorate were not utilized to recruit youth preachers. The foremost goal of the new pastor was to be perceived in the eyes of the young as a "fellow traveler."

Here is a principle in youth ministry that is as old as the ministry itself:

“Touching the hearts of teenagers is touching the hearts of their parents.”<sup>1</sup> Whoever seeks a reformation in youth preaching should first seek to become a positive force in the lives of the youth preachers.

Here is an accurate report of how this can be accomplished: The writer visited the schools where the youth from the church were in attendance (non-SDA and SDA schools) to pray with and encourage them to set their sights on academic excellence. He faithfully attended Adventist Youth, Junior Adventist Youth, Pathfinder, and Eager Beaver meetings.

He also attended the youth socials. He accompanied the youth on their picnics, sat in on their Sabbath School classes, listened to their music, attempted to provide answers to their questions, attended their Friday night rap session, “Behind Closed Door,” attended their graduations, and chaperoned their dances. One Saturday night, he accompanied some thirty senior youth to watch a very significant basketball match between the New Jersey Nets and the Orlando Magic at the Continental arena in the Meadowlands. One of the greatest stumbling blocks of God’s cause are youth leaders that are so *heavenly* minded, they are no *earthly* good to postmodern youth.

The most recent activity done in pursuit of obtaining the “fellow traveler” status among the youth occurred when the pastor and his wife accompanied the Pathfinders on their annual *camporee* from July 13-18, 2005 at Camp Berkshire, Wingdale, NY. Ever since, it has been the writer’s annual custom to accompany the Pathfinders on their

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<sup>1</sup>Sherwin Callwood, “The Church’s Greatest Asset” (seminar presented during the NEC’s Youth Convention, Stanford, CT; January 2004).



the resulting data were tabulated and analyzed, after which, conclusions were galvanized and specific recommendations were offered (See chapter five).

### **The Voice of Youth Campaigns**

The dramatic conclusion of the Elijah story presents overwhelming evidence that the Holy Spirit, through the dedicated mentorship of adults, can and will revive this dying ministry of youth preaching (see chapter two). The optimistic assumption is that the ministry of youth preaching will see better days; Joel 2:28 will witness its culminant fulfillment. The Scriptures declare that Elijah prayed, “Oh Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child’s life return to him. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the life of the child returned to him and he revived” (1 Kgs 17:22 NASB). Usually the intensive fervent prayer of any adult, who sincerely intercedes for young people dead in trespasses and sins, is answered in the affirmative. A dying ministry of youth preaching will revive to the youth ministers who take young preachers into the loving bosom of their hearts; where they will fervently pray over them and mentor them. “And Elijah took the child, and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother [the church]. Elijah said, ‘See, your son is alive’” (1 Kgs 17:23 NASB). A paraphrased version congruent with the pretense of this project would follow along this continuum: “See, reviving deceased youth preachers is much easier than you thought, providing that adults are willing to invest quality time to recruit, train, and mentor them.” The saving impact of youth preaching would be a sham, a big joke, a stigmatizing fiasco, and living dangerously, if young people refuse to come down from the grandstands and get on to the playing field and preach the everlasting gospel through youth campaigns.

A small boy was learning to skate. His frequent mishaps awakened the pity of a bystander, "Sonny, you are getting all banged up." He said, "Why don't you stop for a while and just watch how the other folks are doing it." With tears rolling down his cheeks, the boy looked at the man and then at his skates and said, "Mister, I didn't get these skates to watch others skate; I got them to skate."

This high-tech intensive training is not imparted to have youth preachers sit in the pews and watch pastors, elders, and church members "skate" around and preach about the latest news in about-to-be-fulfilled prophecies that keeps the youth on their eschatological tiptoes. This ambitious empowering output is to empower the youth to preach. Failure is always welcomed, but not trying is unacceptable. "I tried" pales in comparison to, "I did it." The young preachers who cannot preach it should tell it. If they cannot tell it, they should sing it. If they cannot sing it, they should support it. If they cannot support it, they should pray for it. If they cannot pray for it, they should live it. If they cannot live it, they should be ready to die for it. Until youth preachers have found a just cause for which to die, they are not fit to live. Calvary is a stubborn reminder that the preaching of the everlasting gospel is one such just cause worth dying for. Then it would be said of the Emmaus, Christian Fellowship churches, and the Community Tabernacle SDA Mission, "See, your young preachers are alive."

As the great clock of destiny ticks out earth's final seconds in the game of life, the ball is in the hands of the young people. The burden of proof is on their shoulders. The last shot is theirs to make. Through the eyes of divine prophecy, God has already seen, based on the choices of men and women, that the youth will make that shot (Joel 2:28).

### Field Preparation for the Campaigns

The Voice of Youth campaign is likened unto an iceberg. The small portion or visible tip above the water surface has kinship with the nightly messages spoken in both Word and song. While these are indispensable for success, they pale in comparison to the huge mass of rock-ice beneath the surface of the water—the preparation of the field.

### The Prayer Group Method

The prayer group method of preparing the ground for the youth campaigns provided an excellent opportunity for a practical adult mentorship of the young. A Chinese proverb goes like this, “In order to know the people you must first reach out to your neighbor.”<sup>1</sup>

Each family, along with the youth in the home, targeted their immediate neighbors (apartment complex or street where his or her house is located) and converted the home into a prayer group. In order to secure the respect and friendship of the neighbors, they did one of the following:

1. They took over to the neighbor a homemade loaf of bread or pastry.
2. They went over to introduce themselves and their families to their neighbors.
3. They exchanged telephone numbers with the neighbors.
4. Their autos (if they owned one) were placed at the disposition of their neighbors who did not own one.

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<sup>1</sup>Chinese Proverbs, <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/China/proverb.html> (accessed April 25, 2007).

The young people visited their neighbors. The objective was to get them to write down specific prayer petitions for the troubled youth in their homes. This is the description of the follow-up after the initial visit:

1. Constant intercessory prayers for the written petitions.
2. A... weekly phone call to see how God is answering the solicited prayer petitions.
3. Mailed out selected literature to those who solicited prayers. Here are some literary suggestions:
  - a. The Terrible Effects of Alcohol and Drugs.
  - b. The Terrible Effects of Cigarettes and How to Stop Smoking.
  - c. How to Have a Happy Marriage.
  - d. Nutrition and Food Recipes.
  - e. The Education of Our Children
  - f. The Effects of Television on the Children, etc.
4. Visited them from time to time in their homes
5. Invited them to church
6. Hopefully, a prayer group will eventually be established (see appendix C for prayer group program).
7. A wide cross-section of interests to invite to the Voice of Youth campaigns was at the disposition of the young missionaries.

In the event that someone would refuse the offer, the young people were instructed to give the refusing person a million-dollar smile and say something along these lines:

“It was a privilege for me to have been received so warmly in your home today, Mr.

Randolph. I am confident that in the very near future, you will join us. May God bless you and your family, and have a nice day.” Such an abrupt action could be questioned. However, it was justified by the assumption that the Holy Spirit did not prepare this individual. If so, the reception would have been warm and accommodating. The youth were admonished to keep on going, until they met the individuals the Holy Spirit had prepared for them. By the way, unless one lives in Buckingham palace, or the White House, it is doubtful that his or her living room can accommodate the entire neighborhood

### Friendship Evangelism

*Rake and run.* On a given day young people, armed with raking equipment, namely, a leaf rake, garbage bags, etc., are taken up and down streets looking for some places that needs leaves to be raked up. A group member goes to the door and asks if the people would like their leaves raked free of charge. When permission is given, all members pile and get busy raking. When the job is finished, leave a card with the name and address of the youth group.

*Diamond shaping another diamond:* Start a Rap-Session group. Then have those attending invite other troubled young people to the sessions. The youth that come will be afforded the opportunity to declare to the group why they indulge in such a lifestyle. It is surprising how helpful this simple activity could be to young people troubled by gangs, ghettos, etc. It takes a diamond to shape another diamond.

*Newspaper watch:* A youth group can watch the local paper during the week for people who have experienced tragedies, or who have special needs, i.e., a home destroyed by fire, etc. These people will appreciate food, clothing, or lodging.

*Sowing a billion:* This method is effective on the streets. It is not necessary to get into the homes of those visited. The youth witness approaches someone on the street and could ask the question: "Sir/madam, did you hear about it? "Everybody is talking about it." The natural reaction would be, "Hear about what?" The witness could then say, "As you look around in the world today, if you had the opportunity to ask God one question, what it would be?" Wait for the answer and then proceed with the canvass to enroll the person in a Bible study.

### Meeting Places

In regards to possible places where the Voice of Youth Campaigns could be housed, there are various options: home garages, fellowship halls of Adventists; as well as non-Adventist churches, schoolrooms, small tents, and the lobbies of apartment building and complexes.

### Lift Up Jesus

Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself" (KJV). This dynamic dual combination that guarantees ultimate success draws all men to the foot of the cross; there is no mention of dragging. Critics of postmodernism should not mistakenly believe that this emerging worldview is wholly opposed to the Judeo-Christian ethic. The "postmodern ecological concerns connect with the Christian's call to stewardship of the earth.

Postmoderns emphasize the organic over the mechanical, the whole rather than the part, networks over organizations, collaboration over competition and the spiritual over

the scientific.”<sup>1</sup> The life and teachings of Jesus seem to embrace the basic concepts of postmodernism. This justifies the endearing affinity between the postmodern mind and His methods. Jesus mingled with men from all racial niches and took care of their physical needs. It was only then that He bade them to follow Him.<sup>2</sup> The method works effectively in any culture. The greatest stumbling block to the cause of Christ is Christians who are not living how Jesus lived. Therefore, the call to youth ministry is unique in that “it points neither to a map nor a guide book. It points to the Ultimate Guide.”<sup>3</sup> When Christ is lifted up in sermons, in the interaction with neighbors, and in the behavior of the body of believers, He will draw all men unto Himself.

*Lifting up Jesus draws youth.* It never ceases to amaze me the deep respect and admiration postmodern youth have for Jesus.<sup>4</sup> The most effective testimony youth preachers can give is to share with other young people what Jesus has done for them.

Youth leaders err immensely in attempting to be Jesus to the teens God entrusted to them—trying to save, and heal them. That is God’s responsibility. The role of youth leaders is to love them and be their “sycamore trees,” upon whom they climb high “above

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<sup>1</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 143.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, “Call of the Wild,” 27.

<sup>4</sup>In the year 2005, I conducted an evangelistic series on the life of Christ, in the Christian Fellowship SDA church; the response from the youth was incredible. Not only did twenty-two of them give their hearts to Jesus and were baptized. Youth attendance to the campaign broke all records.

the crowd so that they might see the approaching Savior.”<sup>1</sup> True success of youth ministers is measured and determined by the number of teenagers they allow to climb up on them as “sycamore trees;” allowing them to say, “We see Jesus; and we know that He sees us.”<sup>2</sup>

*Lifting up Jesus draws Moslems:* Both Ishmael and Isaac worshipped the same true God as young boys growing up in Abraham’s home. Reconciled by the magnanimous character of their father, side by side, in front of a cave in Machpelah (Gen 25:9) in Mamre, they buried their deceased father.<sup>3</sup> Biblical evidence affirms that Abraham worshipped Christ. Jesus was numbered among the three celestial visitors who visited Abraham to discuss the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>4</sup>

Not only did Abraham bow, but he worshipped Jesus, calling Him Lord (Gen 18 KJV). Jesus said that “he, [Abraham] saw [His] day and rejoiced” (John 8:56). Abraham “commanded his children and his household after him (Gen 18:19). This spiritual nurture that radiated from Abraham touched the lives of all residing within his household or encampment.”<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, with optimistic enthusiasm, it is safe to declare that Ishmael and Isaac worshipped Jesus also. Overwhelming biblical evidence in Genesis chapters 16-21

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<sup>1</sup>David Skidmore, “Becoming the Sycamore Tree,” *Youth Worker*, May/June, 2001, 49-51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 49-51.

<sup>3</sup>Philip Samaan, *Blood Brothers* (Collegedale, TN: College Press, 2001), 10, 11.

<sup>4</sup>White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 139-140.

<sup>5</sup>Samaan, 11.



supports the idea that, even though Ishmael was not the son of the promise, on three separate occasions he was blessed by God and was included in the promise made to Abraham (Gen 16:7-11; 18:20; 21:17-18). God blessed both of Abraham's sons—to Isaac were ascribed twelve patriarchs; twelve princes of the Muslims descended from the loins of Ishmael.<sup>1</sup> The Nation of Islam, whose founding fathers are the descendants of Ishmael;<sup>2</sup> are insulted when the Christian Community (descendants of Isaac) parade Israel as the sole beneficiary of God's blessing and heir to the Abrahamic promise. The Bible or the Koran does not support this position. This shifting duplicity, "dress . . . hate up in the garments of love [to make] it appear that [they are] loving when [they] are actually hating,"<sup>3</sup> could be the reason for the "bad blood" that flows between Jews and Arabs to this day.

If the rightful position as joint heirs of God's promise to Abraham is conceded to the descendants of Ishmael, the three greatest religious faiths founded by Abraham: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, will rise up and live out the true meaning of their creed,<sup>4</sup> "Love God supremely; and love your neighbor as yourself." The Declaration of Independence is a stubborn reminder "that every man is an heir of the legacy of dignity and worth."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Genesis," *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-1957), 1:324.

<sup>2</sup>*New Standard Encyclopedia*, 1993 ed., s.v. "Islam."

<sup>3</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 13.

<sup>4</sup>King, *A Call to Conscience*, 85.

<sup>5</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 86, 87.

President-elect Barack Obama thinking along these lines added, “In the end, then, what is called for is nothing more, and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand—that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us be our brother's keeper, Scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another.”<sup>1</sup>

*Lifting up Jesus draws Africans:* We would have to look deep inside to comprehend that Christians inherited a lot of precious things from Africa; even Christianity itself. Africa contributed much to the Christian church. She bequeathed Augustine, Athanasius, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria.<sup>2</sup>

Mbiti wrote that Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as indigenous, traditional, and the African religion; long before the start of Islam in the seventh century.<sup>3</sup> There is also biblical evidence. Concerning Jesus it is written, “And He was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matt 2:15). Egypt is not in Europe; this nation that served as a sustaining and protecting cradle for the Founder of Christianity is located in Africa.

It is easy to understand why many scholars of African history insist that it is impossible to isolate Christianity from the Africans. This is like separating the glow of a

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<sup>1</sup>Obama, *A More Perfect Union* (2008).

<sup>2</sup>Charles E. Bradford, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* (Barre, VT: L. Brown and Sons; 1999), 12.

<sup>3</sup>John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heineman, 1989), 223, quoted in Bradford, *Sabbath Roots*, 11-12.

light bulb from the filament. As long as one has existed, the other was always there. Precious little justice is done to Africa, who for centuries has been the cradle for Christianity, when she is stereotyped as “a dark continent and pagan; its people subhuman, bad, evil, ugly . . . branded as savage brutes without the slightest knowledge of the true God;”<sup>1</sup> a hopeless nation steeped in heathenism and in the voodoo drums of the spirit gods. In Africa there is occurring, at this very moment, a movement toward God that is denominated as phenomenal. Sociologists are saying that within a few years, one out of every five Christians will live in Africa.<sup>2</sup> After a time of devout faithfulness to the gospel, the North Africans and Egyptian churches became hidebound, moribund, and, like the dinosaur, doomed to extinction and oblivion.<sup>3</sup> God had not forgotten the Africans. Neither did the Africans forget God. Charles Bradford lends this to the discussion; while no one will deny that the African traditional religion was studded with many gods, when the African slaves were being chartered through the extremity of the middle passages, and treated like animals, it was the Great God to whom they appealed.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, taking advantage of my exegetic, theological, pastoral, and reasoning powers—sharpened on the grinding stone of the tough discipline of a doctoral program—I quote no literary source when I declare that the Negro slaves did not find God in those cotton-picking fields in the South. They reclaimed God there.

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<sup>1</sup>Sednak Yankson, *Africa's Roots in God* (Hempstead, NY: Sankofa Heritage Books, 2007), 2, 5.

<sup>2</sup>Bradford, *Sabbath Roots*, 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

*Lifting up Jesus draws Hindus:* Compared to the other non-Christian denominations, Hinduism is unique, in that her roots and connection with Christianity, is perhaps the deepest. One of their founding fathers, the great Shankara, wrote about salvation by grace some eight centuries before the birth of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This great truth, revealed to him by the eternal God, was also revealed to the wise men at the birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-3). In the book, *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White wrote that the light of the gospel is ever shining amid the darkness of heathenism.<sup>2</sup>

Krishna, along with Rama, is worshipped as savior deities, and is considered reincarnated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> I am persuaded that if Christ is lifted up before the Hindu community, they will also be drawn to Him.

*Lifting up Jesus draws all men:* The salvation of the entire human race—every nation, tongue, kindred, and people, is God’s primary concern. When the disciples came back from buying victuals and saw Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman, no one asked Him anything (John 4). As Creator (Col 1:16; John 1:10; Heb 1:1-3), Jesus has the right to speak to any of His creatures in any part of the universe. The existence of a Sovereign God is not determined in university chairs, in the US Congress, or in the hearts of puny creatures; this is not about the Hebrew God versus the Greek gods or, as the late Okot p’Bitek accused, “putting Greek clothing on African gods.”<sup>4</sup> Yahweh is the God of all

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Douglas, class presentation, MSSN670 Christianity and Other Religions, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Summer 2000.

<sup>2</sup>White, *The Desire of Ages*, 25.

<sup>3</sup>*New Standard Encyclopedia*, 1993 ed., s.v. “Hindu Belief and Practices.”

<sup>4</sup>Bradford, *Sabbath Roots*, 12.

flesh and is quite capable of revealing Himself to any of His creatures as He pleases. It is comforting to know that God is actively engaged in evangelizing the nations through the power of the Holy Spirit.

As Jay Akkerman asserts, “The doctrine of the incarnation underscores that creation is not beyond redemption and that the gospel always meets people where they are in the same moment it calls them to a new life in Christ.”<sup>1</sup> The gospel is always dressed in the prevailing culture of the evangelized ethnicity. All human beings are “equally suited though diversely sorted.”<sup>2</sup>

Our likeness has nothing to do with our theology. It has nothing to do with ethnicity. Our likeness goes all the way back to the first man created in God’s image. This justifies the various shades of cultural practices. However, close examination reveals that the principles are basically the same—love God supremely, and love your neighbor as yourself.

The manner in which Orientals and Westerners pay respect to their deceased loved ones reinforces the idea that all ethnicities share a common racial continuum—they are governed by a common Creator. The Chinese would do so with a bowl of rice; a Caucasian would place a bouquet of roses on the tomb. When will the Chinese deceased loved one get up and eat the rice in the bowl? The same time the Caucasian deceased loved one gets up and smells the fragrance of the roses.

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<sup>1</sup>Akkerman, “The Graphic Gospel,” 38.

<sup>2</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 80.

