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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND MISSION
AWARENESS IN THE HILL PORTUGUESE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH,
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

by

Dilson M. Bezerra

Adviser: Skip Bell

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND MISSION AWARENESS IN
THE HILL PORTUGUESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH,
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Name of researcher: Dilson M. Bezerra

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Skip Bell, DMin

Date completed: August 2010

Problem

Between 1992 and 2007, the attendance of the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church has declined from 200 to 60 members and the church completely lost its sense of mission. This downturn requires investigation and study in order to reverse the situation. The project is an implementation of a program to revive the church in fellowship with God, and in action within the community. Further, Portuguese immigrant members display a tendency towards liberalism when removed from their native culture.

Method

An informal survey was created and administered to the church members in order to discover why membership had been declining through the years. Sermons, pastoral

visitation, and training seminars were administrated to the members in order update their knowledge concerning spirituality and mission.

Results

The church developed a spiritual environment for Christian workers to be equipped to fulfill their mission. The tools presented in this project gave the opportunity for practical learning and outreach. As a result of spiritual affirmation, the church accomplished both objectives: to grow spirituality and equip the laity to be involved in mission. House churches became the channel to reach the community.

Conclusions

The project opens the door for a profound commitment of each member. As they renew their faith the focus in every area of the church becomes evangelism: pastors, leaders, and members working together to connect the church with the community. Members have affirmed they are spending more time in personal prayer and studying the Bible, and as a result participate in outreach activities. Worship service and small groups became a tool to connect the community with the church.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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AWARENESS IN THE HILL PORTUGUESE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH,
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

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

by
Dilson M. Bezerra
August 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The church as a spiritual environment for Christian workers will equip the laity to fulfill their mission. The tools presented in this project give the opportunity for practical learning and outreach. The project is an implementation of a challenge program to revive the church in fellowship with God, and in action within the community.

The project opens the door for a profound commitment of each member. As they renew their faith the focus in every area of the church becomes evangelism. Pastor, leaders, and members work together to connect the church with the community. Even though there are different gifts and ministries, we are all supposed to reach the community and show them that salvation comes by Jesus Christ.

My gratitude to the teachers and advisers, Dr. Skip Bell, Dr. Stanley Patterson, Dr. Clifford R. Jones, and Dr. Trevor O'Reggio for their tremendous support through this project. I want to give special recognition to my wife for her patience and my three daughters, Daline, Darlene, and Daiene, for helping their dad since English is my second language. You guys are great. I love you very much!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

When Angola and Mozambique got independence from Portugal in 1975 several 1000 Portuguese refugees entered South Africa because of hostilities from the new governments. By the 1980s there were over one million Portuguese immigrants in South Africa (Azevedo, 2002, p. 37). The Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in that year with a total membership of 20 people. During the next 10 years membership increased to 200 people and a multicultural ministry began. However, through the years members developed a maintenance ministry. As a result, the spiritual level of the church declined, and the membership lost vision for the mission of the church.

Even though the church has been experiencing moderate growth, and many pastors have promoted evangelism, there is still much to be done. In some years the membership of the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church increased and in other years declined, largely due to immigration. In our church there was a need to develop strategies that will motivate and involve more members in evangelism. There is a need to expand the meaning of the Great Commission among the laity. In order to fulfill its mission, the church must continue to develop strategies to motivate, train, and empower the majority of the laity to fulfill the Great Commission.

Statement of the Problem

From 1992 until 2007, membership at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church in Johannesburg, South Africa, declined from 200 to 60 members (attendance 40) as reflected in conference records. During this time the members slowly lost their mission focus as the church concentrated on a maintenance ministry. The result was declining spirituality and lack of evangelistic passion. The members lost the enthusiasm to love and to serve the community, and the theological foundation of the church was shaken because of various crises.

The challenge to evangelize a multicultural and secularized population like in Johannesburg was enormous. In spite of the great effort of pastors and leaders at different times promoting evangelism, the church still did not grow as they could have if they were committed to the Great Commission. The Church needs to learn how to equip and mobilize members to evangelize the Hill area.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to enhance spirituality and reignite mission awareness in the members of the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church through a spiritual formation program emphasizing Bible study, prayer, worship, and small groups. This program was evaluated, and the results interpreted to assess and confirm the results of the project.

This project develops tools that can be used to equip and mobilize members of any immigrant church around the world. The project was applied to the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church as a pilot program, with the purpose of offering

information on how you can revive your church, promoting spiritual formation and mission awareness.

Purpose of the Project

The main purpose of this project was to develop and affirm the spirituality of the members of the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through this spiritual growth, the church was to find a new vision for mission so that the project would bring about a spiritual renewal to the members' lives. The project was conducted in an immigrant church with several aspects of a non-immigrant church. Immigrant members outside their culture have the tendency to be very liberal in their religious approach. For the past 15 years, attendance at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church had decreased significantly. This downturn had to be investigated and studied in order to find solutions to reverse the situation. The spirituality of the church correlates to the prioritization of mission in the church.

The lack of evangelism and outreach programs isolated the members from the community, resulting in the church's mission being lost. The mission of the church must be recaptured by this project. The Christian life is an expression of living spirituality. Living spirituality is both a verb and an adjective. It is to be lived and it is living. Through these difficult years the spirituality of the church declined, generating a lot of stress among the members. The spirituality of the church needs to be reignited. A theological reflection is needed in order to focus on what the Bible says about the mission of the church and issues relating to spiritual formation. The major issue in this project is to take each member into a profound spiritual journey in order to see the real mission of the church. The connection between spiritual formation and mission awareness brings the

church to a deep commitment to be involved with the community to preach the gospel. As members we need to see the Kingdom of God as a present reality and demonstrate the principles of this kingdom in our church lifestyle.

Definition of Terms

The concept of growth is based upon the reason we receive spiritual gifts. These special abilities are given to God's people, so that they can do better work for Him. The result of this endowment will be the growth of the church in strength and maturity. Spiritual gifts are given in order to equip the saints for service. The idea of mission implies a spiritual call for discipleship, people studying the Bible, praying for spiritual growth, worshipping and meeting in small groups to mix with the community. These areas will be involved in the development of the project. Some of the most important concepts of this dissertation are defined in the following sections.

Spiritual Formation

"How the life of the person is formed into Christ-likeness. The formation of the soul, of the heart, of the life, into Christ-likeness" (Foster, 2005, p. 55). Galatians 4:19: "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you" (NASB; all scriptural passages unless otherwise cited are from the NASB). Romans 8:29: "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

Spiritual formation is the development of the internal spiritual life marked by distinct spiritual habits. It is marked by certain disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, confession, humility, and service. It transforms our inner life and relationships. Furthermore, spiritual formation is a movement that provides a platform and a channel

through which transformation enters the life of the members of the church. Spiritual formation is both rooted in and results from God's grace. God initiates the process of spiritual formation. He enables the continued process and provides everything that is necessary for godliness. God will complete the process of sanctification, but He desires a human response of faith and obedience to His grace. A reversal of this order of God's grace and humanity's response is always a religion of self-effort. God's grace is the starting point for all spiritual progress. Humankind is entirely dependent on God for growth.

Phillip Yancey (2000) says,

I will never be able to reduce life with God to a formula for the same reason I cannot reduce my marriage to a formula. It is a living growing relationship with another free being, very different from me and yet sharing much in common. (pp. 134-35)

Another author adds, "What I discovered was that there are no shortcuts, no gimmicks, and no easy ways to cultivate an intimacy with God and attain the resulting passion that should carry one through life's journey" (MacDonald, 1986, p. 11).

Spiritual Discipline

Spiritual discipline describes the behaviors a person applies to their spiritual growth. The discipline suggests specific behaviors we practice over time to grow closer to God and live a life of devotion.

This concept helps us do what we can with our body, with our mind, with our spirit, in order to receive from God the power to do what we cannot. "Following Jesus simply means learning from him how to arrange my life around activities that enable me to live in the fruit of the Spirit" (Ortberg, 2002, p. 44). Spiritual discipline is any activity that can help us gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it. Spiritual

disciplines are a means and not an end. They are the journey and not the destination. They are a way of adjusting our minds, shaping our character, and conforming our actions after the pattern of Jesus' life.

Mission

In this project when we speak about mission we are referring to the mission of the church, which is to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and make disciples of all kinds of people. This mission is described in the following verses:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt 28:19-20)

And He said to them, "Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15)

Jesus described His purpose: "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." (Matt 18:11)

He said to the disciples: "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt 4:19)

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD." (Luke 4:18-19)

When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, there is no need for mission anymore. However, as long as we are here the goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God (Piper, 1994).

Studying the Bible

Studying the Bible in this project is when a person opens up his heart to study and learn the Word of God regularly. The book of Revelation begins with this promise,

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it, for the time is near” (Rev 1:3). Yet many who spend much time studying the Bible tend to avoid this book, claiming that it is a mystery, or a sealed book. This is in spite of the fact that the word *revelation* means the revealing of a mystery. Studying the Bible is an integral component for growth in faithfulness and understanding. It is like a free pass to added attractions. When you first read the Scriptures, you can get enough meaning from it to meet a challenge victoriously, but that level of meaning is just the tip of the iceberg. As you proceed deeper into the Bible, the deeper you go into the heart of God, understanding His perspective. The more you study the Bible, the more it means to you, and the more it can do for you. There is a difference between *getting* what a Scripture means and integrating it totally into your being; that is the difference between mere surface reading and a true Bible study.

Studying the Bible for the Christian is an essential part of life. If we are to mature, then we have to study. God’s Word tells us to study in order to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed. Studying the Bible should not be a burden on us, but it should be hunger to us. The importance of studying the Bible cannot be stressed enough. We are given a relationship with the Almighty, but intimate communion with Him through His Word provides the necessary opportunity for His Holy Spirit to inform and mold our hearts.

Prayer

Prayer is a door of communication with God. The dialogue with the Holy One in a private way increases our sense of His presence. Prayer means that you are beginning a

dialogue with Him. When one chooses prayer, one is choosing to step aside from all that seems to be happening and seek connection with His Father.

Jesus set an example for us regarding what to pray. He prayed for His disciples and for every generation to come that would follow Him. It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that there is a God and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him. It could be said that God talks to you at all times, and at some point, you acknowledge that and you talk back to Him. That is prayer. Then you hear God more specifically because you are engaged in the conversation. Once you start a conversation through prayer, whatever that looks like, the relationship begins.

Worship

In *Real Worship*, Wiersbe writes, “Worship is the believer’s response of all that they are—mind, emotions, will, body—to what God is and says and does” (1990, p. 26).

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His Beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose. (Boa, 2001, p. 162)

Boa’s definition leads us to consider the purpose of worship. This is important because it strikes at the very purpose of the church. The health of our personal and congregational worship reflects our personal and congregational relationship to God. To worship genuinely is to know God. To know God genuinely is to be in a king-subject relationship with Him. In worship we acknowledge God’s kingship in our lives and His right to rule over us. Worship is for God’s benefit. He has the center stage. During worship we yield ourselves to God’s rule and dominion.

To worship God is to attribute worth to him. How do you attribute worth to something or someone? You become devoted, focus your attention, spend time and money, make sacrifices, and show reverence to it, him, or her. What do you worship? For some, they worship sports or food, or any number of things or people. The first facet of worship that we should consider is that of response. By this we mean that worship, from a human perspective is primarily a matter of response.

Small Groups

A small group is a gathering of adults, led by volunteers, which meets once a week for spiritual formation. This usually involves a group discussion around a chosen text or question, and prayers are offered for those who have requested them. Most researchers define a small group as having at least three and no more than 12 or 15 members. A group needs to have at least three members; otherwise it would simply be a dyad. With three members, coalitions can be formed and some kind of organization is present. Too large of a group (more than 12 or 15 members) inhibits the group members' ability to communicate with everyone else in the group. A group member must be able to communicate freely and openly with all other members of the group. Groups will develop norms about discussion and group members will develop roles which will affect the interaction among participants.

A group must have a common purpose or goal and they must work together to achieve that goal. The goal brings the group together and holds it together through conflict and tension. If you sometimes wonder why you are here, would like to know more about prayer, how to read the Bible, or live your faith day to day, a small group may be helpful. In a small group, it is okay to talk about all these things with others who

are on a similar journey. Chances are that in listening you will find out who you really are, learn more about who God is, and discover resources that will energize your life.

Limitations of the Project

This dissertation presents very important aspects of the church life and its environment in order to foster the members' growth. It shows a real connection between spirituality and mission.

This paper does not exhaust all concepts of spirituality and mission but it presents four basic keys to begin a revival in an immigrant church.

The program itself gives direction, training resources, and witnessing tools to practice the call of discipleship. However, since it is dealing with an immigrant population, this project may not be applicable to all international communities.

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

This project considered a Caucasian immigrant church in Africa with specific needs as its target group. It may as well work well in different cultures, but it should fit best other immigrant Portuguese churches around the world.