### Summary

The immigrant Adventist churches are very distinct from those of North America. These idiosyncratic differences exert negative as well as positive impact on the immigrant youth preachers. Immigrants come to America with pre-modern and modern dispositions—God is still the center, and His law is regarded as the moral absolute of the universe. Such a mentality is viable and conducive to surviving the oppressive social conditions imposed by diplomatic slavery. This could be the reason why the fierce winds of postmodernism is not as devastating to the young people of the immigrant churches of the Northeastern Conference as is the case of other youth from other ethnic background. The flames of youth evangelism are flickering, but they still burn. However, denominational experts are shouting that within a few years the creeping shadows of postmodernism would have fully engulfed the vibrant metropolitan immigrant churches in the Northeastern conference. Perhaps with time, they will.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS OF DATA, EVALUATION OF YOUTH EVANGELISTIC CAMPAIGNS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **The Collection of Data**

Emmaus and Christian Fellowship SDA churches, and Community Tabernacle SDA Mission, located in metropolitan New York, are the laboratories in which the empowerment training module to revive youth preaching was tested, implemented, evaluated, and vindicated. Over 115 youth preachers were exposed to the training seminars and filled out the surveys.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Evaluation of the Youth Campaigns and Seminars**

The flames of youth preaching still burns in Emmaus, Christian Fellowship, and Community Tabernacle churches in metropolitan New York. The reason is vital and compelling—this ethnicity still adheres to a pre-modern and modern mindset.<sup>2</sup> Voice of

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<sup>1</sup>In addition, the youth department of the Northeastern Conference allowed the author to extend the empowerment training to almost eighty youth preachers at Camp Victory Lake for the annual Young Preachers' Institute (YPI) of the conference held February 18-23, 2006. The Survey questionnaires were completed before and after the empowerment seminars were unfolded and the responses were analyzed and tabulated. These churches share a common demographic background (dominant West Indian memberships). Therefore, the overall data harnessed from the project remains credible and was not affected in the least.

<sup>2</sup>Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, 27.

Youth campaigns, in incubation for decades, are gathering roots and gaining steady momentum among these immigrant churches. A cohort of youth preachers (average age seventeen years) launched a tent Voice of Youth campaign in Brooklyn, New York in the summer of 2005. They pitched their tent on one of the few open lots in Brooklyn, owned by Christian Fellowship. They preached for five weeks, and some thirty individuals accepted Jesus and were baptized. This was youth public evangelism at its best, and quickly served a notice that the future prospects of Voice of Youth campaigns among immigrant churches of metropolitan New York is alive and optimistic. A similar feat was slated for the summer of 2008; on the same crusade site.<sup>1</sup>

#### Voice of Youth Easter Revivals

An intentional effort was made to have Adventist youth preachers conduct one week revivals in non-SDA congregations during the Easter of 2006. This activity was crucial to the expectations and assumptions of this research project. Evangelical and Catholic churches in the area were targeted. Failure to develop such a mind-set perhaps posed the greatest obstacle and setback to the preaching of the message of the three angels. Not only is such an activity highly motivational and bold, it also opens the door wide for the tactful preaching of the message of the three angels under the disguise of the

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<sup>1</sup>Reports from the immigrant SDA churches of metropolitan New York are indicating that numerous Voice of Youth evangelistic efforts were carried out in 2006-2008. Flatbush, Emmaus, Community Tabernacle, Christian Fellowship, and most recently, Brooklyn Faith, are a few primary examples. The positive results reaped from these efforts signals that these churches have not seen the last of such youth evangelistic campaigns.



“Unknown God.”<sup>1</sup> This mindset facilitates approaching our Christian brethren from other denominations. It is difficult to evangelize effectively from a distance. Such a program demanded that the young preachers adapt an inclusive mind-set like their Master; Jesus Christ. They were thoroughly rehearsed and groomed that their sole purpose was to lift up Jesus in their sermons. The writer prepared a series of resource sermons on the life of Christ (see appendix B for three samples).

An overwhelming host of pastors and religious leaders from the non-Adventist community were in accord in allowing the youth preachers to conduct one-week Voice of Youth campaigns in their respective churches. They seemed to have been swayed by the writer’s argument that all religious barriers are blurred, along the great continuum of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity. The boundless sweep of God’s revelation cannot be limited to any particular religious body.<sup>2</sup> God’s original intention is that all mankind should speak the universal language of love; no nation or religion should feel or act superior to the other (Acts 10:34, 35). The ultimate reality is that God has already made the provision for the salvation of all mankind.

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<sup>1</sup>The term “Unknown God,” used by Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17), is a solemn, universal reminder that religion is “a cultural resource;” designed to lead to the discovery of the ultimate reality—salvation in Jesus Christ (Reader, 22). God has made from “one blood” every nation on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26). Therefore, no particular religion is superior to any of the others. Individuals who love God supremely, and love their neighbors as themselves, are believers. The “Unknown God” strategy, used by Paul, demands that we consider other denominational constituencies as insiders and not outsiders; who are worshipping God ignorantly. The message of the Three Angels (Rev 14) underscores truth restoration and not evangelization or proselytizing. Its focus is to encourage believers to hold on tightly to a free salvation offered by God. We hold on to salvation through obedience to God. The “Unknown God” strategy is an opening wedge to preach this message to any religious group under the sun.

<sup>2</sup>King, *A Knock at Midnight*, 30.

### Resistance from the Pew to the Pulpit

Whenever God's young preachers dedicate and consecrate their lives to the preaching of the Gospel, people will surrender at the foot of the cross and be baptized. Denomination is not as important as profession. The recruiting and training of the young preachers was well received and strongly supported by the pastors and leadership of the SDA congregations. However, the Easter one-week revivals in non-SDA congregations were aborted. An exclusivist mentality, prevalent among local leaders, allowed the bubbles of denominational prejudice to burst in their faces. This fueled a strong opposition to the project. Dispatching SDA youth preachers to non-SDA congregations was seen as "taking it too far." This important aspect of the dissertation was only partially implemented and tested. The researcher is confident that it will be done in the very near future. At such time, it should be affirmed, both by theory and practice, that the preaching of the Three Angels' Messages of Rev 14 is ineffective from a distance.

### The Ian Roberts Story

Towards the end of the year 2005, sixteen-year old Ian Roberts gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized. He attended the ten-hour youth preacher's empowerment seminar presented at Christian Fellowship. A few months later, Ian delivered a powerful sermon during the annual youth week of prayer. At that time, Ian was laying concrete plans to attend Oakwood College to begin his ministerial preparation.

### The Gendrick Grant Story

Gendrick was a gifted youth preacher. He was asked to preach for Pathfinder's day at Christian Fellowship, his home church, when he was eleven years old. I was not

the current pastor, but saw the footage of a video presentation of the sermon. It was fantastic; the human clay was ready for the hand of the Divine Potter. Gendrick was numbered among the youth preachers exposed to the training seminar presented in Christian Fellowship in 2005. He was invited to preach in several churches, including a Presbyterian church in Brooklyn, New York. He was numbered among the few youth preachers who were able to preach in a non-Adventist setting. He is a long standing member of the Youth Preachers Institute of Northeastern Conference and still receives preaching invitations from time to time.

#### Shari Loveday Story

I became acquainted with Shari and her husband when I served as a substitute teacher for her Sabbath School class. They were expecting their first child. Her deep spirituality and sound knowledge of the Scriptures was very impressive and hardly went unnoticed. I challenged her that she would preach a sermon one day in Christian Fellowship—her home church. She took me up on an invitation to register to be trained as a youth preacher. In 2006, Shari was invited as the guest speaker for Women's Ministry Day in Christian Fellowship. I could not hold back the tears of joy as she lifted up Jesus Christ, higher than I have ever seen Him lifted up before. The Spirit of God is beginning to move her to take up ministerial training at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

#### The Kirk Jackson Story

Kirk directs the children's choir and is a sweet singer in Christian Fellowship. He is one of the gifted young adults who have been the humble recipient of five talents from his Master and is making wise investments of these to advance the cause of God. He

faithfully attended the youth preachers' training sessions. Kirk was the unanimous choice of the Adventist Youth executive committee to be the speaker for the second youth day in Christian Fellowship on November 18, 2006. He preached on the subject, *Ignite the Fire*. God's manservant exploded in the pulpit and spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance. He is now numbered among the sons of the preachers.

#### The Simona Mills Story

Simona is the backbone of the praise team and the leading soloist of the youth choir of Christian Fellowship. She was trained as a youth preacher in the seminar held in Christian Fellowship. She was extended the invitation to conduct a singing revival week of prayer in Canada. She ministered to the brethren in both the Word and in song. She is currently enrolled in the D.Min. program in the Seminary at Andrews University, where she is aspiring to become a singing evangelist.

#### The Janella Peters Story

For Pathfinders Day 2005, the pulpit was conceded to Jenella Peters; a Guide captain in the Pathfinder Club at Christian Fellowship. It was one of the best sermons I have heard. Her experience was noticeable and distinct in that, besides being a faithful attendant to the empowerment training seminar, she was mentored and coached by her Pathfinder director, Dr. Winston Lawrence—an elder of the church in question. What shall be said of young Kadeisha Cadette, whose Pathfinder Day sermon, *The Golden Ephod*, still reverberate in the walls and in hearts of the members of Christian Fellowship? This affirms one of the principal premises of this dissertation: The possibility is overwhelming that the immigrant youth of the metropolitan churches of Northeastern Conference could be motivated to become youth preachers, providing that

adults are prepared to dedicate quality time to train and to mentor them in the techniques of sermon preparation. If the youth are given a little piece of the pie, they might just hang around for dinner. Hopefully, they will come into the kitchen and help make the pie.

### The Charles Lewis Story

Of the twenty-five youth preachers who registered to be a part of the Youth Preacher's Empowerment Seminar at Community Tabernacle SDA Mission, the inclusion of Charles Lewis was the most noticeable of importance. The reason being that at the time of the presentation of the seminar, Charles was not a baptized member. He insisted in taking the course. The brethren went out of the way to remind me that Charles was not a member, insisting that he should not receive the training. Of course he was allowed in. A paramount principle in youth ministry is that church principles pale in comparison to the salvation of the souls of young people. Charles faithfully attended the five sessions and his keen attention, energetic participation, and probing questions were endearing. I recall reminding Charles that he was not too far from the kingdom and predicted that he would soon become a baptized member. On May 7, 2007, Charles gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized. The story is true. I was the officiating minister. The "Charles Lewis" story is impressive, because it serves as a reminder that recruiting and mentoring youth preachers is not only the last best hope for the future of this dying ministry, it is a present-day evangelistic juggernaut.

### Youth Preachers Institute (YPI)

Through the untiring efforts of Dr. Newton Cleghorne, former youth director of Northeastern Conference, a Youth Preachers Institute (YPI) was established in 1996. The

Youth Ministries department of NEC reports that dozens of youth have embraced the gospel ministry as a career from this establishment. This is overwhelming evidence that training the young in the techniques of sermon preparation, should motivate and inspire them to become gospel preachers themselves.

### **Analysis of Data (Table 2)**

#### **Question #1:**

*On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest), what would be your interest in being recruited as a young preacher?* According to responses to question one, a much higher ratio (60 percent) of the young respondents was females, in contrast to that of the males (40 percent). This is an affirmation that as a group, young females are pressing more attention to gospel preaching. It is notable that of the total number of female respondents, 30 percent indicated a very high interest to be recruited as youth preachers; as opposed to the ratio indicated by the males (70 percent). Obviously, most immigrant churches of Northeastern Conference do not subscribe to female preachers, elders, pastors, etc. This stands to reason, as the core of this discriminative concept has been passed on incrementally from generation to generation, and subconsciously embraced by the young.

#### **Question #3:**

*In your opinion, which is more important: sermon preparation, or sermon delivery?* Before the empowerment training seminar, a solid ratio of youth preachers (43 percent) indicated by their responses to question three that sermon preparation was more important than sermon delivery. After the training seminar, the response to the same question was upped considerably (70 percent). A number of explanations may account

for this finding. The focus of this research is the techniques of sermon preparation. Limited emphasis is given to sermon delivery. Just as the wise football coach teaches all the fundamentals of the game to his team, all the fundamentals of youth ministry were presented to the targeted group of youth preachers. The empowerment seminar conducted by the writer worked well for the bulk of the trained youth preachers. Perhaps this was the determinant factor that enhanced the favorable reversal in outcome after imparting the seminar. The responses to question three is an affirmative response to research question and assumption six in chapter one—a conscientious training in the area of practical techniques of preparing sermons seems to motivate teenage protégés to become gospel preachers.

**Question #4:**

*Who would motivate me more to be recruited as a young preacher: An eloquent speaker, a theologian, a preacher who is a positive force in my life, my AY director, a homiletics professor, or my church?*

In relation to the general response to question four, the church pastor, a youth preacher, and a significant person in the life of the youth, received the highest response yield in both surveys. The crunch of the numbers asserts a firm affirmation of assumption three in chapter one: the youth leader, who first becomes a positive and significant force in the lives of young people, will most likely have success in recruiting them as youth preachers.

**Question #5:**

*Have you ever preached a sermon in a local church, or in a Youth effort?* The responses for question number five are very interesting, when compared to question two.

Before the empowerment seminars, male youth preachers penned a higher interest in being recruited (60 percent in contrast to 40 from their female counterparts). However, it is noticeable that the data gleaned after the empowerment seminar had female preachers expressing a higher interest in being recruited as youth preachers (62 percent as opposed to 38 percent).

One probable factor could have prompted this reversal response. Standing on the theological foundation in chapter two, this research subscribes to the idea of female preachers. It is a note of interest that both genders came out with identical figures (50 percent) on the question of who was exposed to preaching a sermon before. It appears that while immigrant female preachers are restrained by an oppositional prevailing culture that outlaws them from the preaching profession; they are doing as much preaching in the local churches as their male counterparts. If this trend persists, detention of female youth preachers will be virtually impossible. "An invasion of armies can be detained," said Victor Hugo, "but not an idea; whose time has come."<sup>1</sup>

**Question #6:**

*What do you believe is the reason (s) why it is very difficult for a young person to be recruited as a young preacher?* The responses for question six are very encouraging for the postulation of this research. Preliminary findings indicate that fear and lack of training and preparation may be the principal reasons for reluctance of our youth to be recruited as youth preachers. The post-seminar survey results reveal a considerable drop in the ratios (from 51 and 73 percent to 30 and 50 percent, respectively). The price of

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<sup>1</sup>Victor Hugo, quoted in Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker's Quote Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 207.



mastery in any field is preparation. This is why the pretense of this empowerment material is to equip youth preachers with a thorough preparation. Preparation removes all fears. Assumption six of chapter one was vindicated—a conscientious training in the area of practical techniques of sermon preparation seems to motivate teenage protégés to become gospel preachers.

**Question #7 and 8:**

*Are female preachers more active than their male counterparts?* Pre and post empowerment responses indicated no variance in the distinction of the gender most exposed or unexposed to preaching a sermon on previous occasions (male-female ratio froze at 60 and 40 percent and 40 to 60 percent respectively). This response is not only consistent with reality, but is a stepping stone for the ambassadors of female preachers. The time interval between the completions of both surveys is limited and fleeting. Feasibility of securing a preaching engagement in the lapse of a few weeks is highly unlikely. See responses for questions seven and eight.

**Question #9:**

*Is the sermon theme the same as the subject; or is it what the preacher will say about the subject?* The response to question nine of the preliminary questionnaire—the protégés had some knowledge that the sermon theme or thesis is what is said about the subject—indicated a low response (30 percent), as opposed to the eighty-five percent (85) consistency in the post-seminar survey. There are several possible explanations for this noticeable shift in the survey paradigm, foremost of which is the effectiveness of the training seminars. Second, it is beyond the orbits of discussion that youth ministers who invest quality time to recruit and mentor young people in the practical techniques of

theme-oriented sermon preparation will be empowered to motivate them to become gospel preachers. Sound homiletics is summarized in four great steps: state the point, explain the point, illustrate the point, and apply the point. The focal emphasis of the training seminar is to help the youth preachers *arrive at the point* they will state, explain, illustrate, and apply. The “point” in reference is the sermon theme or thesis. These responses provided strong support for the research question and assumption six in chapter one. A tabulated summary of the results follows:

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF PRE-SEMINAR AND POST-SEMINAR RESPONSES  
500 RETURNED SURVEYS  
20% SAMPLE

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	SURVEY I (%)	SURVEY II (%)	ASSUPTIONS
1. Interest to become a youth preacher	1. Low Interest	40	15	-
	2. High Interest	60	75	
2. High interest among genders to become youth preachers	1. Females	40	62	-
	2. Males	60	38	
3. Which is more important?	1. Sermon preparation	43	70*	Assumption six was affirmed
	2. Sermon delivery	57	30	
	1. Eloquent speaker	13	8	
	2. Theologian	6	5	
4. Who would motivate me more to become a youth preacher?	3. Preacher who counsels me.	98	90	Assumption one was upheld
	4. AY Director	13	10	
	5. Homiletics professor	5	3	
	6. My church pastor	95	95	
	7. Another young preacher	65	80	
	8. My parents	17	15	

Table 2—Continued.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	SURVEY I (%)	SURVEY II (%)	ASSUMPTIONS
5. Have you ever preached a sermon before?	1. Yes	50	50	-
	2. No	50	50	
6. Why is it so hard to become a youth preacher?	1. Fear	51	10	-
	2. Not prepared	73	5	
	3. Ashame	15	85	
	4. Don't want to do it	8	0	
7. Gender of youth who preached	1. Male	60	60	-
	2. Female	40	40	
8. Gender of youth who never preached.	1. Male	40	40	-
	2. Female	60	60	
9. What is the sermon theme?	1. Subject	40	10	Assumption six was upheld
	2. What the preacher will talk about	30	5	
	3. What the preacher will say about the subject	30	85	
	4. I don't know	13	0	

**Analysis of Data (Table 3)****Question #1:**

*Does preparing my sermon from scratch decrease fear and increase confidence; decrease my desire to be recruited as a youth preacher; frightens me; or increase my desire to be recruited as a youth preacher?* Responses to question one, which inquired if the acquisition of skills of preparing sermons from scratch decrease fear, increase confidence, or increase the desire to be recruited as youth preachers, supported the sixth research question and assumption in chapter one. This holds true for both male and female youth preachers.

**Question #2:**

*The preacher who lives what he preaches is more likely to motivate me to be recruited as a young preacher.* The preacher's spiritual life is not only the greatest illustration of the message preached, but also living testimony to the truth and power of that message and the very foundation of its effectiveness. Responses to question two of the post-seminar survey (84 percent) indicate a quintessential and overwhelming support for research question and assumption seven of chapter one. In general, it seems more feasible and more likely for a spiritual mentor to recruit a youth preacher than one who is not.

**Question #3:**

*Desire to become a youth preacher is greater when theme is mentioned throughout the discourse of the sermons preached in church.* A very interesting noted pattern here is that before the training seminar was conducted, a solid number of the respondents (44 percent) expressed indifference as to whether the theme was mentioned in the introduction, during the sermon, or at in the conclusion. Following the

empowerment seminar, 100 percent indicated that the theme should be repeated during the sermon. These responses provided credible and reliable support to the research question and assumption six of chapter one.