Methodology

The starting point for this research was the critical condition of the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The nature of this project was qualitative in order to evaluate the spiritual condition of the church and through the results challenge the church to engage in mission to reach the community. All

members of the church participated in the project implementation from July 2007 until September 2009. The data was collected through church records, conference records, and a questionnaire that was given to all participants. With the results obtained from the evaluation of the spirituality of the church, a project was created in order to help the members to affirm their faith in God and recapture the mission of the church.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MINISTRY

Introduction

This chapter is a reflection on the personal, spiritual, and theological basis of my ministry. It reflects the present situation at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church and the challenges and goals of my ministry in this immigrant congregation in Johannesburg, South Africa. We are going to see how a misunderstanding of our spiritual and theological foundation can compromise the mission of the church. In the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church, we observe religious and cultural myths associated with the spiritual background of members that hinder the vision and the mission of the church.

Brief Biographical Background

An examination of the background of the pastor and church will deepen the understanding of the theological and spiritual foundation of our ministry at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church. By defining our beliefs and history we may have a clearer vision of where we came from, where we are, and where we are going now.

Pastor's Personal Background

I was born in a very traditional Adventist family. I grew up in a very strong, religious environment. My parents were desperately trying to teach us to love the church standards and as a teenager I felt like a hypocrite inside the church. It was very difficult for me to love the Lord, the message, and the mission in my early years. In my spiritual formation and foundation, salvation by works was the goal to achieve. I was tempted to leave the church because I was unhappy, but I did not have the courage to do so. I have to confess that I spent 30 years of my life, even as a pastor, unhappy inside the church. I felt emptiness in my heart because striving to satisfy church standards did not bring joy to my soul.

It was in a Union pastoral meeting that I was reached by the Lord. The message that morning touched my heart and I returned home crying. I learned to study the Word of God every morning and through Scripture that emptiness disappeared; I found joy in Jesus Christ. My spiritual and theological foundation today is a mixture of the old teachings from my childhood and new ones that I found in Jesus. Today, I am not a conservative pastor, but I am not a liberal one either. The Christian life for me is a balance between loving and obeying God while loving other people.

Church Background

In 1975, Angola and Mozambique proclaimed their independence from Portugal. And the new governments asked all Portuguese people to leave their countries immediately. As a result, several thousand entered South Africa as refugees and by the 1980s there were over one million immigrants here. (Azevedo, 2002, p. 37)

The Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church began as a small group around 1980 and grew to over 200 members by 1991 when they bought their own building. In the following three years, the church enjoyed a good atmosphere and grew in

mission and service. After a while, the church slowly became a social church and stopped doing evangelism and its membership began to decline. Attendance declines to about 40, and has risen to about 70 in 2009. A series of crises shook the theological foundation of the church and its members completely lost sight of its mission and goals.

Year after year and pastor after pastor, the church developed a maintenance ministry, which was not enough to retain members. Looking at the current membership trend, we can say that the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church is a dying church. Another important factor to consider about the members of this church is that due to their Portuguese origin, they have a strong Catholic background. Thus, when they became Seventh-day Adventists, they brought a Catholic mentality to their new faith.

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts (or *charismata*) are gifts that are supernaturally bestowed on believers, each having their own proper gift (or gifts) to strengthen the church. They are described in the New Testament, primarily in 1 Cor 12, Rom 12, and Eph 4. There are a great variety of spiritual gifts, some of which are required of all Christians, such as faith, prayer, evangelism, and so on.

Since the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church did not have missionary activities for 15 years, spiritual gifts withered and only a few have been working for the church. Right now (September 2007), we are working on this area. During the study a spiritual gifts seminar was carried out, in which we gave members a test to help them find their abilities (see appendix A). Thus, as the project develops we stimulate members to use their spiritual gifts in the church. People are excited about this and we feel they are growing, using their spiritual gifts for the Lord.

Leadership Within the Portuguese Hill Church

“Good leaders are made; no one is born a good leader. If you have the desire and will power, you can become an effective leader” (Cohen, 2002, p. 50). Good leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. I really believe, as a pastor, that you develop excellent leaders. At The Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church, the pastor historically has been the central authority. It has always been like this and the great challenge here is to expand leadership to embrace every member as a leader.

The first thing we have to do is to define leadership. Biech offers this definition: “Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent” (2009, p. 183). The Christian Leadership Center of Andrews University offers a biblically sound definition: “Christian leadership is a dynamic relational process in which people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, partner to achieve a common goal—it is serving others by leading and leading others by serving” (n.d.).

Many accept leadership roles because the position may give power and authority over others. The true leader is one whose values and character are influenced by the Holy Spirit and who leads by serving. Effective leaders have a keen awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. They strive to maximize their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses.

One weakness of the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church was its conflicts. In spite of the efforts of the pastoral leadership, crises have come over and over through the years and too many left the church hurt. In this process to solve conflicts dominating members took over the pastor’s role and leadership became very confusing.

In the last pastoral change the church remained 10 months without a pastor while lay people were in charge. When the conflicts were over, nobody wanted to take a leadership role and the pastor was burdened with all the leadership in the church.

Present Situation—Current Life Style

The present situation at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church is critical. Membership declined from 200 to a low point of about 40 in 2010. Moral scandals and conflicts were so great that the church; its members and its ministers lost credibility before the community. Amidst those problems, the former pastor showed partiality, thus, dividing the church in groups, which revealed their social and financial condition. Also, past leaders implanted a mentality that it is not good for our spiritual life to mingle with community members because they are sinners. This situation slowly isolated the church from its surroundings. Climaxing the crisis, the previous minister resigned in the second year of his five-year commitment, leaving the congregation unattended for 10 months. So, we had to face massive challenges. There were so many things to fix that sometimes it seemed impossible.

We are trying to open the church doors to the community and show them that we are here to serve. A new church lifestyle has been implanted in order to accomplish our mission. Our main goal is to evangelize and everything in the church should follow this direction. There is much work to be done but we can see God's hand in this recovery.

Personal and Spiritual Needs and Goals

Setting personal and spiritual needs and goals is an important discipline to learn in order to determine expectations from life and how you intend to reach your purposes. If you know what you want to achieve, you will then know what it is that you must

concentrate on. Thus, you will be able to identify distractions and eliminate them from your life.

Personal and Spiritual Needs

Since we are working in a different culture and in a different country we have to establish directions in order to have our personal and spiritual needs fulfilled. I have developed a plan to meet the needs of my job and career and to contribute to the performance of the church. I have been trying to identify relevant needs and opportunities in my job that can at the same time reach my personal interests and goals. Furthermore, I have been seeking advice from those in my congregation with expertise in areas that I wish to explore at the local church such as community service, evangelistic outreach, small groups, spiritual gifts, and Bible studies.

I began by assessing the requirements of my present job and the specifications and needs of the position. I understand that my personal and spiritual needs and leadership success are directly related to the situation I have to deal with. In order to fulfill my personal needs I need to work hard in the following areas:

1. *Effective use of time.* There are many tasks to accomplish during a pastor's workday. I am challenged to use time in a way that will accomplish much.

2. *Family relationship.* A pastor needs to maintain strong relationship with his wife and children.

3. *Time with family.* Often church activities occur in the evenings or on weekends. I have covenanted with God to take quality time with my family.

4. *Physical and mental strength.* As pastors, we often work much more than 40 hours a week studying and preparing to speak and counsel, being available to those who

need advice or friendship, and attending church meetings and functions. It can be an exhausting life.

5. *Opportunities to relax.* I am determined to take time away from the rigors of ministry to do things that I enjoy.

6. *Wisdom.* We often think of this as a spiritual need, and it is. Pastors have to make decisions for their own families for which they need guidance from God.

As pastors, we have to walk close to God and be filled with His Holy Presence. When our spiritual needs are fulfilled, the existential need for God in our lives receives meaning. Looking at the Bible we have directions to meet our spiritual needs.

1. *Christ living through the pastor* (Gal 2:20). Many times in ministry we do not accomplish things for God because we are doing them in our own power. As ministers we have a great need to depend on Jesus in our life.

2. *Faithfulness to spend time reading God's Word every day* (Ps 119:11). Meditating on the Word of God every day is the food that we need to increase spiritually.

3. *An intimate knowledge of God* (Phil 3:10). The verb Paul uses for "to know" is *ginoskein* in Greek, which almost always indicates personal knowledge. It is not simply intellectual knowledge, but personal experience. It is not our aim as pastors to know *about* Christ, but to *personally* know him.

4. *Fear of God*—respect and awe for Him (Prov 1:7). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. This proposition should be our motto in ministry. The expression describes that reverential attitude or holy fear which a man, when his heart is set aright, observes towards God.

5. *Strength to stand for the principles of God's Word* (Eph 6:10-11, 13). The Word of God is at once our weapon of defense against sin and our weapon of attack against the sins of the world. The might is Christ's, but by faith it becomes ours. To be strong is our duty; to be weak is our sin. Strong trust, strong courage, strong endurance, strong hopes, strong love, may all be acquired from Him, if only our fellowship with Him is maintained in uninterrupted vigor.

6. *Accuracy in presenting the truths of Scripture* (2 Tim 2:15). Paul urges Timothy to present himself, amidst false teachers, as a real teacher of the truth. The word he uses for "to present" is *parastesai* in Greek, which characteristically means to present oneself for service.

7. *Contentment in present ministry* (Phil 4:11-13). We have as Paul to learn the gift of contentment. As pastors we experience sorrow and joy, distress and comfort; however, we should know how to bear ourselves in both, because our greatest joy is in the Lord.

Personal and Spiritual Goals

Setting personal goals gives you long-term vision, and most importantly short-term motivation. Through setting personal goals, you will organize your resources and focus single-mindedly on the task at hand. This is a discipline that will raise your self-confidence as your purposes become more clearly defined. Moreover, once you begin to achieve some of your goals you will feel better prepared to achieve greater and more challenging ones, which originally you did not think were possible. Lastly, you should enjoy achieving and rewarding yourself appropriately.

As a leader you need to set some specific goals for yourself. You have to be the best person you can be before you can be the best leader for others. Your leadership is a combination of all you do in life, not just when you are presiding over meetings and committees. Take a deep look at your life. What needs improving? What areas do you want to work and concentrate on? Do not try to set too many goals for yourself. Just choose a few things to improve upon or implement at a time. Below, I list some personal goals for my ministry:

1. To find such an overwhelming peace that regardless of what I am experiencing I will be able to triumph over it exhibiting patience and knowing all is well, recognizing that even the most difficult circumstances can turn into blessings.

2. To develop a resistance to any negative attitudes of people around me and promote a manner of love and peace. This will require cultivating a positive outlook rather than being put down by those who prefer anger and criticism.

3. To live the moment and treat every second of life as a gift. This avoids ruminating over past mistakes and worrying about the future.

4. To be fully forgiving regardless of the situation recognizing that forgiveness does not justify other people's actions. But, it allows healing and relieves me of having to carry the burden of accusation and reproach.

5. I want to have and impart confidence and become a mentor to other people within our church, demonstrating love for each member.

6. I want to depend on God more and not on myself to accomplish my work as a minister.

We need to realize that spiritual and personal goals are close to each other and sometimes they are the same. I would also assume that they should satisfy our deepest inner being. All consuming goals like making money and buying material things do not satisfy our inner soul. It would be better for us to strive for the goals our Creator has for us. Seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness and relax. If I am able to attain my spiritual objectives, my personal aspirations will follow and vice versa. Below, I list some of these objectives:

1. *Connect*. To use my ministry to connect with people and to reveal God's love, grace, and invite them to partner with Him in life and join Him in eternity.
2. *Grow*. To daily seek to become more like Christ in life and ministry.
3. *Serve*. To invest in and meet the needs of all people I come in contact with manifesting Christ's accepting and servant-hearted character.
4. *Share*. To use my ministry as a tool to share what God has done in and through my life shining brightly so that others may see the light and desire it.
5. *Worship*. To live every moment each day in testimony of God's goodness and give everything in response to His greatness.
6. *Fellowship*. I want to pray for my members and study my Bible daily. It is a requirement for a pastor to spend time with God every day.

Theological Understanding of Ministry

What makes congregations the special places that they are is that they are focused on God, in whom they live, move, and have their being (Frambach, 2010). Members congregate to remember how God has acted in the history of the world and in their own lives. They congregate to discern what is happening to them and to the world today, and

to listen to where God is leading them. Theology is an expression of the relation between God and such congregations of faithful, seeking people.

A 1000 years ago Anselm gave theology its classical definition: “Theology is faith seeking understanding” (Gasper, 2004, p. 107). *Understanding* happens on many levels in the congregation. First, understanding involves grasping more clearly what your experience of God tells you about who He is and what He has done for you. Our knowledge of God is always indirect, and the quest for Him is often circuitous and obscure. There is restlessness in our hearts that can be eased only by coming to dwell in God. It is this experience of God that moves us not only to try to understand, but also to worship.