**Question #4:**

*Christ centered-sermons turn me on, turn me off, and increase my desire to be recruited as a youth preacher, or decrease my desire to become a youth preacher.* An overwhelming number of the respondents (95 percent turned on by preachers who do this; and 84 percent encouraged to become gospel preachers when Christ is lifted up in sermons). Christ-centered sermons are the greatest argument in reaching the world with the Message of the Three Angels of Revelation 14. Assumption five was upheld.

**Question #5:**

*Does an attractive sermon title increase my curiosity to hear the sermon, turns me off, or makes no difference to me?* All indications are that an attractive sermon title enhances curiosity to hear the sermon. The post-seminar survey indicated that 95 percent affirmed that an attractive sermon title awakens curiosity to hear the sermon. Pastors and youth evangelists should painstakingly and intentionally prepare attractive sermon titles for the church bulletins and evangelistic campaign handbills. This simple exercise exerts a boosting effect on attendances to church and to evangelistic seminars and campaigns. See responses for question four.

**Question #6:**

*Should a SDA youth preacher, preach in a Baptist church?* After the training seminar, an appreciable number of young respondents (25 percent) indicated readiness in accepting an invitation to preach in a non-Adventist congregation. If the 65 percent of

those who indicated that they would most likely accept the same invitation would be added, there would be an elevated combined ratio (90 percent) who expressed willingness to preach in a Baptist church (see question six). A number of factors could have provoked this response. As opposed to adult members, the postmodern youth mindset seems to be opened to and more tolerant of other religions. A key research question and assumption is that youth preaching will never occur from a distance (see research question and assumption two in chapter one). The responses seem to indicate that effectiveness in preaching the Three Angels' Messages should be optimum, providing the youth preacher subscribes to an inclusive mentality. Classical biblical examples used are: The Samaritan Woman (John 4) and Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17). It was reported earlier that conducting the Voice of Youth campaigns in non-Adventist churches was elusive. The response above is indicative that the resistance came from local church pastors and leaders; this is not the doing of the youth. It is the conviction of the writer that unless denominational prejudice is first removed from the hearts of Christ's witnesses, preaching the gospel to non-SDA constituencies will fall on hard times.

**Question #7:**

*In your opinion, the length of the sermon should be one hour, 10-15 minutes, or thirty minutes?* In the preliminary survey, a combined total ratio (30 percent) of the respondents indicated that the length of the sermon should be one hour and dictated by the Spirit, in contrast to a slightly higher ratio (40 percent) in the second survey. While it is probably premature to lean on this data as a finding, it highlights our prediction and assumption that a good number of the youth are not turned off by the length of the sermon. What turn them off are long, boring drawn-out sermons that only the preachers

seem to enjoy. Looking at the data from question six, an overwhelming majority of the respondents in both surveys (73 and 60 percent respectively) gravitate toward the sermon duration of 30-35 minutes.

**Question #8:**

*I am more encouraged to become a youth preacher when adults do the following:*

*(1) talk about the youth preachers of the old days, (2) talk about today's youth preachers, (3) try to understand postmodern youth, or (4) encourage youth to fight their modern "Goliaths" in their own armor.*

The positive responses for question eight affirms that young people are best motivated to become youth preachers when adults connect with them in their days, empathize with their culture, and encourage them to fight their "Goliaths" of the twenty-first century in their own armor. The response clarions clear evidence—irrevocable and undeniable—that postmodern youth are not impressed when adults gloat over the good old days when they were young. Here is a legitimate observation, if adult members operated at optimum consecration in the good old days, remnants of such dedication should still be actively visible today. Adherents to the old school should be foremost in leading the faithful return of tithes and offering, in witnessing, in health and temperance reform, and in the faithful use of entrusted talents. I have seen both foundations and lived during the era of the so-called "good old days." There is no great discrepancy between adult behavior in the old days and their behavior today. Adult orchestrated gossip during the old days pales in comparison to their present day delinquency. They disrespected church pastors during the "good old days;" these days they fist fight them in church basements. Spiritually, they were lukewarm in the "good old days;" they are cold these days. The cold hard facts of life are that adult



lifestyles today are accurate reflections of yesterday's behaviors. The so-called "good old days" were not so good after all. The times are different. The feet of the postmodern youth are still on the ground. The difference is that they wear better shoes. Research question and assumption three of chapter one was answered in the affirmative and upheld.

**Question #9:**

*Which of the following would you say was the reason for your low or high interest to be recruited as a youth preacher: (a) The training was effective, (b) the training was ineffective, (c) fear, and (d) constantly referring to me as a youth preacher?* Prior to the training seminar, a very high incidence (90 percent) responded to question nine, expressing that they shy from youth preaching because of fear. In contrast, after the empowerment seminar, it dropped considerably to 20 percent. The respondents indicated unanimously that the training was effective (100 percent). Constant reference to the youth during the interaction of the training seminars as youth preachers seems to pay positive dividends. The assumption is that the young persons will eventually become what they are repeatedly told they are (see assumption one, chapter one).

**Question #10:**

*Who do you believe is more inclined to believe in God: a Caucasian American youth preacher, an African-American youth preacher, or a West Indian immigrant youth preacher?* Responses to question ten unveils a high ratio of the respondents (80 percent) who indicated their conviction that West Indian immigrant youth preachers are more likely to believe in God; in contrast to those of Caucasian and African American persuasion. This dissertation rides on the premise that postmodernism seems to take a

heavier toll among young people who live in a society that has forgotten God (see research question and assumption four, chapter one). By the same token, it was generally peddled the idea that African-American and Caucasian youth preachers are equally unlikely to believe in God. This is understandably for the Caucasian youth preachers, but totally unacceptable for those of African-American persuasion, who could not have survived the inhumane brutalities of the middle passages (as well as the manacles of slavery), without God's timely interventions. Findings from this question indicated that 10 percent, 80 percent, and 10 percent of Caucasian-American, Immigrant, and African American youth preachers, respectively, were of a spiritual inclination. However, it should be noted that these results are not reliable, as they expressed the subjective beliefs of those surveyed and were not the actual responses of the Caucasian and African American ethnicities.

**Question #11:**

*Did you grow spiritually as a youth preacher after you were exposed to the training seminar?* Much emphasis was given to the spirituality of the youth preacher, during the empowerment seminars. This accounts for the high ratio (95 percent) of the respondents to question eleven who believe that they had grown spiritually after the presentations. Research question and assumption seven of chapter one is vindicated by these results.

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONS  
500 RETURNED SURVEYS  
20% SAMPLE

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	SURVEY I (%)	SURVEY II (%)	ASSUMPTIONS
1. Preparing my sermon from scratch	1. Decrease fear and increase confidence	49	55	Assumption six was upheld: Acquiring skills in sermon preparation enhances the desire to be recruited as YP
	2. Decrease desire to be youth preacher	29	0	
	3. Frightens me.	11	0*	
	4. Increase desire to be a YP	90	98	
2. Preachers who live what they preach are more likely to motivate me to become a YP	1. Yes	84	-	Assumption seven was affirmed: A spiritual person should exert a positive impact in the recruitment of YP
	2. No	8	-	
	3. Not sure	13	-	
3. Desire to become a YP is greater when theme is mentioned ...	1. Introduction	24	40	Assumption six was upheld. The Theme should resonate throughout the sermon
	2. During sermon	20	40	
	3. At conclusion	12	20	
	4. Does not matter	44	0	
4. Lifting up Jesus in sermons do the following for me:	1. Turns me on	-	90	Assumption five was upheld: Christ-centered sermons are the greatest argument in reaching the world with the Loud Cry Message
	2. Turns me off	-	0	
	3. Increase desire to be YP	-	85	
	4. Decrease the desire to be a YP	-	0	

Table 3—Continued.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	SURVEY I (%)	SURVEY II (%)	ASSUMPTIONS
5. An attractive sermon title does the following for me:	1. Increase curiosity 2. Turns me off 3. Makes no difference	87 1 12	95 2 0	Assumption six was upheld. Pastors should capitalize on church bulletins and handbills
6. Should a SDA youth preacher, preach in a Baptist church?	1. Readily accept 2. Most likely accept 3. Think about it 4. Refuse	- - - -	25 65 5 5	Assumption two was upheld
7. Sermon length	1. One hour 2. 10-15 mins 3. 30-35 mins 4. Holy Ghost leads	20 1 73 6	30 0 60 10	In both surveys, the 30-35 minute sermon was highly favored
8. More encouraged to become a YP when adults do the following:	1. Talk about the YP of the old days 2. Talk about these days 3. Understand today's youth 4. Encourage youth to fight in their armor	- - - -	5 40 35 30	These results upheld assumption three

Table 3—Continued.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES	SURVEY I (%)	SURVEY II (%)	ASSUMPTIONS
9. Reason for low or high interest	1. Effective training	-	100	From the responses to the questionnaire, assumption one was upheld.
	2. Calling the trainees youth preachers	-	90	
	3. Youth preachers did not assimilate material	-	-	
	4. Afraid	90	20	
10. Who is more inclined to believe in God?	1. A Caucasian YP	-	10	Assumptions four and five were upheld
	2. An African American YP	-	10	
	3. An Immigrant YP	-	80	
11. Spiritual growth after the seminar	1. Yes	-	95	Assumption seven was affirmed; the training seminar enhanced spirituality of YP
	2. No	-	5	

### Summary

As postmodern youth preachers face the hour of greatest peril, the God of Elijah has placed on their hearts the imminent message of the preaching of the Three Angels of Revelation 14. In spite of heavy opposition from the enemies of God's cause, "in the closing work of God in the earth the standard of His law will again be exalted. False religion may prevail . . . and darkness like the pall of death may spread over the world, and the whole force of the popular current may be turned against the truth. . . . But in the hour of greatest peril, the God of Elijah will raise up human instrumentalities to bear a

message that will not be silenced.”<sup>1</sup> As the great clock of destiny ticks out earth’s final seconds, the words of the late J. F. Kennedy—spoken on that cold morning of his inauguration as the thirty-fifth president of the United States of America—is a potential challenge and inspiration to young immigrant preachers in the Northeastern Conference: “During the course of history, few people have been summoned to defend freedom in the hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility. I welcome it.”<sup>2</sup>

When Sir Ernest Shackleton set out to find a crew for what turned out to be his ill-fated voyage to Antarctica in 1915, he placed an ad in the *Times* of London which read: “Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful (he never returned). Honor and recognition in the case of success. Amazingly, over five thousand men applied.”<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the hardships involved in youth ministry, many youth leaders are responding to the “call of the wild.” From the very inception of the SDA church, young people have always played a key role to champion God’s cause. The Advent movement began with young people. Now the trumpet summons them once again—not as a call to bear arms or as a call to physical battle. The call is not to defend the constitution of any of the governments of the world, but a call to help bear the burden of a long cosmic controversy between good and evil—between Christ and Satan. This is a solemn call to defend the constitution upon which all governmental constitutions are shouldered—the

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1963), 65.

<sup>2</sup>Kennedy, “Inaugural Speech,” 2.

<sup>3</sup>Robbins, “The Call of the Wild,” 26.

Constitution of the King of kings and Lord of lords—God’s moral absolute—God’s Law. Youth preachers must not shrink from this awesome responsibility. Postmodern youth preachers stand on sacred soil. They are God’s last best hope and response to a world that is on the brink of total anarchy. Guarding this sacred divine trust is non-negotiable. They are called to the kingdom for such a time as this—to defend God’s Holy Law. There will be no other time in earth’s history when God needs youth preachers as He needs them this very moment to say, “You can count on us now, Lord.”

The postmodern “ship” of lawlessness is sailing steadily into the “harbor” of the ecumenical movement. “That we all may be one” (*Ut Unam Simus*) is the unrelenting determination of some Protestants and all Catholics. The Adventist denomination has always stood on the premise that, while it is imperative to employ the tenets of postmodernism as a stepping stone to light up the world with the preaching of the Three Angels Message, the “harbor” denominated as the ecumenical movement is no place for her to dock. It is vital and compelling that such an action be equated to nothing less than betrayal of God and this divine trust. Here is a parting word that is delivered with a fist of steel in a velvet glove. Postmodern youth leaders who will make a difference must be prepared to pay any price, bear any burden, endure any hardship, support any friend, confront every enemy, leave no stones unturned, count no project too expensive, and use every positive virtue of postmodernism to recruit, equip and train the youth to preach the gospel with power. Trampling on God’s law to achieve this is not an option for those called to defend the constitution of the King of kings and Lord of lords. There may be those who will choose to walk that road. While I am just a foot soldier in God’s great army—I am not authorized by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to

make a public statement as to what is the Church's position on this issue—I am persuaded that I will not walk that path. However, I believe that this dissertation highlights the position that should be adopted if optimum success in reaching our youth will be achieved. I hope that it is fully understood why I must obey God rather than man. Here is a great source of comfort; the Great God of heaven has not brought His youth preachers this far by faith only to abandon them to the unforgiving and unpredictable arms of destiny; the militant church will become the triumphant church.

### **Conclusions**

It should be clear that our pilot data is a dismal permission to merely scratch the surface of the various factors integrated in the recruitment, training, and mentoring of youth preachers. Notwithstanding, eight general conclusions emerges from the discussion:

1. The three-fold confluence of secularism, pluralism, and privatism, has given birth to postmodernism, which is perhaps the most challenging, yet opportune, period for adolescents in this earth's history. Youth ministers cannot afford the luxury of being lulled to sleep on the satiny pillows of indifference, while our young sons and daughters are dying in the streets, dorms, and in the hallways of educational institutions.

2. The findings indicate that youth ministers, who interact closely with postmodern youth—setting aside quality time to train them in the practical techniques of preparing sermons—are positioned to motivate them to become gospel preachers. If a fire is started, it is expected to burn. If the goods are placed in the hands of the protégés, more than likely, they will find a way to deliver it. If they are given a piece of the pie, they might hang around for dinner.



3. The preponderance of the evidence, from the research findings, signals that postmodernism take a heavier toll among young people nurtured in a society that has forgotten God. Recruiting and mentoring of youth preachers has less favorable outcomes under such conditions.

4. A church that is not intellectually respectable, emotionally satisfying, and not serving as a liaison to postmodern thinking, will eventually become an irrelevant social club without spiritual or moral authority.

5. Stripped of its human fanaticisms, postmodernism should not be viewed with suspicion, but as an open door of opportunity through which our faithful youth preachers will walk into history, preaching the Christ-centered message of Rev 18, that will light up this world with God's glory.

6. Youth ministers who embrace a postmodern youth culture by investing quality time to closely interact with the youth—making the church a safe place where they feel safe to tell their story—is the greatest argument in favor of recruiting youth preachers.

7. Embracing an inclusive mentality is the first step in the direction of reaching non-members with the message of the three angels of Rev 14.

8. It is inevitable; adept spirituality of the facilitator of the empowering training will have a lasting positive impact on the spirituality of the homiletic protégés.

### **Recommendations**

Having seen this empowerment program implemented in SDA as well as non-SDA congregations; after having provided an analysis of the results of the field-testing, as well as a summary and conclusion, the stage is set for some solid recommendations. A paraphrased version of the words of Senator Barack Obama is now employed for this

desired purpose: “I would never have embarked [on choosing this particular course of study] if I was not under the firm conviction that [the recommendations embodied within these pages will make a difference in youth preaching].” “This approach is far from being perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the [youth leaders of the twenty-first century]—men and women whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change will earn them their rightful positions in the annals of history. Their struggles, trials, and triumphs would not only be unique, but universal—chronicling fond memories of the [story and glory of youth preaching]—memories that generations yet unborn might study and cherish, and with which we could start rebuilding [this ministry] in our generation. [Youth leaders] are summoned to always believe that collectively, they can write [the destiny of youth preaching]. They can adapt an adversarial stance that breeds division, and conflict, and cynicism. They can tackle the monumental issues of [youth ministry] as a spectacle. The miseries of [young people can be] paraded on every channel, every day and night and denigrate them from the cradle to the grave. [Their critics] can pounce on their manifold gaffes as evidence of speculation that [better days are written in the past tense]. That is one option. [Notwithstanding, here are some recommendations: Youth leaders all over the globe can say in unison], “Not this time.”<sup>1</sup>

*The recommendations this time are* that youth ministers and adult members will be first and foremost in setting the example in spirituality before the youth, by both deeds

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<sup>1</sup>Obama, *A More Perfect Union* (2008).

and words. They are summoned to engage in an open discussion about the three-fold confluence of secularism, pluralism, and privatism that has created the perfect storm for postmodern adolescents. Effective mentorship of youth preachers never occurs from a distance. Therefore, youth ministers are challenged to intentionally get close to the youth by becoming thoroughly acquainted with their prevailing culture. Then take them into the loving bosom of their arms: praying over them, recruiting them, training them, and equipping them as youth preachers.

Adult church members insist that postmodern youth emulate how they operated when they were young. Therefore, the sudden death of youth preaching should be laid to their charge.

Youth mentors should decide to give the youth enough operational space and reject the use of failed outmoded and antiquated strategies used for battling the “Goliaths” of the twenty-first century. God’s church sits at the crossroads of destiny, commissioned with the awesome task to preach the Message of the Three Angels. Lost in some back alley of dissolution, cooling off, or to be taking the tranquilizing drug of gradualism, is not acceptable.

*The recommendation is* for adults to leave that lonely and desolate valley of exclusive mentality and rise, with the young, to the sunlit paths of youth public evangelism. The challenge *is* to view Moslems as joint heirs of God’s promise to Abraham—not through the racial lens of the hateful ideologies of radical Islam, as a Nation of devils. This is the first step in the direction of successfully evangelizing the Nation of Islam.

President-elect Barack Obama takes this discussion to a spiritual level, “In the final analysis, what is called for is nothing more and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand—that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us be our brother's keeper. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, “Love God supremely, and love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>1</sup>

This [is] [the time to focus our attention on Joel 2: 28—on how “young men” can work harmoniously with “old men.” God will use both. *This is why this research strongly recommends* that each adult church leader work closely with at least one young person in the department he or she is leading.

*Another recommendation at this time is* that youth leaders reject the cynicism peddled by the senior membership, yelling the stereotype that young people are too young to lead. Youth leaders are summoned to view the ministry of youth preaching as solemn as death. Those, who can't muster up unconditional love for young preachers dead in trespasses and sins, and are not prepared to do some serious weeping and praying over their spiritual corpses, should tender in their resignation, effective immediately. Ignore this recommendation, and youth preaching could become a lost art, vulnerable to extinction. It appears that youth rebellion and anemic church attendance are silent messages that our young people want ownership of their church, this very moment.

*The strong recommendation is to give it to them;* they may not be around to take it when it is finally given. Offering ownership of the church to the young people is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

paramount to engage them to help the church fulfill her three God-given tasks: evangelism, consolidation, and stewardship.

One who has ownership of an enterprise will promote the enterprise (evangelism); he or she will also stay with the enterprise (consolidation), and will also support the enterprise (stewardship). This time, youth leaders are summoned to move beyond the denigrating, polarizing stereotypes of postmodernism, and make a conscientious effort to understand the challenges of postmodern youth culture.

Their spiritual “pupils” must be dilated to see that the average age of puberty is on the decline in the United States. It now stands at twelve to thirteen years;<sup>1</sup> thirteen-year-olds are having similar sexual desires as adults do.

*The final recommendation* is directed to all involved in the glorious task of defending the moral absolute of the universe (God’s law), through the powerful preaching of the Three Angels’ Messages of Rev 14; the recommendation is to lift up Jesus in our sermons.

### **The Challenge**

As the monologue of this discussion fades away to its encounter with destiny, here is a paraphrased portion of a powerful speech delivered on June 6, 1984, by President Ronald Reagan, on the fortieth anniversary of D-Day: Youth preaching ministry is under a dark shadow—it is either dead or dying.

When the history books are written in future generations, historians will have to say that there lived a group of youth leaders in their respective centuries, who injected

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<sup>1</sup>Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry*, 172.

new meaning into the “veins” of youth ministry. In order to reclaim that which was lost in youth preaching, “They shot rope ladders over the cliffs [in enemy territory] and began to pull themselves up.” When one youth leader fell, another took his or her place.

“When one rope was cut, a [youth leader] grabbed another and began [the] climb again. Soon, one by one, the [youth leaders] pulled themselves over the top, and in seizing the firm land at the top of the cliffs, they began to [reclaim that which was robbed from youth ministry].” These were the youth leaders of the twenty-first century. “These were the boys [and girls] of *Pointe du Hoc*.”<sup>1</sup> “These were the men [and women] who took control of the treacherous “cliffs” of [youth preaching] in the hour of its greatest danger. These were the true heroes and champions [of youth ministry], who mentored the young and helped them to fight their twenty-first century “Goliaths” in their own armor. If history indeed affirms that youth preaching was salvaged, “these would be the heroes who did it.” These would be the warriors who, according to a paraphrased version of Stephen Spender’s poem, fought in their lifetime for the revival of youth preaching and “left the vivid air signed with their honor.” “And as a result, a grateful world imprinted their heroic efforts on the conscience of humanity.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is renowned for this succinct penned contribution, “When the years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvelous age in which we live, men and women will know and children will be taught

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald Reagan, “D-Day Fortieth Anniversary Speech,” delivered in Normandy, June 6, 1984, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/rreaganddayaddress.html> (accessed August 14, 2006).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization [because God's army of youth leaders] were willing to suffer for righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

"[The prophets of gloom and doom] say that [youth ministry] has had its days in the sun, that [it] has passed its zenith. They expect you to tell your children that [youth ministers] no longer have the will to cope with [problems that confront the postmodern youth], that the future will be one of sacrifice and few opportunities. I utterly reject that view. [Youth ministers] have a rendezvous with destiny. [They] will preserve for our [youth preachers] this, the last best hope of man on earth, or [they] will sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children's children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done. [I close this literary journey] with the greatest love for [youth ministry] and an eternal optimism for its future. [For this ministry], there will always be a bright dawn ahead."<sup>2</sup>

And now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and lift us up from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope, from the midnight of desperation to the daybreak of joy, to Him be power and authority, and majesty, forever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup>King, *A Call to Conscience*, 109.

<sup>2</sup>Reagan, "Quotes from Reagan on America, Freedom, and War."

## APPENDIX A

### LETTERS AND SURVEYS

1. Sample of Circular Letter sent to the participating SDA churches in Brooklyn, New York.
2. Copy of Church Bulletin with Shari Loveday (a trained youth preacher) preaching for Children's Day.
3. Letters from the Youth Department of Northeastern Conference
4. Youth Preachers Questionnaires





**SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH**

Northeastern Conference

**Youth Ministries**

115-82 Albert Road  
Jardoson, NY 11434-1690  
Tel. 718-266-8304  
Fax 718-759-3123  
<http://www.nadcon1906.org>

January 5, 2006

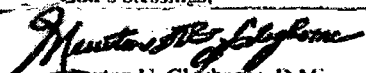
**Pastor Anthony Usher**  
31 Circle Drive  
Hempstead, NY 11550

**Pastor Anthony Usher,**

On behalf of the Youth Ministries Department of the Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, we kindly request your presence during the annual Western New York Youth Leadership Training, February 3-4, 2006.

We appreciate your willingness to serve not only the Youth Department but the entire delegation of youth around the Northeastern Conference.

God's blessings,

  
Clayton U. Cleghorne, D.Min.  
Youth Director



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH

Northeastern Conference

Youth Ministries

115-55 Meridale Boulevard  
Jamaica, NY 11434-1806  
Tel: 718-799-8088  
Fax: 718-789-5133  
<http://www.nccfemny.org>

January 25, 2006

Pastor Anthony Usher  
31 Circle Drive  
Hempstead, NY 11550

Pastor Anthony Usher:

It was a pleasure having you at our annual Youth Ministries Convention. Your insightful seminars gave a breath of fresh air to our youth leaders both former and in-coming. Many people have mentioned that your keen awareness to the needs of the youth in this day and age is highly appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule and pastoral ministry to the Christian Fellowship Church to partner with the Youth Ministries Department for this event.

Sincerely,

  
Newton U. Cleghorne, D.Min.  
Youth Director

## **CHURCH AT WORSHIP**

*Sabbath, July 26, 2008*

*11:00 A.M.*

**"The Lord is in His holy temple: Let all the earth keep silence before him." Habakkuk 2:20**

### **WORSHIP THROUGH ACKNOWLEDGMENT & PRAISE**

<i>Introit</i>	<i>Praise Team</i>
<i>Processional</i>	<i>Officers</i>
<i>Welcome &amp; Announcements</i>	<i>Sis. Thora T. McKay</i>
<i>Religious Liberty</i>	<i>Sis. Joan Little</i>
<i>Stewardship Emphasis</i>	<i>Bro. Winston White</i>
<i>Pastoral Greeting</i>	<i>Pastor Anthony L. Usher</i>
<i>Children's Chapel</i>	<i>Elder Frank Stone</i>
<i>Singspiration</i>	<i>Praise Team</i>

### **WORSHIP THROUGH INSPIRATION**

<i>Call to Worship</i>	<i>Elder Donald Bryan</i>
<i>Doxology</i>	<i>Congregation</i>
<i>Invocation</i>	<i>Pastor Anthony L. Usher</i>
<i>Affirmation</i>	<i>Bro. Aaron Dyer</i>
<i>Opening Hymn #229</i>	<i>Sis. Zia Merceus</i>
	<i>"All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"</i>
<i>Scripture Reading</i>	<i>Bro. Nassair McKenzie</i>

### **WORSHIP THROUGH PRAYER, SONGS & GIFTS**

<i>Intercessory Prayer</i>	<i>Elder Lester Marsh</i>
<i>Special Music</i>	<i>Selected</i>
<i>Offertory</i>	<i>Elder Samuel Mills</i>
<i>Introduction of Speaker</i>	<i>Sis. Terina Jackson</i>
<i>Meditation</i>	<i>Selected</i>

### **WORSHIP THROUGH THE WORD & OUR WITNESS**

<i>Proclamation &amp; Appeal</i>	<i>Sis. Shari Loveday</i>
	<i>"Before I Formed Thee "</i>
<i>Closing Hymn #249</i>	<i>Sis. Eryncia Welsh</i>
	<i>"Praise Him Praise Him"</i>
<i>Benediction</i>	<i>Bro. Nassair McKenzie</i>
<i>Benediction Response</i>	<i>Congregation</i>
<i>Postlude</i>	<i>Musicians</i>

**Sunset Tonight: 8:18 P.M.**

**Next Friday: 8:12 P.M.**

April 2, 2006

Pastor Ainsworth Joseph  
Kingsborough SDA Church  
415 -7<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Dear Elder Joseph:

I hope that this correspondence finds you and your entire church family prospering, both spiritually as well as spiritually. I write to you concerning a matter of urgent importance. I am on the final lap of my dissertation project in quest of a D.Min. from Andrews University, in the area of: "Recruiting, Equipping, and Mentoring Youth Preachers in the Metropolitan Churches of the NEC."

If you have been searching for an effective method to train the youth in the practical techniques of preparing sermons that they in turn would be motivated to become gospel preachers, then the PowerPoint seminar to empower youth preachers is what you need.

If you start a fire, it is expected to burn. If the goods are placed in the hands of the youth, more than likely, they should find a way to deliver it. If we give the youth a piece of the pie, they might hang around for dinner.

This empowerment youth seminar can become a reality in three simple steps:

1. Get as many of the young people of your church, between the ages of 12-35 to fill out the questionnaires. The questionnaires will be returned to me. A sample of the questionnaire is enclosed.

2. The next step is to arrange a week-end meeting with all those who would like to be trained as youth preachers. We could meet Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon, and close out Sunday morning.
3. At the completion of the empowerment seminar, the participants will fill out the very same questionnaire they did before training was imparted. The filled out survey forms, besides guiding our fingers to scratch where the youth are itching, are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the training seminars.

God did not, in arbitrary fashions, choose the youth over the adults to be the main protagonists of the preaching of the Message of the Three Angels. His original intention was that both young and old do this together. A more acceptable alternative could be that God in His infinite wisdom has already looked into the future and saw that the young people have the right mind-set to deal with the humongous challenges of postmodernism.

They adapt easier to the gigantic challenges of a postmodern society than adults. They are not exclusive. In their understanding, no one denomination has a monopoly on truth; they reject the idea that only Adventists will be saved. Religious barriers are blurred along the cosmic continuum of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity. They hold the Bible high above tradition and trivial innuendos. Most importantly, they recognize the futility of fighting the "Goliaths" of the twenty-first century in Saul's armor.

Therefore, Joel 2:28 is a far cry from being a partisan act of God in favor of the young. This is not some cosmic plan orchestrated within the holy precincts of the divine Godhead. What we read in Joel 2 and Acts 2 is not favoritism, it is just an accurate report and the writing of history before it actually occurs. When adults have enough faith to believe that that which is written in God's Word will be fulfilled, and support the youth,

they are simply cooperating with a history that has already been decreed to happen, based on the choices made by men and women in life.

Show me an adult church member who adapts an oppositional stance against Joel 2:28 and postmodern youth and I will show you a Nebuchadnezzar making the image of pure gold, instead of one composed of a coalition of metals, as Daniel indicated (Dan 2, 3). By this brief correspondence, I am soliciting the use of the Kingsborough Temple as one of the forty-five churches in Brooklyn NY, where the PowerPoint user-friendly program will be developed, tested, executed, and evaluated.

I make haste to declare that there is no charge attached to this service. On the other hand, I will be forever indebted to the Kingsborough congregation for empowering me to prepare our young sons and daughters to preach the Three Angels' Message with power. Feel free to communicate your decision on this pressing matter at 516-565-4425; or at [pastorausher@hotmail.com](mailto:pastorausher@hotmail.com): With no other pressing particular in mind, I remain,

Yours truly,

Anthony L. Usher  
Senior Pastor  
Christian Fellowship SDA Church

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNG PREACHERS OF THE NORTHEASTERN  
CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
SURVEY (BEFORE TRAINING)

Taking fifteen minutes to fill out this questionnaire could be a very valuable contribution in the recruiting, training, and equipping of young preachers in the Northeastern conference of SDA. Please answer the following subjective questions by placing an "X" in the indicated spaces. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME:

1. GENDER: \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male NATIONALITY \_\_\_\_\_

2. AGE: \_\_\_(10-15)\_\_\_ (16-25) \_\_\_ (26-35) \_\_\_(36-50) \_\_\_(51-75) \_\_\_

3. EDUCATION: \_\_\_Elemen. \_\_\_ High Sch. \_\_\_ College \_\_\_ Graduate \_\_\_ Post

4. Have you ever preached a sermon in a local church, or in a Youth effort?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

5. What do you believe is the reason (s) why it is very difficult for a young person to be recruited as a young preacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ They are afraid

\_\_\_\_\_ They feel that they are not prepared for the task.

\_\_\_\_\_ They are ashamed of the gospel.

Other reason \_\_\_\_\_

6. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest), what would be your interest in being recruited as young preacher?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**7. Which of the following would you say is the reason for your low or high interest to be recruited as a youth preacher?**

- The training I received was effective
- Constantly referring to me as a youth preacher, made me feel like one.
- I did not assimilate the material presented
- Because now I know what youth preaching is all about.
- Because I am still afraid to preach

**8. Developing the skills in preparing my own sermons from scratch will do the following for me:**

- Decrease fear and increase confidence
- Decrease my desire to be recruited as a young preacher.
- Frighten me
- Increase my desire to be recruited as a young preacher

**9. The preacher who lives what he preaches is more likely to motivate me to be recruited as a young preacher.**

YES       NO       NOT SURE

**10. Would a well-prepared sermon increase your desire to preach?**

YES       NO       NOT SURE

**11. In your opinion, which is more important?**

- The preparation of the sermon
- The delivery of the sermon.

**12. Which of the following is the sermon thesis or theme?**

- The subject
- What the preacher will talk about



\_\_\_ What the preacher will say about his subject

\_\_\_ I don't know

**13. The desire to become a youth preacher is greater when:**

\_\_\_ The preacher states the theme clearly in the introduction.

\_\_\_ The preacher states the sermon theme as he goes along

\_\_\_ The preacher states the theme at the conclusion

\_\_\_ It does not matter to me

**14. Who would motivate me more to be recruited as a young preacher?**

\_\_\_ An eloquent speaker

\_\_\_ A theologian well versed in Hebrew and Greek

\_\_\_ A preacher who is a positive significant force in your life

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**15. In your opinion, the length of the sermon should be:**

\_\_\_ One hour

\_\_\_ 10-15 minutes

\_\_\_ 30-35 minutes

Other length \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Which of the following you consider to be more able to equip you as a young preacher?**

\_\_\_ A professor of homiletics from Andrews University

\_\_\_ My AY director

\_\_\_ My church pastor

Some other person \_\_\_\_\_

**17. A young preacher is best recruited in the following manner:** Pre-registration When the invitation is announced from the pulpit. Have the young person filling out the survey form at home

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**18. An attractive sermon title does the following for me:** Increase curiosity to hear the sermon Turns me off It makes no difference to me

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**19. At the conclusion of most sermons I heard:** I am more confused than at the beginning I was able to follow most of them I usually walk away with the sermon central thought (theme).

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**20. Who contributes the most for a young person to be recruited as a young preacher?** The young person The parents The church pastor Another young preacher

Give the reason for your answer \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNG PREACHERS OF THE NORTHEASTERN  
CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
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3. EDUCATION: \_\_\_Elemen. \_\_\_High Sch. \_\_\_College \_\_\_Graduate \_\_\_Post

4. Have you ever preached a sermon in a local church, or in a Youth Effort?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

5. What do you believe is the reason (s) why it is very difficult for a young person to be recruited as a young preacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ They are afraid

\_\_\_\_\_ They feel that they are not prepared for the task.

\_\_\_\_\_ They are ashamed of the gospel.

Other reason \_\_\_\_\_

6. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest), what would be your interest in being recruited as young preacher?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

**7. Which of the following would you say is the reason for your low or high interest to be recruited as a youth preacher?**

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**9. The preacher who lives what he preaches is more likely to motivate me to be recruited as a young preacher.**

- YES                       NO                       NOT SURE

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- The subject

- What the preacher will talk about
- What the preacher will say about his subject
- I don't know

**13. The desire to become a youth preacher is greater when:**

- The preacher states the theme clearly in the introduction.
- The preacher states the sermon theme as he goes along
- The preacher states the theme at the conclusion
- It does not matter to me

**14. Christ-centered sermons do the following for me:**

- Turns me off
- Turns me on
- Increase my desire to become a youth preacher
- Decrease my desire to become a youth preacher

**15. Who would motivate me more to be recruited as a young preacher?**

- An eloquent speaker
- A theologian well versed in Hebrew and Greek
- A preacher who is a positive significant force in your life
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**16. In your opinion, the length of the sermon should be:**

- One hour
- 10-15 minutes
- 30-35 minutes
- Other length \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Which of the following you consider to be more able to equip you as a young preacher**

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**20. At the conclusion of most sermons I heard:**

I am more confused than at the beginning

I was able to follow most of them

I usually walk away with the central thought (theme) of the sermon

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Who contributes the most for a young person to be recruited as a young preacher?**

- The young person
- The parents
- The church pastor
- Another young preacher

Give the reason for your answer

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**22. If you became an experienced youth preacher, and was invited to preach in a one-week revival at a Baptist church, during Easter; what are the chances that you would accept the invitation?**

- I would readily accept
- Most likely I would accept
- I would have to think about it
- I would refuse, because a SDA youth preacher should not preach in a Baptist church

Other reason \_\_\_\_\_

**23. You are more encouraged to become a youth preacher when adults and church leaders:**

- Talk about the youth preachers of the good old days
- Talk about the youth preachers of my generation
- Make the effort to understand postmodern youth culture
- Allow you to fight your "Goliaths" in your own armor; and not in Saul's armor.

**24. In your opinion, which of the following individuals would have the tendency to believe more in God?**

\_\_\_\_\_ A Caucasian youth preacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ An immigrant youth preacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ An African American youth preacher?

**Give the reason for your answer**

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**25. Can you sense that after you have completed this empowerment seminar, that you grown spiritually?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Give the reason for your answer**

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## APPENDIX B

### SEMINARS

1. Schedule for Empowerment Seminars in the Churches
2. Ten-hour Empowerment Seminar for the Formation of Youth Preachers
  - a. Sermon Preparation (Part I)
  - b. Sermon Preparation (Part II)
  - c. Spiritual Development of the Youth Preacher (Chapter 3)

DATE	TIME	PRESENTATION TOPIC	CHURCH
16-18 May, 2003	7:00-9:00 pm.	"Spirituality of the YP"	Emmaus
17, May 2003	4:00-5:00 pm	"Theological Foundations of YP"	
	5:15-6:00 pm.	"The Message"	
	6:15-7:30 pm.	"The YP and Sermon Preparation"	
18 May, 2003	9:30-10:20 am	"Sermon Preparation Continued."	
	10:30-11:20 am	"Field Preparation of VOY"	
	11:30-12:30 pm	"The Challenge"	
16-18 May 2004	Same as above	Same as above	Christian Fellowship
January 12-15, 2006	Same as above	Same as above	Hispanic Youth Retreat
February 18-23, 2006	Same as above	Same as above	Northeastern Youth Preachers Institute
October 13-15, 2006	Same as above	Same as above	Community Tabernacle Mission
December 1-3, 2006	Same as above	Same as above	Linden/Queens Area District
VOY =	Voice of Youth	Campaigns	

TEN-HOUR EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR FOR THE  
FORMATION OF YOUTH PREACHERS

Presented to:

A Selected Group of Young Adults from Emmaus

and Christian Fellowship Churches and

Community Tabernacle

Mission

by

Anthony L. Usher

2003-2007

METHOD OF SERMON PREPARATION FOR YOUNG  
PREACHERS: THE EQUIPPING SEMINAR I

**Overview**

“Accept it because God says so,” “Accept it because it makes sense,” and, “Accept it because it works,” are the clichés that adequately summarizes the pre-modern, modern, and postmodern mentalities, respectively. It is fair to assume that most postmodern young people, if not all, have had the experience of traveling somewhere, whether by land, air, or sea. This is why the research employed the metaphoric expression of a voyage to highlight the practical steps involved in sermon preparation, that will motivate the recruiting and equipping of young preachers. It is a practical method that all can easily relate to. This will facilitate recalling to memory the great principles of homiletics as they pursue and interact in the daily activities of life in the market places. In this manner these principles will eventually become engraved and riveted on the walls of their young minds. This was the method of Christ.<sup>1</sup> He utilized the elements of nature and common metaphors of life in His discourses. On posterior occasions when the people would encounter these in their daily lives the lesson would be remembered and cherished. One would never fully comprehend the impact practical things exerts on the postmodern mind of the young preacher. Here is a great principle in youth ministry: *Young people learn best when taken from the known to the unknown.* Here is what Bruce Norman had to say: “To the post modern thinker, absolute truth is

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing*, 143.

only absolute if and where it is shown to work in real life.”<sup>1</sup> The postmodern thinker has been subjected to the practicality and the rigidity of the travel curriculum. If that works for traveling, it might just work in sermon preparation. Even though many metaphors has been employed by homiletics professors, the likes of building a brick wall, flying an aero plane, an iceberg etc., the metaphor of travel is a rather an attractive alternative.