Second, if we believe God is not simply there, but also active in the world, then experiencing God also reveals something about ourselves and our world. To be a congregation is also to engage in a quest to see our world in a special way from the perspective of God. Understanding is therefore about coming to terms with the world in which we live and what happens to us in that world. All things that make up our lives—the hopes and the heartbreaks, the triumphs and the tragedies, the experiences of just getting by, and the moments of real transcendence—are the substance of theological reflection as we seek understanding from God’s as well as from our perspective.

Finally, faith-seeking understanding is also about action. The knowledge of God we seek is not simply information about God. It is knowledge that grows out of a relationship with God that cannot but change us—challenging us to examine how we live our lives, drawing us into transformation, calling us to be missionaries, and creating a deeper faithfulness. Faith seeking understanding, then, is about all these things:

discernment, worship, making sense of our lives, and transformative action. Seen in this light, theology is more than an added value that a congregation might seek when everything else is in place. It is really at the heart of the life of the congregation. It helps clarify why a congregation has come together in the first place, why it stays together through good and bad times, and how it responds to the challenges that come its way. The fundamental purpose of theological reflection is to discover and better grasp the understanding of faith at work in the congregation, which can serve as a platform for affirming identity, dealing with change, and planning the future.

Understanding Theology in Ministry

Why take up the task of developing a theology for your ministry in the church? For those who have had theological education, theology may recall the travails of seminary or university classrooms. In some churches, theology itself may be suspected as something that will lead people away from the Bible or the Holy Spirit into dangerous or frivolous human constructions.

In a world where people seek understanding, however, the meaning of theology has to be made explicit. When a church wants to transmit its values, it needs to talk theology. And when churches are faced with major decisions, they usually want to make those decisions on more than economic, utilitarian, or pragmatic grounds; they want the decision to be informed by their faith. Secularization has caused great harm to the church, separating ministry from theology, perching from doctrine, and Christian care for conviction (Akin, 2007). When looking at theology in church ministry, we will explore the rationale and use of theology for two related purposes.

First, and most frequently, a church takes up the task of doing theology because it seeks a better sense of its identity. That desire can grow out of many different interests:

1. Your church may want to track the journey of faith it has undergone. This is often the case when such theologies are developed to prepare for an anniversary celebration or a new building dedication.
2. It may also be that your church has decided to undertake a program of spiritual renewal and needs a benchmark from which it will work. Here the questions are: Just who are we? What do we want to become?
3. Your church may have a sense that it is drifting or losing members and it needs a clearer sense of its own identity. Doing theology will help give it a distinctive edge as it discovers the defining moments from the past and discerns whether those moments engage well the challenges of today.

Any of these concerns may prompt an interest in developing a theology. Identity is an issue seldom raised until it has become somehow problematic. When a church's identity is challenged or under threat, then speaking of it becomes of paramount importance.

Second, theology becomes important in ministry especially when a church is faced with a major change and important decisions about its future. In such a situation, it must have a keener understanding of itself in order to negotiate the changes before it. Changes frequently involve conflict, further prompting the need for theological clarity. No matter what the challenge confronting the church, its theological stance must be made explicit and accessible so as not to be superseded by pragmatic or utilitarian strategies. Some examples are as follows:

1. Your church needs to make a decision about relocating to another area. Most have moved away from the neighborhood of the sanctuary and now must travel a great distance. Or the need to relocate may have to do with building a new house of worship to meet the needs of an expanding membership.

2. Your church has grown so large that it has lost the face-to-face quality that was important to its founders. Should it split into two churches?

3. Your church has become so small that it must consider merging with another church or disbanding altogether.

4. Challenges often come from changes in the general environment in which the church finds itself. How will your church respond to plant closings, immigrants coming into the area, or pending legislation that does not reflect cherished religious values in the church? In many instances, the church has very little control over the changes as such.

Theology can be the springboard for spiritual renewal and revitalization of a church. And theology can help churches meet change not only more faithfully to their traditions and aspirations, but proactively and prophetically if that is God's call to them.

Practical Theology in the Ministry

There is a way of doing theology called practical theology. Practical theology is tied closely to the lives of the church and individuals. Rather than moving from faith to life (theory to practice), it moves from life to faith and then back to life (practice to theory to practice). Practical theology begins, therefore, by describing the situation of the church and then correlating that situation with the faith and beliefs of the church. From there, practical theology moves back to the life of the church to a refocused practice. This is different from the more familiar way of doing theology wherein one starts with faith

and beliefs and then tries to reshape a church's practices to those outside standards. Practical theology as it is now being understood places high priority both on the facts of the situation in which a church finds itself and on the experience of the church. These facts and experience are not just the stuff to be shaped and formed by belief, but are active partners in discerning the meaning and place of those beliefs in the world in which the church lives. In other words, describing the situation is part of theological reflection itself, not just a prelude to it.

Theology in Church Ministry

If doing theology is to be part of your church study, it is important to think about different roles that will be exercised by people. Four deserve attention:

The first is that of the formal and informal leaders of the church, both members and clergy. Those whose skills, longevity, and influence put them at the heart of your church's life will have a special role in the theological work you do. They typically have the best overview of the church, although they may not agree among themselves just what that overview is and how it is to be interpreted.

The second role is that of the entire church itself. Members certainly provide the grist for the theological mill, with their stories of suffering and hope, of being perplexed and receiving insight. They may provide a healthy counterbalance to the leaders' view of the church's past and present. If you are intentional about providing opportunities for a broad segment of the church to participate, members can contribute diverse voices, offer the insight of an arresting image, or suggest the scriptural passage that best illumines the situation. It is the congregation as a whole, after all, that must finally understand and

practice the insights of your practical theological work. That will happen most easily when the whole church is involved in your practical theological work.

The third role is that of those with some professional theological training, often the minister but also others in the church. Their task is to help identify and articulate the themes that will be the source and stuff of theological reflection. Stories about struggles to understand why bad things happen must be identified as stories of suffering. Stories about reconciliation need to be identified as such and lifted up. The other part of their task is to provide a longer memory of religious experience in the past.

Finally, there is a role for outsiders, often consultants for a self-study process. Consultants or other figures, who come from outside the church, are sometimes able to spot things other participants cannot or do not want to see. Although outsiders do not know the church as well as longtime members, such contributors may offer important perspectives from the experience of other churches.

Doing practical theology, then, will involve insiders and outsiders, leaders and members, as well as theologically trained staff and members. An important task of the leadership in a church study is coordinating the theological process. This involves, first, assuring that all voices are allowed into the conversation and have an opportunity to be heard. Orchestrating this can be difficult; nonetheless, it is absolutely necessary.

Church and Ministry Understanding

In order to have a good approach to mission we need to understand what church and ministry stand for. The concept of priests and believers called together to work for the common good of the community is the first step to bring the gospel to people. The “priesthood of all believers” and “the community of believers” were commonly used

images for the church among the Reformers (H. S. Wilson, 1991). God through His church has a mission to accomplish and the powers of darkness in this world are working to detain this ministry. A worldly model of authority of master-slave is present in most Christian organizations. The church should be completely different from secular society. Jesus says to His disciples: "No longer do I call you slaves, . . . but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). This is a powerful leadership statement for our time. He also said: "You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you: but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" (Matt 20:25-26). "Ministry in the Church has, therefore, a revelatory or prophetic function: it reveals the oppressive character of worldly authority and it presents an ideal of leadership that serves the true needs of people" (Heyer, 1974, p. 62). The Hill was struggling to discover servant leadership.

The Concept of Clergy

A question has been raised in the evangelical world today: Who is in ministry? Generally when we think about ministry our thoughts comes to a special class called clergy who has the authority and power inside the churches. These are a variety of leaders with leadership responsibility who minister in the local church. The New Testament concept of ministry is very interesting. Paul wrote:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:11-12)

The New Testament church developed this powerful concept that every Christian is in ministry. There are no different classes between those who minister and those who sit in the pews. Paul wrote to the evangelist, teachers, and pastors to equip the saints for

ministry. Those are in the leadership position are not supposed to do all the work but they should train people in order to accomplish the church's mission.

We have to be careful because many people today see the ministry as a profession where people have theological formation and use their time and abilities preaching, teaching, and counseling. The world divides Christians into two separate classes—clergy and laypeople—but the Scriptures teach no such distinction.

Every Christian is created for ministry (Eph 2:10), saved for ministry (2 Tim 1:9), Call into ministry (1 Pet 2:9-10), gifted for ministry (1 Pet 4:10), authorized for ministry, (Matt 28:18-20), commanded to ministry (Matt 20:26-28), to be prepared to ministry (Eph 4:11-12), needed for ministry (1 Cor 12:27), accountable for ministry, and rewarded according to his or her ministry (Col 3:23-24). (Warren, 1995, p. 368)

A Biblical Definition of Ministry

Every Christian, then, is in ministry. If you are a Christian, you are in ministry. Assuming that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it should be a matter of great interest to you to know what constitutes ministry. What is ministry? What is it that God holds you responsible for? Although much could be said on the word *ministry*, there are two general characteristics of ministry in the New Testament which are essential for each one of us to understand.

In the New Testament, Paul states very clearly the idea of ministry as service: “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Paul presents here a very important characteristic of ministry. Equipping the saints for the work for service brings the idea the church has to be trained to help people in need. These works are not limited to the ministry of preaching, teaching, and counseling, but also include service and benefits that build other Christians. The word *service* has a special quality here indicating a very personal service rendered to

another. The motivation for this ministry of service is love and reveals the true nature of the Kingdom of God.

Another aspect of ministry mentioned by Paul is the building up of the body of Christ. This concept is strengthening the body as whole but also building the members individually. Here this profitable service is not just an option; it is an imperative for the body of Christ. Moreover, due to the necessity of a diversified and universal ministry in the church, two additional underlying New Testament principles must be considered: (a) the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and (b) the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts

Concerning spiritual gifts the Apostle Paul wrote: “there are varieties of gifts, ministries and effects but the same Spirit and God who works all things in all persons. The spirit for the common good manifests in everyone” (1 Cor 12:4-7). This indicates that the ministerial work includes all of the functions encompassed by the totality of spiritual gifts given to the body. Since spiritual gifts are given to sustain and build up the body (vv. 12-27) and ministerial service is also the work of sustaining and building up the body (Eph 4:11-13), we can conclude that spiritual gifts are given to enable Christians to carry out the ministerial work, which is the building up of the body of Christ. So, ministerial work is dependent upon the exercise of every spiritual gift and it is the work of service performed by all believers for the benefit, ultimately, of all believers.

The Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers

The second biblical principle, which underlies the concept of ministry in the New Testament, is that of the priesthood of all believers. Although this doctrine is taught

elsewhere (Rev 1:6; 5:9), it is Peter who gives us the clearest revelation on this matter.

“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (1 Pet 2:5, 9).

The New Testament Definition of the Church

“There is need of a clear understanding of the New Testament conception of church” (Thiessen & Doerksen, 2007. p. 313). We find evidence in the New Testament that every believer who is baptized becomes part of the church body. Paul in 1 Cor 12:13 says, “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” We see the church as a manifestation of Christ becoming His body on the earth. There are several Bible texts that enforce this point such as Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:11, 18, 27. The message in all of these texts seems to be the same: Anyone who experiences baptism becomes automatically a member of the body of Christ.

How do we define the local church? Local church is a local assembly of all who profess faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ. Most often in the New Testament the Greek word *ekklesia* is used in reference to the local assembly (1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Cor 11:8). There is not just one specified local church in any one area. There are many local churches in larger cities for example. The scriptural definition is that any part of the world where we have two or three have gathered together in my name Christ will be there (Matt 18:20). This seems to be Christ’s version of what is necessary to have a local church. A church of two or three may not be a very good church in that it is not able to fulfill all of the functions that are appropriate for a local church according to the New

Testament, but this does not mean that it is not a church. A distinction must be made between that which determines the *being* of a church versus the *well-being* of a church.

According Revelation the visible church of God has some special characteristics:

1. It keeps the commandments of God (Rev 12:17, 14:12). The reference is primarily about the Decalogue.
2. The church worships the true God (Rev 14:7).
3. Because the law of God was changed (Rev 7:25), the church's mission is to restore the law. The Sabbath of the seventh-day will be restored in the Decalogue.
4. This is a church still relying on the grace of God by keeping His commandments. Second, they have the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17). The testimony of Jesus is identified as the gift of prophecy (Rev 19:10).

The church is presented in revelation as having faith in Jesus (Rev 14:12), and this means that by embracing the teachings of Jesus, we make a commitment of faith to Him and we are responsible as God's people to call the world back to the biblical teachings of Jesus. The church of God also has the patience of the saints. *Patience* here means *resistance*. Every time apostasy and deception prevail, the church is opposed to the constant attacks of the enemy and remains committed and faithful to the Lord.

The Mission and Function of the Church: The Commissioning of the Church

The mission of the church is revealed in the New Testament in different ways. By examining different Bible texts we can have a clear understanding of the church in God's program.