### **Sermon Preparation as a Voyage**

The idea to travel could be compared to the *sermon idea*. The final destination, that is so vital for the traveler, has kinship with the *specific objective of the sermon*. The craft in which the traveler is transported to the final destination is likened to the *text* or passage of scripture upon which the sermon is built. The driver, the pilot, or the astronaut, would be a rather feeble and inadequate representation of the role of the *Holy Ghost* in the preparation of sermons that will motivate the young to join the ranks of gospel preachers. Sermon preparation and presentation is a highly spiritual activity that demands a reciprocal spirituality on the part of the youth preacher. The travel route on the map, the rudder of the sea craft, the steering wheel, the rotating bar of the tail fin of an aircraft, and spacecraft, have the same role as that of the sermon *thesis or theme*—they all dictate the path of both the journey and the sermon. The beginning of the journey functions very much like the sermon *introduction*, while the end of the voyage is likened to that of the sermon *conclusion*. The various stops during the voyage are compared to the *smooth transition* from one main sermon point to the other. The flight number, the bus number, the seat number, or the name of the cruise line, is compared to the sermon

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce Norman, *Bridging the Gap*, 27.

*title*. Traveling first, second, or third class is compared to the three basic types of sermons: *topical*, *textual*, and *expositive*.

### **The Sermon Idea**

The first step taken in building a sermon is the *sine qua non*—the idea. There can be no sermon that was not first preceded by an idea. It is the “germ,” the bacterial beginning, the point of conception, from which eventually the entire sermon is grown.<sup>1</sup> It was rightly said that no power or an army of a million men can stop an idea when its time has come.

Men can be assassinated and nations crippled by embargos, but you cannot kill a great idea. In short, the life and experience of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a stubborn reminder that you can kill the dreamer but you can't kill the dream.

### **Sources for Sermon Ideas**

According to E. K. Bailey, there are two primary sources for sermon ideas: the Word of God, and people.<sup>2</sup> Even though metaphors from nature is a third option, ideas for sermons comes from varying sources: (1) direct inspiration from God, (2) systematic study of God's Word, (3) daily interactions with people in the market places of life, (4) sermons from other preachers, especially the ones from radio and TV evangelists, (5) dialoguing with friends from your homiletic network, (6) meteorite inspirations and, (7) sermon recycling and regeneration.

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<sup>1</sup>John Killinger, *The Fundamentals of Preaching*, 49.

<sup>2</sup>E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 79.

## Sermon Recycling and Regeneration

Sermon recycling looms as the tallest homiletic innovation ever presented in this field and is perhaps the most effective method of preparing sermons that will connect effectively with young people, and motivate the recruiting of young preachers. You will agree after this description of what sermon recycling entails. You most likely have heard the saying that “*a cat has nine lives,*” but I say unto you, that a sermon has as many lives as you permit the Holy Ghost to let it live. This same sermon can be preached over and over again to the same congregation, week after week. By changing the sermon theme or thesis, multiple sermons can be prepared from the same text. Here is a classic example: Sometime ago I prepared a sermon on Joseph with the title, “From the Pit to the Palace.” The theme was: “Only God can help sinners on planet earth climb from the slave pits of sin to the King’s palace.” For black history month, February 2004, the very same sermon was preached. This time the title and the sermon theme were respectively changed to “Masters in the Land of Slavery,” and “No man can become a master in the land of his enslavement without the help of God.” This is sermon recycling. Here is another example:

TEXT: 1 Sam 6:1-3

Here are some possible sermon theses derived from the above text:

1. We ought to obey God, rather than the King.
2. Our best efforts will end in tragedy, if cradled in disobedience.
3. God in love permit tragedy which, in turn, leads to inner reflection, and amendment of disobedient ways.
4. Most of our disobedience stems from following the world and its sinful ways.

5. Too often we fly in the face of God, blaming Him for the tragic results of our poor choices.
6. God permits chastisement to those in the light, and winks at the ignorance of those in darkness.
7. Human intervention in divine things often ends in tragedy.
8. God does not need human hands to defend his cause.

If sermon recycling looms as the “tallest” homiletic innovation, then *sermon regeneration* must be her “twin sister” tower. However, sermon regeneration is not to be confused with sermon recycling; which is the method wherein a new sermon comes to life by simply changing the sermon theme or thesis. Sermon regeneration steals its nomenclature from the vaults of the field of biology. It involves the production of, one or more, new sermons from the “severed parts” of a sermon. Like the hibiscus flowering plant, the young preacher can also cut up the “stem” and “branches” of the *one-two-three* of a sermon, he had previously preached, and stick each part into the homiletic “soil” of sermon preparation.” In this manner, a new sermon can be developed from each part. The sermon from 2 Chr 7:14, “*If My people would pray,*” is a classic example of sermon regeneration. The sermon theme was, “There is no limit to the power available when God’s people humble themselves and pray. *The one-two-three-four-five,* stood up like this:

1. The power made available when Moses prayed.
2. The power made available when Daniel prayed.
3. The power made available when Samson prayed.
4. The power made available when Jonah prayed.
5. The power made available to Jesus, when He prayed.



In this sermon, Jonah was presented as one of God's children who humbled himself and prayed from the belly of a whale; and was delivered. The outline of a regenerated sermon would look somewhat like this:

SERMON TITLE: "Fishy Situations".

TEXT: Jonah 1, 2.

THESIS: Disobedience often lands us in some "fishy" situations.

1. The "fishy" situations provoked by marriage with unbelievers.
2. The "fishy" situations provoked by pre-marital and extra-marital sex.
3. The "fishy" situations provoked by sending our children to the public schools.

Jesus was on target when He declared thousands of years ago that men, wise men that is, do not draw new wine from old wine bottles (Luke 5:37). While this holds true in the winery business, the genius of homiletics is the ability to draw new wine from old bottles—brand new sermons from the old ones already preached.

Fresh "bread" served week after week should awaken the interest among the young to become preachers. The method of sermon recycling and regeneration are the last two best hopes of preparing sermons that will encourage our youth to become excited about gospel preaching.

#### **Specific Objective or Sermon Purpose**

Using the metaphor of a voyage, the young preacher will see how the specific sermon objective is formulated. The very first thing you settle on when traveling is the final destination.

The youth are in accord that, *there is absolutely no point in carrying the ball until you learn where the goal is.*<sup>1</sup> Before you board your transport vessel (text), your final destination should be fixed in your mind. *A person going nowhere is bound to reach his destination.*<sup>2</sup> You do the very same thing in building biblical sermons that spawns the recruitment of youth preachers. The very first thing you decide on is not the *introduction*, (as many do) but the *conclusion*. This is the greatest tragedy of homiletics. The *introduction* is the first part of the sermon that is presented. The *conclusion* is the first part that is *prepared*.

### **The Selection and Interpretation of Text**

Now that the destination has been decided, choice of the transport will be easy. The same is true in preparing sermons that will move the hearts of the young to become gospel preachers themselves. Young gospel preachers must allow the Holy Spirit to impress upon their mind the most appropriate text that can effectively and safely take them to the desired final objective. Therefore, this activity demands a high level of spirituality on the part of the young preachers. The next step is to correctly interpret the text. There are three reasons why this is important:

1. To discover exactly what the Bible writers had in mind when they wrote
2. To be able to make correct spiritual application of the text in our day. Proper interpretation of the text will empower the young preacher to make sound application. Of all the homiletic sins of which preachers are guilty, and that God will punish [and for which our young sons and daughters will never forgive them], none is more grievous than when they transmit messages to the

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<sup>1</sup>Kenda Dean, C. Clark, and D. Rahn, *Starting Right*, 204.

<sup>2</sup>E. C. McKenzie, *14,000 Quips and Quotes* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 206.

congregation (particularly to the young) that are contrary to the original intention of the Bible writers.

3. Proper interpretation of the text will lead to the discovery of the sermon subject (1Cor 13 is a classic example).

### **The Sermon Subject**

The sermon subject is defined as “*the matter of what the sermon is about; the business it deals with.*” Its sole purpose is to help in the elaboration of the *sermon theme or thesis*. Proper utilization of the sermon theme could be a very effective tool to awaken the desire in the young to be recruited as gospel preachers.

### **The Sermon Theme or Thesis**

The theme is the gist of the sermon in one single, clear sentence (8-15 words). It is the idea that the young preachers desire that their listeners take home. If the building of a sermon is comparable to traveling, then its theme is the mapped out route through which the sermon preparation will pass on its way to the final destination. Many young preachers often confuse the sermon subject and the sermon theme. The subject is what the youth preachers are going to talk about, for example, *the Righteousness of Christ*. The sermon theme is what they will say about the subject: *We are saved, not because we are good, but because Christ is good.*<sup>1</sup> According to Brown (1958), the sermon thesis or theme is characterized by at least eight points:

1. The theme should be very short, as opposed to being long, boring and drawn out. It is the essence of the sermon.
2. The theme should be engulfed in human interest, and in touch with the basic experiences of life.

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Bresee, “Finding a Theme,” *Ministry* (June 1984): 9.

3. The theme should be stated in the form of a great truth that is good for all times, and for all peoples.
4. It should be proverbial in nature, having family connections with erudition, and sages.
5. It is imperative that the theme be formulated in such a clever manner, that its concept is universal, transcending time, and space.
6. The theme should be free from all historical references, names, personalities, places, or events.
7. The theme should never express two or more ideas. It is a very steep task to ride two horses at the same time.
8. The theme should be Christ-centered. Such themes will produce Christ-centered sermons. Self-centered themes will produce self-centered sermons, which are not worth the while preparing and, much less, preaching.<sup>12</sup>

Jowett emphasized the importance of the sermon theme with these words:

No sermon is ready for preaching, not even for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal. I find the getting of that sentence the hardest, the most exciting, and the most fruitful of my labor in my study. To compel oneself to fashion that sentence, to dismiss every word that is vague, ragged, ambiguous, to think oneself through to a form of words which define the theme in scrupulous exactness—*this is surely one of the essential factors in the making of a sermon*; and do not think any sermon ought to be preached or even written, until that sentence has emerged, clear and lucid as a cloudless moon.<sup>2</sup>

The reason why the sermon should not be written, until the theme is defined, is because what the heart is for the human body, the sermon theme is for sermon preparation. Sermons that will be effective, in recruiting and equipping young preachers, are the ones in which the mentor preacher allowed the theme to bear direct impact on

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Reynolds Brown, *The Art of Preaching* (New York: McMillan Co., 1922), 28.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Jowett, *The Preacher, His Life, and His Work* (New York: Doran, 1912), 133.

every subsequent element in sermon building; in like fashion how every tissue and body cell is touched by every heartbeat.

The sermon theme is important because of the following reasons: (1) it provides something specific to aim at, (2) the sermon theme makes the sermon easier to preach, and (3) it makes the sermon much easier to be understood by the audience, and eliminates “Christopher Columbus” sermons. When Columbus left Spain, he didn’t know exactly where he was going. When he got to the New World he didn’t know where he was. When he got back home he didn’t know where he had been. “Christopher Columbus” sermons are the principal reasons why the youth are turned off from joining the ranks of gospel preachers. It is so difficult for the young mind to follow the sermons of some preachers. When they stand up to preach they don’t know where they are going. As they preach, their audience doesn’t know where they are. When it is all over, neither the preacher nor the audience knows where they had been. Stating the sermon theme clearly in the sermon introduction has been a very dependable safeguard against “Columbus” sermons; it is easier for the youth to follow the sermon. Having stated how you will reach your specific objective, now the burden of proof is on the young preacher to deliver what he or she is proposing.

### **How to Find the Theme**

Don’t settle on your theme too early. It is true that your sermon preparation begins after you have chosen a passage or a subject; but before you have decided your exact point of view on that subject. It is always good to open your Bible before you open your mind. This will avoid forcing your ideas on the Bible; let it force its ideas upon you. Remember, you are not looking for man’s answers to man’s problems; you are looking

for God's answers to man's problems. The best place to find God's answers is in God's Book. Blackwood wrote that, "The minister can never fully understand the enchantment that the Scriptures exert on the human spirit"<sup>1</sup> Both *Value genesis* reports indicate that the statement by Blackwood is particularly true for the youth. Another reason why it is not wise to settle on the theme too early is because the material you gather as you study may not be congruent with your theme. You may have an excellent theme, as well as first class material, but if there is a discrepancy between the material and the theme, the preacher have big trouble on his hands. If the material you gather, and include in the writing of the sermon does not fit the theme, then the young preacher has dug himself into the homiletic bottomless pit, from whence there is no exit. It is equally dangerous to choose the theme too late. The best way to choose your theme is to let it develop as you study. Always begin with the Word. Bear in mind that young people are particularly fascinated with the Word, and biblical sermons are easier for them to follow. This is the time when you spend quality time reading, praying, meditating, and pondering over the passage. Alexander Maclaren referred to this spiritual activity as the "incubation of the text." This is what has worked for me. As you study in this fashion, ideas will surface, each of which has the potential to be developed into the kind of sermon that will impress some teenager to become a youth preacher for Christ. Write down these ideas, each time asking yourself whether there is something in that idea which is big enough to become the central thought of the sermon—the theme. How will the preacher be able to determine if an idea is big enough to be the theme? Two questions will make that

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Blackwood, *Sermon Preparation* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), 96.

determination: Is the idea Christ-centered? Can this idea adequately satisfy the demands of the specific objective of the sermon? If the answer to both these questions is in the affirmative, then this idea could be the sermon theme. Each time a Christ-centered idea adequately satisfies the demands of the specific objective of the sermon, write it down. By the time your sermon material has taken solid shape and form, your sheet should be full of possible themes. You should be able to easily choose the theme you want from these. Now the theme has grown out of your Bible study. Now your theme will be congruent with your study material, because both come from a common source.

### **The Principal Functions of the Sermon Thesis**

Building a sermon is like building a concrete edifice, you lay block upon block until you reach the point of completion. The “blocks” that are laid upon each other before the sermon is constructed, are in the following order from bottom to the top:

SERMON CONCLUSION  
 SERMON INTRODUCTION  
 PUTTING ON SERMON FLESH  
 TYPES OF SERMON  
 SERMON DIVISIONS (SKELETON)  
 SERMON TITLE  
**SERMON THEME**  
 THE TEXT  
 THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE  
 THE SERMON IDEA

Under the supervision of the sermon theme, break up the theme into three or four points. These points will serve as the sermon outline, upon which the “flesh” of biblical arguments, illustrations, and applications will be placed.

### **Examples of Sermon Theses**

A list of thirty-six sermon theses was placed in the hands of the young preachers. These were reviewed in the seminar to help them in the preparation of sermons that will increase their desire to become gospel preachers (see appendix C for the list).



imperative that the title be pertinent, and congruent with the spiritual needs of the congregation. It is a must that it be fresh, innovative, interesting, and attractive. Well-elaborated sermon titles will not only enhance attendance in evangelistic efforts, but will also maintain interest in the meetings. Let me illustrate. The church pastor came to church early, and was standing in the church vestibule welcoming the folks as they came in. A young adult approached him and asked if he (the pastor) was scheduled to preach. On learning that an elder was slated to preach, the young lady indicated that she would go visiting; listening to a lay preacher was not her favorite pastime. On her way out, she picked up a church bulletin and was impressed and captivated with the sermon title printed, *Spiritual Elephants*. She was overpowered by her curiosity, and decided to stay and hear what *Spiritual Elephants* was all about. She made a wise decision, because that sermon was one of the best preached in that church to this day. Be advised that cheap titles will have just the opposite effect on the public. Here are some examples of what is denominated as cheap titles:

1. Michael Jackson and Jesus.
2. The Naked Girl and the Cemetery
3. The Baptist Preacher who lost his head in a Discothèque.
4. Why God is like a Bottle of Hot Water
5. The man, the woman, and the hotel room.
6. Kissing in the Dark.
7. Sex and the Single Girl
8. Hugs and Kisses
9. How to Have Sex with God!

It is obvious that the preacher should shun the one-word sermon titles. Here are few examples of how the title is derived from the sermon theme:

THEME: For the Christian, loss of the trivial things of life always precedes the divine unction.

TITLE: "The Divine Unction".

THEME: The Road to Hell is paved with Good Intentions.

TITLE: "The Road Paved with Good Intentions."

### **The Theme and the Sermon Divisions**

The "one, two, three" is formed in such a manner that the key phrase of the sermon theme appears in the heading of each division, or point. Here is an example:

SERMON TITLE: "Some Fishy Situations"

TEXT: Jonah 1, 2

THESIS: Disobedience often lands us into some fishy situation.

DIVISION POINTS:

Fishy Situations provoked by marriages with unbelievers.

Fishy Situations provoked by pre-marital and extra-marital sex.

Fishy Situations provoked in the public schools.

In like manner how the automatic transmission of an automobile effortlessly makes transmission from a lower gear to a higher, making a smooth transmission from point to point in a sermon is vital.

### **The Theme and the Key Phrase**

The key phrase is, "Those Fishy Situations Provoked by." Note how it appears in the heading of the three main points or division of the sermon. Sermons that impress the young, are the ones in which this key phrase is echoed and re-echoed throughout the duration of the sermon. On one occasion, I was accused by one of the deaconess of a

church I pastored that my sermons were too long, because I was repeating myself.

Obviously she was not aware that I was *simply repeating the key phrase*. This key phrase is what unifies the sermon; what we have is not three or four separate little sermons, but one sermon in three or four steps.

### **The Theme and the Sermon Length**

The number of points will have bearing on the length of the sermon. People are so busy doing nothing these days. A preacher stood up to preach and made this apology to the congregation for the bandage on his face, "Please excuse the bandage on my face," he said, "I was thinking of my sermon while shaving, and I cut my face." After hearing the sermon that lasted a solid hour, a listener made this silent comment, "*Next time, why not think about your face and cut your sermon.*"<sup>1</sup> Psychologists are in accord that the listening span for the average human being is somewhere around 30-35 minutes.<sup>2</sup> It might be shorter for adolescents. Effective preaching to teenagers demands that the sermons be short, and spicy, beautiful and done nicely. For all practical purposes, the young people are not listening after thirty minutes. It is virtually impossible to deal with five or more points in thirty minutes. It is for this reason that Blackwood showed an inclination for two points. Fosdick, spoke of "not more than four points." Callaway leaned towards three points. John A. Broadus recalled the proverb "three heads like a sermon," and led his students in that direction.<sup>3</sup> My personal choice is three, and if by

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<sup>1</sup>Bresee, Sermon Length—II," 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>3</sup>Roy Naden, "Preparing Your Sermon," *Ministry* (October 1984): 13.

reason of necessity—four. Reasons for this position are twofold; the first being the firm and unwavering conviction that the three-point sermon and thirty-five minutes keeps great company. The second reason finds biblical roots in the words of the wise man in Prov 30:29 NKJV, “*There are three things which are majestic in pace; yes four . . .* Let us take a closer look at how the theme limits the number of points that are to be admitted into the sermon outline. A theme less, textual sermon on 2 Tim 3:1-5 could have the following possible eighteen points:

1. Selfish men in the last days.
2. Covetous men in the last days.
3. Boastful men in the last days.
4. Proud men in the last days
5. Blasphemous men in the last days.
6. Disobedient men in the last days.
7. Unthankful men in the last days.
8. Unholy men in the last days.
9. Men without natural affection, in the last days.
10. Men, in the last days, who are truce breakers.
11. Men, in the last days, who are false accusers.
12. Incontinent men in the last days.
13. Fierce men in the last days.
14. Men in the last days, who despise those that are good.
15. Treacherous men in the last days.
16. Heady men in the last days.
17. Men in the last days, who love pleasures more than God.
18. Men, in the last days, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

I am yet to meet the gifted preacher, who is able to preach a sermon, of eighteen points, in 30-35 minutes. On the other hand, look at what happens to the same textual sermon that is theme-oriented:

TEXT: 1 Tim 3:1-5

THEME: “Last-day signs in I Tim 3 more prominent among the young people.”

Note, that the theme limits the signs in 1 Tim 3 to the youth. If the indication of the theme was not limited to the youth, then the eighteen above signs of the last day signs are eligible. Only five of the afore-mentioned eighteen sermon divisions will find shelter under the umbrella of this crude sermon theme.

#### SERMON OUTLINE (POINTS)

1. Disobedient youth to their parents in the last days.
2. Unthankful youth in the last days.
3. Heady youth in the last days.
4. High-minded youth in the last days.
5. Youth, in the last days, who love pleasures more than God

Five sermon heads or divisions are too much homiletic territory to cover in 30-35 minutes; the young people would readily welcome five instead of eighteen.

#### **The Theme and Types of Sermons**

Homiletic professors are in accord that textual sermons are easier for the young people to follow, and that novice preachers should start with this type of sermon. Here are some reasons why:

1. The textual sermon is highly biblical; one of the great principles of youth ministry is that the youth are fascinated with the Word of God.
2. This type of sermon offers the opportunity for the youth to follow along in their Bibles.
3. The preacher will come across as being biblical.
4. Because the points of the outline come directly from the text, when the young people leave the place of worship, the outline goes home with them in their Bibles.

The sole danger that faces the young preacher, who favors textual sermons, is that he will have to be constantly on his guard against the temptation to yield to *eisegesis*; that

is, reading into the text what was not intended by the Bible writers. The homiletic experts would contend that, while the textual sermon is the easiest for the young adults to follow, putting a textual sermon in the hand of a young adult, in the context of sound homiletics, is like putting matches in the hand of an arsonist.

The Josiah story recorded in 2 Chr 34 (seen earlier in chapter 2) is a stubborn reminder that God's Word—rediscovered by adults and hidden in the hearts of the young—should ignite an unprecedented reformation and revival in youth preaching.

Another type of sermon that is easy for the youth to follow, to prepare, and to remember, is the method described by William Evans in his book, *How to Prepare Sermons*. His approach is based on four basic questions: WHAT, WHY, HOW, and WHAT THEN?<sup>1</sup> The sermon has four divisions, which are formulated under the auspices of these four questions. This exercise allows the youth preacher to be very analytical and, at the same time, cuts down on the temptation to bring in any “unrelated foreign objects” (UFO), that have no bearing on the question that is being addressed. No room is allowed to “beat around the bush” in this system. Here is another important principle in preparing biblical sermons that will encourage the young to become gospel preachers:

*“Young people are turned off by preachers who beat around the bush.”*

After the young preacher has settled on his theme, he addresses the WHAT question. This is best done by definition, description, and by analysis. It is always recommended to go from the known to the unknown, when dealing with the question of

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<sup>1</sup>William Evans, *How to Prepare Sermons*, 29.

the WHAT. State what it is not, before stating what it is; first the negative, then the positive.

When the young preacher comes to the WHY section, he must address himself specifically to the question. It is at this homiletic junction where reason, necessities, and proofs make their dramatic entrances.

According to Bradford the WHY section is the battleground for arguments, apologies. This is the place where the young preacher will unveil his strongest proofs and most persuasive arguments. Making powerful use of Scripture, analogies, and illustrations, he seeks to fix evidences and proofs as a nail in a sure place.

The young preacher enters the HOW section with the assumption that his arguments were convincing, and that his thesis was accepted. This section percolates around the divine initiative, and human response. This is when the tang of humanity interacts with the glow of divinity. Evans expressed it eloquently, "God's part and man's part." This section demands of the young preacher that his efforts are concerted to get the "rubber" of man's feeble, finite mind, to meet the solid "road" of God's eternal, unmovable, will. It is only then that the will of man becomes omnipotent. The theme text for the HOW section is, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me" (Phil 4:13).

In the WHAT THEN section of the sermon, the young preacher attempts to make personal application to all he or she's been talking about it. At this point of the game, Evans quotes Spurgeon as saying, "*Where the application begins, the sermon begins.*" Some years ago, I prepared and preached a topical sermon, using the method of Evans. This was what the outline looked like:

TITLE: "Peace Be Still"

TEXT: Luke 8:22-25

SUBJECT: Peace

THEME: "Only Christ, the Master, can give true, lasting peace"

THE POINTS OF THE SERMON:

1. WHAT IS TRUE LASTING PEACE?

- a. What true lasting peace is not.
- b. It is not a quick fix, exile, long pilgrimages, gifts to charity etc.

2. WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE TRUE LASTING PEACE?

- a. Many storms are raging in the world today.
- b. Spiritual, political, social, financial, etc.
- c. Only manner to make it over to the other side is to be sure that Jesus, The Prince of Peace, is on board.

3. HOW CAN TRUE LASTING PEACE BE SECURED?

- a. Recognize that without Christ, you can do nothing about those storms that are threatening to take away your peace.
- b. Don't try to do it alone. Awake Jesus, through prayer, and invite Him to calm your stormy seas of life. Remember, He is the Prince of Peace.
- c. Stand still, and watch your peace flow like a river.

4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THAT PEACE IS FOUND?

- a. Application
- b. No fear of anthrax, terrorism, earthquakes, death, etc.
- c. "Do not be afraid, only believe."
- d. The story of Esau and Jacob.
- e. "When the ways of a man pleases God . . . (Prov 16:7).

**Conclusion and Invitation**

A. A lifeguard rescued a young boy who was drowning.

- 1. Relate how the lifeguard had to wait until the boy was almost drowned (no more fight in him) before he rescued him.



2. The grateful mother asked the lifeguard what took him so long before he rescued her son.
- B. The lifeguard replied, "Mother, if I had gone in after your son the moment you called out to me, there was still a good deal of fight within him; both of us would have drowned. I had to wait until he was helpless, before I could rescue him."

### **The Theme and Sermon "Flesh" on the Sermon Skeleton**

As was mentioned earlier, the sermon theme is broken down into one, two, three, or the most four sermon divisions. These will become the sermon skeleton or outline.<sup>1</sup> As these calcified, lifeless, ominous, bony structures of the sermon skeleton leers back at you, a paraphrased version of the pertinent question, directed to prophet Ezekiel thousands of years ago, is: "Son of the preachers, can the dry bones of this sermon outline live, and become such a moving homily, that it would encourage the young to become gospel preachers themselves?"

Two things must happen before any sermon outline can come to life and have positive impact on the lives of our adolescents; first, the bones of the sermon skeleton must come together and, secondly, the putting on of the sermon "flesh" of arguments, supporting texts, illustrations, and practical applications, etc.

Here is a suggestion as to how "flesh" is placed on the sermon skeleton: Take 3-4 clean "8 x 11" typing sheets. Write the heading of each sermon division is on the top of each corresponding sheet. Each of these headings should be elaborated in such a manner that the key phrase is resonated. At the same time, they should provide enough homiletic latitude and theological longitude for exegetical digging and investigation. Each heading

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<sup>1</sup>John Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 79.

should be elaborated in such concise fashions as the sermon theme; that other sermons can be regenerated from each. Now is the time to consult the Bible, commentaries, Bible dictionaries as well as your computerized or manual seedbed of sermon ideas, to see what has sprouted in the area that your sermon divisions are focusing on.

Now is the time to consult other books, the likes of Ellen White's "Conflict of Ages" series. Now is the time to consult other sermons, and other relevant material. As you study and meditate, use your sermon theme or thesis to eliminate any unidentified foreign objects (UFO's) from the sermon. As you find supporting arguments, ideas, texts, applications, and illustrations that are congruent with the pretense of your theme, jot these under each corresponding sermon division heading, in the order they appear. As the pages are filling up, decide on which practical applications, illustrations and arguments can be applied. Write these on the respective sheets. In this manner, the sermon skeleton begins to gather "flesh." Obviously, the gathered material will be crude, and disorganized. Like at the Creation, the sermon ideas are "without form and void" (Gen 1:2). Young preacher, as your homiletic eyes rove over this disorganized, lifeless, calcified, chaotic, ominous structure of a combination of "sermon bones," ideas, illustrations, arguments, supporting texts, and analogies, it is imperative that you read Ezek 37:8: "And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above: *but there was no breadth in them.* At this homiletic junction, located somewhere between the already and the not yet, the young preacher is faced with the tenacity of this nagging question, "Can this chaotic mess ever become organized? Can this sermon live?" The answer is found in Ezek 37:9-10, "Come from the four winds, O breadth, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he

commanded and the breath came upon them, *and they lived.*” Here is a bold statement that needs no apology, a preacher might as well attempt to hear without ears, or breathe without lungs, than to attempt to organize or preach a sermon without the power of the Holy Ghost in his heart. The anointing of the Spirit must be upon the youth preacher before [He or she] can penetrate the heart of the listener.<sup>1</sup> The Bible declares that it was the Spirit of God who moved upon the face of the waters at Creation, giving form and organization to an earth that was void, in chaos, and without form. When young preachers allow the Spirit of the living God to move all over their sermonic, chaotic, confusion, He will organize it, and breathe new life into it, and it will live. The youngest of our sons and daughters will be able to follow it. *The youth will easily follow a sermon that is prepared and organized by the power of the Holy Ghost.* Only the power of the Holy Ghost can provide adequate guidance in the organization of the sermon. Failure to allow Him to perform this unique operation will result in *sermonic miscarriage.*

This is the most critical, difficult, and most important part of sermon preparation. This is not taught in any theological seminary, university, or monastery. This is what homiletic professors refer to as the *agony of preaching.* This is the moment of truth; when the entire congregation will have first hand evidence if the young preacher is controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit; or if he or she is a phony, controlled by another spirit. This is when the jury comes in to give the verdict of “guilty” or “not guilty.”

This business of organizing the sermon is off limits for flesh and blood; this is

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<sup>1</sup>Bailey and Wiersbe, 58.

Holy Ghost territory. Not only will the spirituality of the preacher be tested to the limit, but this is also the moment when the keeper of the Gospel flame of preaching must walk the theological tight rope alone; allowing the Holy Ghost to first move upon his soul, and breathe order upon the chaotic uncertainties of his life.

### **Introduction and Conclusion Derived from Theme**

A sermon, an elephant, and a horse, have three basic parts in common: a head (introduction), a body, and a tail (conclusion). It is easy to see why an elephant or a horse need a head and a tail, but why does a sermon need an introduction and a conclusion? This important question will be answered in this section.

#### **The Sermon Introduction**

The sermon introduction could be likened unto the stopper of a bottle of cold, refreshing Poland Spring water on a very hot and humid day in the Sahara desert. Before the water can quench the thirst of a traveler, it is fiercely urgent that the stopper be removed. Sermonic frustration occurs when spiritual thirsty listeners try to “drink” the contents of a sermon that still has the “stopper” on—the sermon was not properly introduced.

The principal function of the sermon introduction is to remove the “lid” that encloses the contents; thereby allowing the audience to attend to the message presented. The bottle stopper is much smaller than the bottle itself; as the head of a horse is smaller in comparison to the body.

The introduction should not be too long, occupying just about a tenth of the sermon space. Try to avoid the error most preachers make with the introduction; *they spend so much time setting the table, that there is no time left to eat.* It is difficult trying

to introduce someone you are not acquainted with previously, as it is to prematurely settle on your introduction before you know a good deal about the sermon body.

The introduction is the first part of the sermon presented, but one of the last parts prepared. Sermon introductions should fulfill at least four purposes. Perhaps you don't need all four in every sermon, but have all four in mind every time you prepare a sermon:

1. *Establish rapport with the audience.* Sensitive youth preachers begin by making friends with the audience. They are conscious that their impact as a speaker is determined less by what they say than what the listeners think of them while they are saying it.

2. *The introduction arrests attention.* The young preacher asked, "What is the best way to get the attention of the congregation, when you stand up to preach?" The old preacher answered, "By giving them something to attend to." Never stand up to preach until you are sure of what the first and last sentences will be. Be sure to make that first pitch right across the plate; belt high. If you fail to secure the attention of your audience during the first sixty seconds, you may never get it again for that particular sermon.<sup>1</sup> Imagine; someone in the audience has his or her head buried in a book at the very moment you step into the pulpit to preach. Your introductory words should be captivating and compelling enough to make the person close the book in order to listen to what follows. This kind of impact will not occur by happenstance; but is the final precipitate of a meticulous and painstaking preparation of the introduction.

3. *An introduction will arouse interest in the topic.* Here is a classic example of an introduction given by a minister, who spoke on legalistic religion: "Nineteen hundred years ago, there was a religious group of people who kept all the Ten Commandments, paid a faithful tithe, was most faithful in every detail of religious life—and they murdered Christ." Now this is an introduction that aroused interest in the topic.

4. *The introduction should give away the sermon theme.* In the introduction, do not tell the congregants what will be the subject of the sermon; but, rather, tell them what will be said about that subject. This is the sermon theme. The young preacher is firing nothing but blanks when he or she begins by saying, "Today, the discussion will be on attitudes." How different if you say, "The thought for consideration today is, "Some men see things as they are and ask why, you must dream things that never were and ask, why not?" Some young preachers prefer not to give their theme in the introduction. For them, the element of surprise is their greatest asset. A sermon is as personal as a toothbrush. A great theme can awaken interest and make the rest of the sermon easier for the young to understand.

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<sup>1</sup>John Killinger, *Fundamentals of Preaching*, 91.

## Types of Sermon Introductions

There are at least seven ways to properly begin a sermon. Here are some examples:

1. *A story.* “One carefree morning of 1902, a sharp shock was felt in Martinique, a tiny island in the Caribbean....”

2. *A Challenging statement.* “The Bible teaches that some will die once; others, twice; while there will be those who will die thrice. But there will be a special group who will never be claimed by the grim reaper. The choices you make in this life will determine which group you will be in.”

3. *A question*

4. *A quotation.* “Modern man has discovered lots of answers, but not the Answer. He knows much about *how-to*, but very little about *what-for*. He seems more capable of extending life than enriching it. He is long on pleasure, but short on purpose.” Here is a quotation used in the sermon, “The Story and Glory of Life:” “If life is not more than a cosmic accident, a mindless joke, a swirl of confusion, and a color splashed across the backdrop of meaningless time, then perhaps the discotheque is man’s truest expression of reality. There. Bathed in the flashing brilliance of psychedelic lights, rocked by the pulsating rhythms of the electronic beat, stimulated by the sensuous gyrations of the go-go dancers—there, in miniature, is the story and glory of life.”

5. *A text read in a modern translation, the likes of Prov 3:4-6.*

6. *Statistics or some current and alarming event*

7. *An unknown or spectacular feat or event.* “Did you know that only 1,200 miles separates the north and south poles? That distance is too close for our sins. The Bible declares that God will “separate our sins as far as the east is from the west.”

## The Transition Sentence

This is the right moment to deal with the transition sentence, which is the “graceful, orderly, smooth, connected movement”<sup>1</sup> of the sermon from the introduction to the arguments contained in the body of the sermon. Failure to make this transition will

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<sup>1</sup>Katie Canon, *Teaching Preaching*, 145.

result in an *elephant sermon*. An elephant sermon is one in which the head and body merge into one huge continuous introduction, having a little tail of a conclusion. Here is an example of the transition sentence:

TITLE: Buying Life at Half-Price

INTRODUCTION:

One morning, a radio announcer was advertising a special subscription for Life magazine. He closed with this offer, "You can buy Life today at half-price." We live in a world where many people make the tragic mistake of trying to buy everything, including life, at half price.

But they are discovering that it will not work. Today, we will discover together, that the only life that is significant and lasting is the one that is bought at full price. But the good news is that it can be bought for free. Open your Bibles to John 3:1-5.

SERMON HEADS

1. Salvation is free, but you must come to Christ; whether by day or by night.
2. Salvation is free, but you must not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ.
3. Salvation is free, but you must come out of your hiding places and publicly accept Christ and be baptized.

The transition sentence is the portion that is underlined. Note how it makes a smooth, effortless transition from the introduction to the body of the sermon. The sermon conclusion is up next.

### **Sermon Conclusions**

Preaching a sermon is like flying an airplane. Some parts of it are fairly easy. However, there are two crucial moments: (1) getting off the ground, and (2) getting back on the ground. Bresee wrote that a sermon is like a love affair. It is much easier to start one than to end one.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Bresee, "Sermon Conclusions—I," *Ministry* (January 1990): 19.

Young preachers should beware of elephant sermons. Like the elephant, this is the sermon that has a big-head introduction at the beginning, plenty of body in the middle, but almost no tail at the end. It has been discovered that if the young preacher spends quality time to elaborate a solid body of arguments, then the conclusion will take care of itself.

Broadus had this to say, “The conclusion ought to have moved like a river, growing in volume and power; but instead of that, the discourse loses itself in some great marsh, or ends like the emptying of a pitcher with a few poor drops and dregs.”<sup>1</sup> Here are a few reasons why the sermon conclusion is often long, drawn out, boring, and disconnected in the young eyes in the audience:

1. *The sermon conclusion was short on planning.* Too often it is just an after thought.

2. *The entire sermon was re-preached in the conclusion.* It is natural for the preacher to be excited over his subject. After all, it is the final precipitate of his flesh and blood. Woe to the young preacher who is preaching something that he is not excited and enthused about. Unfortunately, unless bridled, such enthusiasm may lead him or her to preach the sermon all over again in the conclusion. I learned a valuable lesson from an retired Salvation Army captain about sermon conclusion: “When you’ve done pumping, let loose of the handle.”