John 20:21: "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' " Jesus calls attention to the nature of his own mission as a way

of understanding the mission of the church. To be specific, we could look at Jesus' description of his intent in various places where he declared his own purpose:

Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 3:17: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This passage contains Christ's so-called Great Commission to the church. We notice that reaching the lost figures prominently. The church is to go, not to wait for others to come. International missionary outreach is explicitly mentioned. Notice that baptism is included, as well as "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." In other words, part of the task of the church is to teach and disciple those who have been reached with the gospel so that they can have a healthy walk with God.

2 Corinthians 5:15-20:

And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. . . . Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

In this passage, Paul once again draws the parallel between the mission of Christ and that of the church. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" and "he has committed to us the word of reconciliation." The church is to take up the work of reaching those alienated from God.

Colossians 2:19: "and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God." Here Jesus is the head of the body of Christ. Our mission is to hold fast to him, receiving our directions and nourishment from him, often through the agency of other members (the "joints and ligaments"). Likewise, we, as joints and ligaments in our own right, are responsible to take it of Christ and give it to others. This is describing how Christians depend on each other for ministry within the church. However, he also points out that the whole body "grows with a growth which is from God." In other words, as a living spiritual organism, the church is to grow like other living things. Here the ever-present importance of reaching out to those who do not know Christ is again evident.

Ephesians 4:11-16:

And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

In this passage, we again see Paul's vision of the properly functioning body of Christ. Under the headship of Christ, not only are there leaders who equip other members (the saints), but also the saints themselves do the "work of service." This work of service

is the responsibility and opportunity of “every joint” and of “each individual part.” In other words, the vision here is of a community where everyone has a role in being built up spiritually and building up others. The result is growth.

1 Peter 2:9-10:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In Peter’s version of the commission of the church, the identity of the Christian community is that of the people of God, which stressed along with its mission.

Every local church has certain goals and a strategy for accomplishing them. It also has structures and methods by which it carries out this strategy. How should we determine these things? Since we want to base such decisions on the Bible, it is vital that we approach the biblical data with sound interpretive principles. Unless we do this, we will build the church in ways that are ineffective. No wonder Paul says that we should “be careful how (we) build!” (1 Cor 3:10).

Conclusion

In consideration of this study about the spiritual and theological foundations of the church for service, the following conclusions are drawn.

When a church embarks on a program of training, equipping and mobilizing its members, there will be more lay involvement in the in-reach and out-reach programs of the church. There will be an increase in newcomers participating in church activities if members mingle with the community. I believe that a better theological understanding will enhance the development of small group ministries in the church. The organization and promotion of small group ministries is the key to an active and vibrant congregation.

In many churches today there are dire needs for a revival program because the congregation is stagnant and dying. A small group can provide a safe place for members to develop their ministry. Also, in a very large church, small groups can keep members connected. Theological foundation, when administered effectively, will supply opportunities for spiritual and numerical growth. Spiritual and theological understanding provides a foundation for new believers, integrates them into the life of the church, and helps them to become effective soul winners themselves. Given the high rate of apostasy as a result of relational problems, small groups is an outstanding tool for gaining, reclaiming, and restoring relationships. Theological understanding fosters the need for regular Bible studies and in-depth reading of the Spirit of Prophecy, thus strengthening the members.

Recommendations and Implications

The Spiritual and theological understanding holds implications for pastors, church leaders, officers, and members. They are as follows:

1. As an immigrant church the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church should evaluate the needs of the community constantly.
2. Church community assessment provides insights and promotes awareness for churches in need of a spiritual program.
3. Pastors should understand the need to let lay leaders play a significant role in the life of the church.
4. It is a fact that the work cannot be finished without the involvement of the laity. Therefore, more pastors ought to put stronger emphasis on the motivation and training of lay members for service.

5. Pastors and members have an obligation to become more aware of the needs and concerns of non-church people, and through the church ministry, seek to reach them and invite them to a family-friendly church.

6. Churches that are dying or experiencing lack of growth should look for a spiritual and theological understanding and, by God's grace, grow in mission.

7. Pastors should establish the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy platform on which this revival program stands. By doing so criticism will be reduced and the faith of the believers strengthened.

CHAPTER III

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LITERATURE IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND MISSION AWARENESS

Introduction

Each event in our lives and everything we experience provides a point of change. For good or bad, people are transformed each and every day. The purpose of this chapter is to study the effectiveness of established church centers on people's spirituality. For decades, maybe for centuries, spirituality has been ignored by most of the protestant group in church. According to Hartung (2008), an unhealthy focus on poor interpretation of "faith without works" has caused many problems. Spiritual formation is not something to be represented as a meaning of work for salvation. In contrast, the pursuit of positive spiritual formation is by grace. Without God, life would be meaningless, but God transforms lives by grace.

The spiritual journey is a personal experience with God, but it is important to share this journey with others. One person would offer support to the other one, and faith would be stronger. Sometimes, the journey is confusing and difficult; yet, there are no quick fixes or programs that can be successful in easy steps. Our openness to God's leadings and our willingness to not do it alone helps get us through the possible problems and lack of passion.

Nowadays, religion is out and spirituality is in. According to Kenneth Boa (2001), in the last three decades, there has been a remarkable need and search for spiritual answers to big questions about life.

In the past, there was a moral consensus in the Western world, and that was followed by a tendency to secularize culture by marginalizing religion and replacing it with a popular faith in scientific progress and humanistic inquiry.

It seems that the church is having serious concerns about their devotees. Attendance is decreasing in most mainline denominations (Barna, 2009). The leaders' commitment is imperfect. The leadership core is aging rapidly, and most churches are not reaching the new and younger generation, which see the church as irrelevant or something that can be replaced by relationships, work, school, or friends of another life style. While this is the current reality, the biblical command of Matt 28:19-20 to reach the world still stands.

According to Hammett (2002), it seems that many churches have created, or at least contributed, to the indifference and dissatisfaction of people's spiritual life and ministry by focusing more on indulging those in the pews rather than reaching those in the world.

Many current church leaders believe that the clergy are there to take care of them, when in reality the biblical function of the clergy is "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4). The church must learn how to pursue sinners as Jesus did.

Spiritual Formation and the Church

In many circles of the Christian life spiritual formation has become a well-known subject for the growth of our faith. This topic has become a vital part of the life of many

churches today and seminars, small groups, and training classes have spread around the world today. As we enter in the 21st century there is awakening in the evangelical world to study and develop this topic. Any expression of spiritual formation must emphasize clearly the biblical means for growth, such as, prayer, Bible knowledge, and fellowship with other believers. These have been hallmarks of the Christian life for centuries, and they should never be brushed aside or de-emphasized (Burer, 2005).