3. *The conclusion was not prepared.* The conclusion, above any other part of the sermon, must come from your heart, and from the moving of the Holy Spirit on the young preacher’s heart. One reason it is often neglected in preparation is that the young preacher may feel that the Holy Spirit will move when the time comes. And make no mistake about it, He will. Bear in mind that the Spirit works better on a conclusion that was well prepared.

4. *Failure to prepare the final words of the conclusion.*

Charles Reynolds Brown shares what has worked for him:

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<sup>1</sup>John Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), 208.



In my own practice, while I never used a manuscript in preaching, there are five sentences in my sermon that I always write out in advance and know by heart—the first one and the last four. I like to begin with a sentence as good as I know how to make it, so that the first ball may be pitched, if possible, right over the plate at the proper level. And I want to have the last four sentences definitely in mind so that I may not be left circling around in the air, like some helpless crow, flying to and fro above a rail fence where the stakes have all been sharpened, seeking in vain for a suitable place to land.<sup>1</sup>

Many preachers have a lot in common with this crow. In spite of the fact that there are numerous landing options, yet they find it rather difficult to land and conclude the sermon. Here are some landing options:

1. State the desired change you hope the sermon will provoke in the lifestyles of the listeners.
2. Restate your theme. One very practical preacher had this to say, “I just tell them what I am going to tell them (sermon introduction). Then I tell them (sermon body). Then I tell them what I just finished telling them (sermon conclusion).”
3. The sermon could be brought to a conclusion by reading a text.
4. A clinching illustration or story.
5. A poem could be used for conclusion.
6. The sermon title could be restated for the conclusion.
7. Ask for a response, which should be done progressively: show of hands, stand, and finally, invitation to come to the altar.

Even though landing options for the conclusion are numerous, it should be prepared painstakingly. Don't ever stand up to preach before you know exactly how you will sit down. This is one of the unpardonable sins in homiletics.

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, *The Art of Preaching*, 113.

### **The Importance of the Conclusion**

The most important part of the sermon is the conclusion. This explains the difficulty entailed in preparing it. The lawyer is well aware that no matter how eloquently he argues his case, if his closing arguments don't draw forth a positive verdict, he fails.

Who will ever forget the late Johnny Cochrane's famous closing argument in the O. J. Simpson murder trial, "If the glove doesn't fit, you have to acquit." The salesman knows that no matter how fluent his sales presentation, if he doesn't know how to "close," so as to make a sale, he starves. Young preachers must learn to do likewise. It is important that the sermon introduction arrest the attention of the audience. It is also important that the sermon body bring along with it, inspiration, instruction, and persuasion. It is even more crucial that the sermon conclusion help listeners decide what action they will take. The young preachers must close for Christ; it is imperative that they concentrate on the verdict.

### **No Hard and Fast Rules**

It is not only dangerous; it is also presumptuous, to lay down hard and fast rules for preparing effective conclusions. It is not wise to bore the congregation by concluding the same way every time. Consider the fishermen and learn from them. If the fish don't bite certain bait, they try another. Sometimes they use a worm and sometimes a fly—it depends on where they are fishing and what they are trying to catch. They don't bait the hooks with what they happen to like best; or with what is most often used. Fishermen use whatever lands the most catch of fish. According to Bresee, young preachers must be wise in preparing sermon conclusions, varying their techniques, when "catching" men and

women for Christ.<sup>1</sup> Even though the conclusion should vary from sermon to sermon, and from congregation to congregation, there are, however, two basic parts that are indispensable for a conclusion. The first part of the conclusion should be a *summary* of the sermon. The last part should be a *call to action*

### **Summary**

The ideal summary is the one in which presents the sermon's basic thoughts in a new way. This by no means is indicating that thought provoking sermon themes and divisions cannot be repeated as a summary. Bear in mind that the congregation will not gravitate to the idea of having a sermon re-run in the summary. Listen to this wise counsel from Bresee:

Don't present any new arguments in the conclusion. To do so is to go contrary to its purpose, which is to recapitulate and apply the arguments or ideas already given. Thus, you will need only a few sentences in the summary portion of the conclusion. Solomon didn't have preaching directly in mind, but he gave excellent homiletic advice when he said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" (Eccl 12: 13). Too many conclusions unintentionally summarize only the last portion of the sermon body. You can drive your point deeper home if your summary pulls together the whole sermon.<sup>2</sup>

Unto what then shall the sermon summary be likened? It is likened unto the painting of a landscape, each division of the sermon body being an object in the painting—the tree, the cloud, the road, the horizon, etc. When you stand up to preach, the big picture is in your mind. You see it clearly. Unfortunately, the audience doesn't.

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Bresee, "Sermon Conclusions—II," *Ministry* (March 1990): 24.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

They will only be able to see the big picture as you summarize. It is for this reason that a well-prepared summary is so essential.

### **A Call to Action**

The sermon summary reviews and informs. The call to action confronts the will. A discourse is not really a sermon at all until it does both. Roy L. Smith had this observed that “the strength of the church does not consist of a host of those sick saints who gather on the Sabbath day seeking strength to get them through one more week, but lies in the effective force it can put into the field to battle against entrenched wrong and militant evil. . . . We come to the house of God as soldiers to a conference on strategy. We receive our marching orders and accept our assignments.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Here is a great example of a sermon conclusion:

Years ago, a man found a Spanish coin in Florida. It bore the date 1496 and the Latin words, *plus ultra*. He knew that at one time the coins of Spain had borne one more word—*ne plus ultra*. Why the change? In the early sixteenth century, Spain controlled both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar, and the two promontories, one on the African shore and the other on the European shore were called the Pillars of Hercules. Spanish coins were stamped with a representation of these two great outposts of the western world, the last known habitable part of the earth toward the west. On the maps of the Pillars of Hercules appeared the words *ne plus ultra*. When Columbus sailed through the pillars and into the western horizon and discovered the new world, everything changed. Spain became a mighty empire with lands beyond the Pillars—the gold mines of Peru and Mexico, and the sun-drenched hills of California. And the legend of the coins was changed to *plus ultra*, more beyond. Before Christ came to this world, despair cast its long dark shadows over the graves of men and women—*ne*

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent Q. Tigno Jr., “The [Whys] and Wherefores of Worship,” *Adventist Review*, October 10, 1985; 8, quoted in Linford E. Martin, *The Empty Pew: A Pastor’s Guide to Improved Church Attendance* (Lincoln, NE: Churches Resources Distribution Center, 1992).

*plus ultra*, no more beyond. But through the gospel, the Light of Life shone bright from Joseph's tomb; so that today, on the tombstone of every child of God, faith writes, *plus ultra*, more beyond!"<sup>1</sup>

This material, which the author is optimistic makes a valuable contribution to Homiletics as well as to the recruiting, training and the equipping of young preachers, is "no doing of Abraham." Certainly, every "t" has not been crossed or every "i" dotted. It lays no claim on *ne plus ultra*; "no more beyond." Its basic concepts are just the summary of an "Isaac" reopening Abraham's wells (Gen 26). Because knowledge in this field is like crawling backwards through the twin funnels of discovery and innovation, the pen of faith cannot be detained as it writes in bold letters on this final page, "*plus ultra*"—there is more beyond.

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Naden, "Preparing Your Sermon," *Ministry* (October 1984): 15.

## APPENDIX C

### SERMONS AND THESES

1. "Sir, we would see Jesus"
2. "What will we do with him that is called the Christ?"
3. "Woman, Behold your Son"
4. A List of Thirty-Seven Sermon Theses

## **SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS**

**TEXT:** John 12:21

**SUBJECT:** Jesus is the answer

**THESIS:** Any individual crippled by sin, and receive Christ, will walk again!

### **Introduction**

It was springtime in Jerusalem—a festive time, filled with preparations for the Passover and brightened with flowers. For Jesus, all was dark and gloomy. Not only had the Jews and Pharisees rejected Him, but also they would soon murder Him. Springtime in Jerusalem, but the smell of death was riding the wind. Through that dense overhanging dark cloud of gloom and doom shined a beacon light of hope; which brought great encouragement to the Son of God. Somewhere near the barrier that excluded the Gentiles from the temple court, come a request that shattered the gloom of death and brought great encouragement to the heart of the condemned Savior. Some Greeks had located Phillip, and across that crowded atrium came the words that brightened His heart, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21).

There were many great things, historical sites, and personalities to see in Jerusalem at that particular moment in history:

1. Herod’s Temple, known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.
2. The sealed Golden Gate that faces the rising sun; which, according to Jewish tradition, will only be opened to receive the coming of the Messiah in power and dazzling glory.
3. Lazarus, who was miraculously summoned back from the grave by the Life-giver.

This Greek delegation did not come to see any of these. They came with one purpose in mind, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" I hope that we will understand that people don't come to church to be dazzled and fascinated by the eloquence of the preacher. They don't come to see the display of new J.C. Penney Outlet outfits, Bostonian fancy shoes, or custom-made Giorgini suits. It is high time for it to sink in that they are not impressed with our flawless liturgies; they are not interested with our contemporary gospel music; and they are not moved by the attack of our \$100,000 pipe organ. They come to church because they want to see Jesus.

Our message will introduce a man lame from his birth; who did not attend a church service for almost forty years. The folks gave him silver and gold, but He did not come to church until somebody gave him Jesus. Open your Bibles to Acts 3:1-8.

### **The Lame Man Longing to See Jesus**

Using the camouflage of my imagination, I can see him. He was carried daily to the gate of the temple called Beautiful, and there he sat begging of the people who were entering. This is an adequate description of the human race, which has been crippled and shackled by the manacles of sin from its very inception, in the Garden of Eden. The Bible declares, "Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceived me" (Psalms 51:5). For almost forty years and never once did he go into the temple. Forty years, and all they gave him was money and insults. Forty years of finger pointing, inferiority complexes, hatred, and being ostracized. In all those years, not once did somebody offered Him Jesus. Why? They couldn't offer Christ, because they didn't have Him. All they had was silver and gold; all they had was pride and selfishness; all they had to offer was gossip self-righteousness. And no man can give what he does not



have. And so daily, he took their money, mingled with their insults, and watched them going into the temple. I understand that the richest man in the world is worth about 100 billion dollars. For the majority of them, that is all they have. If you want Jesus, you must look for a born again Christian. When will men understand that the most urgent need of the world is not money; it's Jesus. When will President George Bush understand that the solution for Al Qaeda and terrorism is not a two hundred and sixty billion dollar budget or deploying more troops to Irak? The solution for Al Qaeda is Jesus!

When will the Jews and the Palestinians understand that true lasting peace will only come to the Middle East through Jesus, the Prince of Peace? When will Louie Farrakhan and my Moslem brothers and sisters understand that, "Neither is there salvation in any other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we might be saved (Acts 4:12); and "that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow . . . and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord . . ." (Philippians 2:10, 11)? When will our Hindu brethren realize that true lasting cleansing is not to be found in the dirty tributaries of the Ganges River; but in that fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins? I am talking about Jesus. The biblical narrative says that Peter and John came together to the temple to pray. I am here to tell you this evening that the greatest miracles performed in the cause of Christ were done whenever God's children were united in prayer. (Somebody must have said amen out there). They came to the same temple; they saw the same lame man. It was the same situation. Somebody said, put a vulture in a cage and his eyes will rove downwards, in the creeks and corners, looking for dead carrion. Put an eagle in that same cage and his head will be pointed to the sun. It was the same cage, but a different bird.

**A Crippled World Longs to See Jesus  
in His Followers (Read Acts 3:4).**

It is puzzling why Peter and John didn't say, "Look on Jesus." But this is what Christianity is all about. The followers of Christ should walk so close to Him that they will never be afraid to say, "Look on us." The world must take note that we have been with Jesus. Every now and then a young person of my congregation would ask me, "Pastor, why can't I go to the movies, to the clubs, or eat certain foods? My simple answer has always been, "Because you are a child of the King." Why I can't use drugs etc? You are a child of the King." Why I can't use mini skirts, and jewelry. . . . You are a child of the King." Christianity demands that the participants come down from the grandstands; and on to the playing field and say, "Look on us." Some folks in church talk Christianity by the yard, but can't walk it or live it by the inch. What the world need is not more Christianity, but more Christians who practice Christianity; Christians who can say; "Look on us."

The greatest stumbling block to the cause of Christ is that His followers use Christianity as a cloak; they take it off and put it on to their convenience. Our Christianity must become an integral part of us. It is only then that we would be able to say to a crippled world, "Look at us."

When the world say to you that everybody is doing it, and that it is impossible for a youth in Brooklyn to live right, tell them, "Look on our young people." In a time when millions of marriages are broken to pieces on the jagged rocks of infidelity, and are long frozen in the deep freezers of ice-cold affections, challenge the world, "Look at our marriages." In a world where fourteen-year-old students are murdering fellow students and teachers in cold blood, as a preacher of righteousness, I say to you, "Look at our

schools.” In a world where sex is the game, immorality is the fashion, women is the song, drugs is the creed, and wine is the beverage; I hope that we can say, “Look on us!”

As I consider the hypocrisies of Christians, both past, present and future, I raise the pertinent question, Can you say with all certainty that your neighbors and fellow church members can see Jesus in you? What a great church this would be if people would spend as much energy practicing their Christianity as they spend quarrelling and fighting about it.

**Give Me Jesus and I Will Come  
to Church (Acts 3:5-8)**

When Peter and John said, “Look on us,” the lame man thought to himself that he would become the beneficiary of some monetary benefit from them. The next words uttered by Peter shattered his hopes to smithereens, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6). They offered the lame man what they had—Jesus, the Pearl of Great Price. Immediately, the man obeyed the command, rose up and walked, and went leaping and praising God. Any man, who has been crippled by sin, and receive Christ, and is touched by the healing hand of the Great Physician, will walk again. Not only will he walk, but also he will leap. Not only will the healed sinner leap, but he will also praise the name of Jesus. Not only will the rehabilitated sinner walk, leap, and praise the Name of Jesus; but also the first place he will go is to the temple (and if you don’t say amen to this, I don’t know what will make you say it).

Many people in this community have been brutally attacked, bruised and beaten spiritually by the devil. Crippled by the cosmic virus of sin, they lay half-dead at the gate

of the church begging for the “alms” of relief from demonic oppression. We err greatly and deceive ourselves in thinking that their most urgent clamor is for the “silver and gold” characteristics of the true church; or for the “alms” of indoctrination. They don’t want our doctrines and our beliefs. They want Jesus.

**Illustration: Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8)**

The Bible says, “Then Phillip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Phillip didn’t preach to him about the Sabbath; as an African, he was familiar with that already. He preached to him the Lord of the Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> He did not preach to him about unclean food, he preached about Jesus, the Bread of Life. His focus was not on jewelry. This subject pales in comparison to Jesus, the Pearl of Great Price. Therefore, he preached Jesus. The desert preacher didn’t waste precious time on the doctrine of the state of the dead; he spoke about the first resurrection, when the dead in Christ will rise first. Like the Greeks, a crippled world demands of modern disciples, “Sirs, we would see Jesus.” They will never walk through the doors of this beautiful church unless He is seen in our lives and in our doctrines.

**Conclusion**

**Illustration**

After the Second World War, a group of world leaders convoked a special meeting. They had a one-point agenda: Come up with a logical solution that would prevent a Third World War. They offered a thousand dollars to any person who could

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<sup>1</sup>Sednak Yankson, *Africa’s Roots in God* (Hempstead, NY: Sankofa Heritage Books, 2007), 175-177.

come up with a suggested solution. Among the hundreds of suggested solutions that came, there was one, which simply said, "Try Jesus."

Let us be honest with ourselves, everything we have tried has failed. We have tried drugs, wars, money, the clubs, worldly pleasures, music, homosexuality, and lesbianism; but yet things are going from bad to worse. Why not let us try Jesus?

How many want to say tonight, "God, everything that I have tried to achieve happiness has failed. This evening, I want to see Jesus. For the first time, I want to try Jesus." (Raise hands)

"Have Faith in God the story in the Bible is true.

Have faith in God, divine love is reaching out to you.

Have faith in God; the power in His blood will see you through.

Have Faith, dear friend in God."

## **“WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE CHRIST?”**

**TEXT:** Matthew 27:19-27

**SUBJECT:** Decision to accept or reject Christ

**THESIS:** Each individual must decide what he will do with the Christ.

### **Introduction**

He was awakened very early in the morning, and he was in a bad mood. Like most hard working men, he was not particularly tickled about the idea of getting up so early in the morning. As he got dressed, he said to himself, “This must be a bad criminal, otherwise the Jewish authorities would not have awakened me this early.” He was thinking that he would get this over with quickly, so that he could go back to bed. He had no idea that the so called criminal was Jesus of Nazareth, and that this would be the day he would have to decide what to do with Him that is called the Christ. I seize this opportunity to declare that every person within the radius of my voice, this evening, will be given the opportunity to accept or reject the Christ of Calvary. My sincere prayer is that you will chose life and live. Open your Bibles to John 18:28-29, as we consider the subject, “What will you do with the Christ.”

### **Jesus before Pilate (Read John 18:28-29)**

Pontius Pilate had judged many criminals, a good number of which were on death row. Never had he seen a criminal like Jesus. After a lengthy period of escalating questions, he finally declared, “I find in Him no fault at all” (John 18:38). When the tide of public opinion turned against Him, men and women accused Him of a lot of mean

things. He was called a rabble-rouser, a political activist, a troublemaker, an agitator, and some even called Him Beelzebub, the Prince of devils. You can call Him what you may, but as for me and my house, His Name is wonderful, He is our Counselor, He is the Mighty God, He is the Everlasting Father, He is the Prince of Peace, He is the Fairest of ten thousands, He is the Rose of Sharon, He is the Lily of the Valley, He is the bright and morning Star, and all the governments of the world, including the great United States of America, are on His shoulder. Like Pontius Pilate, "I find in Him no fault at all." Can you find fault with the One who is the author of so great a salvation? This man called Jesus, left the splendor and glory of heaven knowing fully well His destiny. He died the death that every sinner on this planet should have died, in order that they might live the life that He should have lived. I am here to tell you today that greater love hath no man than to lay down His life for a friend. I challenge you to look me in the eye and tell me that this isn't love. If that isn't love, then the ocean is dry; there are no stars in the sky, and the sparrow can't fly. Now you can see why Pontius Pilate, me and my house, and billions of Christians and non-Christians down through the annals of time, "Find in Him no fault at all"

**Read John 18:33-38**

Pilate asked Jesus the million-dollar question, "What is truth?" This is the greatest question a sinner can ask in the plan of salvation. Unfortunately, Pilate asked the question, but did not wait for the answer. He was called away by the angry mob. He missed his greatest chance. If only he had tarried for the answer, he would have heard

from the lips of the Savior, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6); “Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free” (John 8:32); “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*” (John 8:36). In the war against terror, President Bush has boasted that America is a free society. I am here to tell you today that true freedom in any society can only be found in Jesus. Pilate asked the question, but did not wait for the answer. He walked away from the answer; and from salvation. People are asking the right questions about their salvation but, like Pilate, they are not waiting for the answers. They are called away by the angry mobs of society. Those attending evangelistic meetings are called away by angry husbands and wives; called away by angry friends, classmates, and college professors; called away by angry parents, church pastors, and angry bosses.

**Read Luke 23:6 (Jesus is sent to Herod)**

With the help of the Roman intelligences, Pilate learns that Jesus was from Galilee; he was privy that Herod was governing that region. Pilate, knowing that Jesus was innocent, seizes the opportunity to shift the responsibility to somebody else. This is the typical behavior of sinners—they look to see what will be the decision of others, before they decide what they will do with Him that is called the Christ. They ride the tide of public opinion; if my friends decide, then I will decide. If my spouse decides to go ahead with it, then I will go ahead too. If my pastor says it is all right, then all is well. If the majority is doing it, then they will do it too. I stand before you to remind you kindly but firmly, that anybody who does not think and make a decision for himself will become a victim of the mass.



A great delegation of priests and elders accompanied Jesus to Herod—the very same individual who had decapitated John the Baptist. Friends, John was not beheaded because he was the “Godfather” of organized crime of Judea; a drug lord, or because he had robbed the central Bank of Jerusalem. He was executed because Herod asked for the truth, but couldn’t handle the truth. Herod had a brother by the name of Phillip, who was married to a woman by the name of Herodias. Herod had taken away his brother’s wife. John the Baptist, the one who fearlessly reprovved iniquity in high and low places, denounced this iniquitous alliance, much to the chagrin and disgust of Herodias. She eventually found revenge upon the Baptist by inducing Herod to cast him into prison, and finally had him executed.

It is no different today. People just can’t handle the truth. All it takes is for some modern John the Baptist to come preaching the truth just as it is written in God’s Word, and before you realize what is happening, his or her head is gone. Today, there are some folks in almost every congregation; if you preach smooth things you are the greatest among the sons of the preachers. The minute you start preaching the truth, here they come trying to cut off your head. I am here to tell you this evening that nobody can just behead God’s servants for the cause of the truth and just walk away. It would be best for that man or woman, if he or she had not been born.

Herod was anxious to see Jesus. He had heard about His mighty miracles, and hoped that He was John the Baptist reincarnated. He questioned Jesus on many matters. At the command of the king, the cripple and the maimed were paraded before the King of kings and He was ordered to prove His claims by performing a miracle. Jesus answered him not a word (Luke 23:9). What Herod and millions didn’t understand is that Jesus

was not running in any popularity contest. His mission was not to gratify idle curiosity. He came to heal the broken-hearted. Could He have spoken any word to heal the bruises of sin-sick souls, He would not have kept silent. He had no words for those who would but trample the truth under their unholy feet. Those lips that uttered the most impressive truth, that in tones of tender entreaty had pleaded with the most sinful and most degraded, were closed to the haughty king who felt no need of a Savior. Christian friends God is love. But His grace has a limit. There is a line that is drawn, where the call of His Spirit gone. God holds the destiny of every soul in His hands; He will not be mocked or be trifled with. Herod had many opportunities to be saved; Jesus sent him His best minister, whom he decapitated because he lusted after the voluptuous, shapely form of a go-go dancer. Now the Master comes in person, and Herod is still adamant in his depravity. He had committed the unpardonable sin. He had no alternative but to send Jesus back to Pilate. Let us look at some lessons that can be gleaned from this tragic experience.

### **Haunting Decisions**

Herod's biggest problem was that he made a very poor choice at a crucial moment at the crossroads of his life. He exchanged the life of an innocent prophet of God for a few moments of pleasure with a seductive go-go dancer. A very poor choice and it haunted him for the rest of his life; and will haunt him for all eternity. We too like Herod are making some poor choices in life that are coming back to haunt us every day. We make poor choices of friends. Somebody said that a true friend is the one who comes in when the entire world has gone out.

Then some make the wrong choice of dress, music, schools, and life companions. Some are dead, who could have been alive today. Why they are not here? They succumbed to the wrong choices.

**Illustration:** An irresponsible father introduced his son to sleep with prostitutes; he contracted the HIV virus.

### **Don't Squander Flowers on the Dead**

The poet Tennyson wrote, "Don't squander your flowers on the dead." It is while you are alive that you must decide what you will do with Him that is called the Christ. Whatever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might; because there is no repentance in the grave where you are going (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

### **It is an Individual Decision**

Every man, woman, boy or girl must decide individually what they will do with Him that is called the Christ. Pilate tried to shift Jesus to Herod, but the Bible says that Herod sent Him back to Pilate. He had to decide what he would do with Him that is called the Christ! So must every individual born on planet earth. So must every individual under the radius of my voice. There comes a time in life when it is only you and Jesus. A sinner woman was brought to Jesus for His condemnation. After writing all the sins of her accusers in the sand, all of them dropped their rocks and went home. Jesus was left alone with her. There comes a time when it is only you and Jesus.

### **Read Luke 23:6-12**

Pilate and Herod became friends that same day, on account of Jesus. If, by dealing with Christ, vile fellows, the likes of a Pilate and a Herod, can be reconciled to each other,

can't the same thing become a reality for church brethren, who are handling the holy oracles of Christ every single day? Can't they be reconciled too? What about the Moslems and the Jews in the Middle East? Surely, the common creed of the three great religions founded by Abraham (Christianity, Moslems, and the Jews) must be strong enough to reconcile them to each other—love God supremely, and love your neighbor as yourself? The problem is that they are not applying it. The same love that reconciled Pilate and Herod can bring peace to the Middle East.

### **Timely Message through the Most Effective Medium**

God sent a message of warning through Pilate's wife to warn him from the deed he was about to commit. The message came on time and from someone dear to him—his beloved wife. It couldn't get any closer. God always sends his message of warning through the most effective mediums.

She did not belong to the Jewish nation; she was a pagan. It is not the messenger; it is the message. I say to you, this church does not have great preachers; what she has is a great message. When will men understand that all religious barriers are blurred, along the great continuum of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity? Why is it so hard to perceive that the boundless sweep of God's revelation cannot be limited to any particular religious body or selective group of individuals?<sup>1</sup> In answer to Christ's prayer in John 17, an angel, from heaven, visited Pilate's wife. In a dream she had beheld the Savior and conversed with Him. She was given a panoramic review of all that transpired

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., *A Knock at Midnight*, 30.

in Pilate's judgment; she saw Calvary, and even the second coming of Christ in power and apocalyptic glory. Her message was simple, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man" (Matthew 27:19). Note; the message came on time. God always sends the message on time. This was true for the antediluvian world, as well as for Sodom and Gomorrah. You are not here this evening by chance. The Holy Ghost woke you up this morning, and started you over to this meeting place, so that you can hear the message on time. But still Pilate vacillated.

### **Jesus or Barabbas? (Read Matthew 27:15)**

Who was Barabbas? He was on death row; he was a false messiah, he was a thief, and a murderer; a troublemaker, a rabble-rouser, political activist, and opportunist, who used religion as a cloak of disguise for his true motive—his greed for money and power. He was a thorn in the flesh of the Jews. He had excited sedition against the Roman government. The Jews hated Barabbas. Pilate brought out both the prisoners to the mob, and said with great earnestness, "Who will ye that I release unto you?" He was convinced that they would ask that Jesus be released. To his surprise, like the bellowing of wild beasts, came the answer of the mob, "Release unto us Barabbas." Louder and louder swelled the cry, "Barabbas," "Barabbas," "Barabbas" etc. "What shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ," Pilate asked. Demons, disguised in human form shouted, "Let Him be crucified."

It is no different today. In this postmodern era, the claims of absolute truth are promptly dismissed, based on the premise of intolerance, and the young are viewed with suspicion—as living epitomes of animated disgrace. In this reprobate world and its sinful ways, in which the ability to reason is so waned, the tenderness of conscience is so

impaired, that the sense of God is obscured, and the authority of the body is increased over the mind, it is common practice to crucify Jesus, and let the wrong things and situations go free. Deaths provoked by rabies pales in comparison to the thousands that die directly or indirectly from the consumption of alcohol. Yet we shoot the dog, but license alcohol. It should be the reverse, "License" the dog, and "shoot" alcohol. Do that, and there would be no end to the strikes, the demonstrations, the lobbying, the political wrangling, and the whining, "Give us our wine, or we die!" There is more. Give us our women, our sex, our drugs, and our songs. What shall we do with Him, who is called Christ? Crucify Him. Give us the neon deserts and the gambling casinos of Las Vegas. Give us the psychedelic lights of the nightclubs. What shall we do with this Jesus, called the Christ? Have Him crucified. Pass out the condoms to our young sons and daughters. Preacher, what shall we do with abstinence until marriage? Crucify that. Yes, it's okay to shack up with your fiancé, so long as it is a meaningful relationship. What shall we do with marriage? Crucify it! Let the contract of marriage not be interpreted as limited to only a man and a woman. Give the homosexuals and lesbians a break. Give us Barrabbas. Give us Sunday for the Sabbath, and the popular religion. What shall we do with the Seventh-day Sabbath and the old time religion? Nail them both to the cross. Do away with that. Crucify them both. Give us ham, pigtail, hog-flesh, and the lotto. Give us the world and its sinful ways. Then what shall we do with this thing called baptism? Crucify that.

### **The Tragic End of Pilate**

Pilate washed his hands, but he couldn't wash his conscience. He knew that Christ was innocent, and wanted to set Him free. His problem, like millions today, was

that he wanted to serve two masters. By freeing Jesus, he sought to please the Jews, and thought that he would be promoted in the Roman Empire. Is not this the same situation today? Many want to follow Christ, but want to hold on to the things of the world at the same time. You cannot serve two masters. The life Pontius Pilate came to a very tragic end. He ordered the mass murder of a group of Galileans on the very premises of the church (Luke 13:1-5). This cruel incident came to the notice of Caesar. Pilate was demoted, and exiled on Gaul, which subsequently became France. He committed suicide. "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

### **Conclusion**

Outside the Peace of the Hague Netherlands, there stands an enormous statue of Christ. A visitor asked a guide why the statue was outside instead of inside where it was most needed. The answer was, because the entrance was too small.

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart. I am just wondering, is the entrance of your heart large enough to let Him come in, or is it too small? (Have someone sing, "The Savior is waiting to enter your heart.")

“WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON; SON,  
BEHOLD THY MOTHER”

**TEXT: John**

**THEME:** The disciple who first follows Jesus to Calvary will eventually follow Him all the way to Glory.

### **INTRODUCTION**

A. The mother of Jesus, sustained by the beloved disciple John, had followed the steps of her Son all the way to Calvary.

1. **Somebody said that preaching is the final precipitate of a marvelous wedding of passion and intellectual prowess.**
2. **This is why I am using this theme from which to preach: “Those who first follow Christ to Calvary will respect and provide for their parents**

B. They will eventually follow Him all the way to Glory.”

### **ALL THE WAY TO CALVARY**

A. When you follow Christ all the way to Calvary, like Mary, you will have firsthand experience that the Calvary journey is a heartbreaking one.

1. **Modern disciple, when you follow Jesus all the way to Calvary, you will see the Son of God fainting under the heavy burden of the cross.**
  - a. How much Mary desired to place a supporting hand beneath His wounded head and to bathe that brow which had been once pillowed upon her bosom.
  - b. However, this sad privilege was denied to her.



**2. With the disciples, she still cherished the hope that Jesus would manifest His power and deliver Himself from His enemies.**

- a. Again her hopes and aspirations were short-lived as she recalled the words in which He had foretold the very scenes that were now unfolding.
- b. Would He who had given life to the dead suffer Himself to be crucified?
- c. Must she witness His shame and sorrow, without even having the privilege of ministering to Him in His distress?

**C. If during this time of the Passion you, like Mary, would go all the way to Calvary with Jesus.**

- 1. If you could only see His hands stretched out on the cross.**
- 2. If you could see the hammer brought down with a sickening thud, time and time again.**
- 3. My friend, if you were there and saw those rusty spikes driven through His tender shivering human flesh; maybe you too like Mary would have fainted.**

### **WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON**

**A. The heart-stricken disciples had no alternative but to bore away from the cruel scene the fainting form of the mother of Jesus.**

- 1. But she could not endure to remain away from her Son.**
- 2. John, sensing that the end was near; brought her again to the foot of the cross.**

B. Some folks believe that an individual only have to come to Calvary once.

1. **This is a theological lie that is spurious and cunningly deceptive.**
2. **It is not enough to come to Calvary one time and walk away never to return.**
3. **You must keep coming back, again and again, and again and again; as much times as it will take, until you hear the words from the Master Himself, “Woman, behold your son; son, behold your....”**
4. **This short phrase is not the words of a utopian dreamer who never quite came down to earth.**
  - a. We cannot dismiss this phrase as just another example of Oriental hyperbole, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing.
  - b. John understood Christ’s words and, accepted the trust. He at once took Mary to his home, and from that hour cared for her tenderly.
  - c. Holy tradition indicates that Mary lived with John in Ephesus until she died.
5. **Far from being the pious injunction of an impractical idealist, this perfect example of Christ’s filial love shines forth with undimmed luster down through the annals of time.**
6. **This text glitter in our eyes with new urgency; its implications are not only awesome and staggering, but also vital and compelling.**

C. For nearly thirty years Jesus by His daily toil had helped bear the burdens of the home.

1. **And now, even in the midst of His last agony, He remembers to provide for His sorrowing, widowed mother.**
2. **By now Joseph was dead; even though Joseph had children from a previous marriage, Mary only gave birth to one child; only one child was nursed in her bosom—His name was Jesus!**
3. **In a society in which women had such little value, poverty was the inevitable destiny of an aging, childless widow.**
4. **Now we understand the words “Woman, behold your son.”**

D. “Disciple, behold your mother” is not a petition; it is a command.

1. **It commands children to give flowers to their mothers when they can smell them.**
2. **Do not squander your flowers on the dead; wrote one of our poets.**
3. **One of the most difficult things for me to understand is how is it that modern disciples can follow Jesus all the way to Calvary.**
  - a. Even participate in His crucifixion,
  - b. Hear from his own lips, “Woman, behold your son” and, “Son, behold your mother,”
  - c. Then walk away and treat women as second class citizens in our churches; hiding behind the pretext that it was the woman who was deceived and not the man.

**“Son, behold your mother,” “Grandson, behold your grandmother,”  
and, “Church brethren, behold your women.”**

- 3. It is only then that we will be ready to go all the way to glory with  
Jesus. And that’s all I have to say.**

“There is hope for you when habits have made you a slave.

There is hope for you his hand is mighty to save.

There is hope for with His blood the way was pave.

There is hope in Christ for you my friend.

## A LIST OF THIRTY-SEVEN SERMON THEMES

1. "He who is busy at the oars won't have time to rock the boat" (Luke 2:42-50).
2. "The battles we lose standing up can be won on our knees!"
3. "What we fail to do in easy times will be done in hard times" (Samson, Jonah, Caleb).
4. "Only those who lean heavily on the pillar doctrines will be able to fulfill the mission" (Judges 16:23-31).
5. "God's blessings are reserved for those who remain in the blessing place" (Trevor Baker).
6. "Tears of grief must never exceed the blessed hope of the resurrection!" (Luke 24)
7. "The greatest miracles will be done within the context of obedience" (John 2:5).
8. "You will never be truly blessed until you learn to rejoice with the blessings of others" (1 Chronicles 28).
9. "The people will always follow the leaders who are bearing the "ark" of God's Word!" (Joshua 3:1-6).
10. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" (Matthew 7:21-23).
11. "Yesterdays blessing can become today's worst curse!" (Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:1-3).
12. "Fear is the dark room in which all the negatives of life are developed"
13. "Little is much when God is in it." (Stewardship)

14. "Failure to let go of what is not rightfully yours will eventually destroy you!"  
(Gehazi: 2 Kings 5:20-27).
15. "Ostracized Christians make the best witnesses!" (The Gadarenes, the woman of Samaria, the four lepers, Jesus, etc).
16. "The abiding presence of God will dwell anywhere He is welcomed" (Obed-Edom: 2 Samuel 6).
17. "Every man will come to church one day—dead or alive!"
18. "Elevated seats around the communion table, is no guarantee for seats around the welcome table!"
19. "Whether trials grinds down, or polishes up, depends on the stuff you are made of."
20. "Smooth sailing through the storms of life is reserved for those who put away besetting sins!" (Jonah thrown overboard).
21. "What to do when things in life go from bad to worse!" (Mark 5:23-36).
22. "Sitting on idols in church, is the greatest setback to the cause of Christ."  
(Genesis 31:17-19; 26-35).
23. "A consecrated youth will conquer any giant, if he comes in the name of the Lord!" (David and Goliath)
24. "We ought to obey God than the king" (1 Samuel 6:1-3).
25. "Our best efforts will end in tragedy; if cradled in disobedience" (1 Samuel 6:1-3).
26. "Most of our disobedience stems from following the world and its sinful ways" (1 Samuel 6:1-3).

27. "Human intervention in divine things often ends in tragedy" (1 Samuel 6:1-3).
28. "God does not need human hands to defend His cause" (1 Samuel 6:1-3).
29. "Too often we fly into God's face; blaming Him for the tragic results of our poor choices" (1 Samuel 6:1-3).
30. "God permits chastisement to those in the light, and winks at the ignorance of those in darkness" (1 Samuel 6:1-3)
31. "The bounties on the Master's table are so abundant; that even the crumbs can satisfy my spiritual need" (Matthew 15:22-27).
32. "The bounties on the white man's table are so abundant; even the crumbs can satisfy the black man's needs" (Matthew 15:22-27).
33. "The bounties on the rich man's table are so abundant; the poor would be able to live on the crumbs" (Matthew 15:22-27).
34. "To reach heavenly Canaan leaders, and the people, must follow the road map" (Joshua 1; 1-2; 3:1-3).
35. "To reach the heavenly Canaan we must not confuse stop over points with the final destination" (Joshua 1:1-2; 3:1-3).
36. "Imposing human will on God's will, is a stumbling block on the road to heaven" (Joshua 1:1-2; 3:1-3).
37. "Sanctification precedes the wonder of crossing over to the promised land" (Joshua 1:1-2; 3:1-3).

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## VITAE

## ANTHONY L. USHER

1. Anthony L. Usher was born in Belize, Central America, in the heart of the Caribbean Basin. He can relate to three of the world's greatest cultures: the British, the Spaniards, and the Americans.
2. Usher, and his bride since March of 1983, the lovely, the beautiful, and the gifted Laurene Richards Crawford, has worked in three of the world divisions of Seventh-day Adventists.
3. This blissful union has produced three handsome boys: Arlington, Erick, and Warner, who have kept them on their tiptoes and on their knees. Aspiring to become a medical doctor, Usher pursued and obtained associate degrees in chemistry, biology, and in physics, from the Belize Technical College, in Belize, Central America.
4. Leaving chemistry for the ministry, he subsequently earned a bachelor's degree in theology from the Adventist University of Central America, and a master's degree in Leadership and Administration from Loma Linda University. Anthony Usher has been ordained to the gospel ministry since September 1986. He has faithfully served his Master as a grade school teacher, as district pastor, as conference evangelist, and youth departmental director.
5. He also served as field secretary of the Costa Rican Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, as youth campus pastor, and as professor of homiletics in the School of Theology, at the Adventist University of Central America.
6. Anthony is currently the senior pastor of the Christian Fellowship SDA Church, in Brooklyn, New York. He is pursuing a DMin in Youth Ministries from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is fluent in both the English and Spanish languages.