According to Gangel and Wilhoit (1997), spiritual formation represents a drastic example, a new approach for the church's ministry. The author also defines spiritual formation in three elements:

- (1) It involves the whole church's ministry; (2) knowledge is viewed as a means to Christian growth and never as an end in itself; and (3) there is a distinct accent on the work of God's grace in the process of formation. (p. 11)

Wakefield (2001) also agrees with Gangel and Wilhoit (1997). He states that spirituality is distinguished from religious understanding by certain characteristics like "prayer in all its forms, worship, praxis, discipline and the stages of the religious life" (p. 1).

The term spiritual formation itself and the topic as a field of study have become popular in recent years. The ideas and patterns presented in the process of spiritual formation involve a Christian changing or maturing from one form to another.

When the term *formation* is used, it means the ongoing process of the believer's actions and habits being continually transformed to Jesus likeness. Popular interest in spirituality has been a pronounced increase in the church's appetite for spiritual renewal. The spiritual life is an all-encompassing, lifelong response to God's gracious initiatives in the lives of those whose trust is centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Definitions of the spiritual formation are rather varied, although there are common ideas correlated to them. Mulholland (1993) defines spiritual formation in his

book *Invitation to a Journey*. According to him, it is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the gracious working of God's spirit, for the transformation of the world.

According to Pettit (2008), spiritual formation is the holistic work of God in a believer's life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ.

Burer (2006) states that spiritual formation is the intentional transformation of the inner person to the character of Christ. It is intentional in two ways: It is part of God's will for the individual believer and the individual believer makes a conscious choice about it. It is transformation in that it involves definitive, measurable growth in a certain direction. It involves the inner person in that it concerns itself with character, thoughts, intentions, and attitudes more than actions, habits, or behaviors. It has the character of Christ as its goal and standard of measure.

Willard (2002) is one of the most well known writers who address the topic of spiritual formation. He is a philosopher, a Southern Baptist, and former director of the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California. In a recent published work, Willard (2002) defines spiritual formation as follows: "Spiritual formation in Christ is the process by which one moves and is moved from self-worship to Christ-centered self-denial as a general condition of life in God's present and eternal kingdom" (p. 85).

Willard (2002) also says that spiritual formation in the tradition of Jesus Christ is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart,

which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed (transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ.

According to Lawrenz (2000), “Spiritual formation is the progressive patterning of a person’s inner and outer life according to the image of Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth” (p. 15).

The Center for Christian Leadership at Dallas Theological Seminary says that spiritual formation is the process by which God forms Christ’s character in believers by the ministry of the Spirit, in the context of community, and in accordance with biblical standards. The process involves the transformation of the whole person in thoughts, behaviors, and styles of relating with God and others. It results in a life of service to others and witness for Christ (Burer, 2004).

Biblical spirituality is a Christ-centered orientation to every component of life to the mediating power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is a journey of the spirit that begins with forgiveness and life in Christ and progresses through faith and obedience. Since it is based on a present relationship, it is a journey with Christ rather than journey to Christ (Boa, 2001).

In the book *Becoming Christian: Dimensions of Spiritual Formation* by L. R. L. Honeycutt (1990), he talks about the importance of the “Spiritual Legacy” of the church. He mentions three reasons that spirituality is so crucial in the life of the congregation. First, spirituality informs every facet of the church’s life. We express our spirituality when we preach the good news and when we maintain soup kitchens, when we pray for the sick and when we help people in their needs. Second, spiritual maturity is inseparable from theological maturity. Spiritual maturity in the church is characterized by sacrifice,

devotion, openness, creativity, innovation, commitment, prayer, community, and a sense of the prophetic word. Spirituality leads to theological maturity. Third, spirituality leads to action—a care response to human need. Mature spirituality is expressed in servant hood. It opens our eyes to those around us and challenges us to respond to the human predicament.

According to Leonard (1990), another possibility that is very dangerous today is to see spiritual formation as simply a new label for old activities—for what we are already doing: worship, hearing the word, community, and quiet time, plus a new twist or two such as spiritual direction and so on. Now all of these things are very important. But if spiritual formation merely becomes a new label for things we are already doing, it will leave us right where we are. And the issues of deep inner transformation will remain untouched. And I say with trepidation that there is a real danger of spirituality becoming a field of mere *expertise*, of academic competence, focused upon *religious activities*.

Leonard (1990) also states that one of the greatest dangers for the cause of Christ today is that Evangelicals will not understand our need for genuine repentance: repentance is not about what we are not, but about what we are. Our problem is not caused merely by the fact that we do not do certain things like love our neighbor as ourselves and so on. It is the very things that we teach and practice about the spiritual life that leave us in the position of not doing the things we should.

The Spirituality of Jesus

According to Jesus, what is spiritual formation? Jesus does not provide his followers with a neat formula with a certain number of steps. Spiritual formation is not primarily about *doing*, although doing is still crucial. Those who become spiritually

formed as Jesus intends do all kinds of behaviors that please God and that profit themselves and others. Klein (2006) says, “We must begin, however, by thinking of ‘being’ for doing emerges from being. What a person is will determine what she or he does” (p. 12).

After all research and authors definitions, the most important definition is the spirituality of Jesus, our main example. According to Wakefield (2001), Jesus emphasized the prayer as an important tool to be close to God.

According to St Luke’s Gospel, Jesus had to be asked to give instruction in prayer, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” . . . When his direct teaching came, it was of petition rather than contemplation: “Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.” (p. 11)

Wakefield (2001) says that Jesus did not instruct about methods of meditation. He calls attention to the fact that prayer should be a basic logic of conversation and requesting. Being persistent is crucial. The prayer needs to recognize God’s control and power with our genuineness. “He [Jesus] wants us to ask. His desire is to keep his people praying because their desire, the longing of their hearts, is for a personal relationship with him.” (p. 11).

Integrating Christian Education Into the Whole Church

Gangel and Wilhoit (1997) cited a large research project by Peter Benson and Carolyn Eklin which observed the efficiency of Christian teaching at the congregational level. In the beginning, they were concerned regarding the perception of Christian education as a disconnected entity of the church. As the figure below shows, the traditional church’s ministries view it as a detached entity.

Figure 1. Traditional church's ministries. Adapted from *The Christian educator's handbook on spiritual formation* *The Christian educator's handbook on spiritual formation*, by K. O. Gangel & J. C. Wilhoit, 2007, Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Theoretical literature and program literature (books, curriculum materials, other helps) emphasize and assume that Christian education is quite distinct from the rest of the church's ministries.

Frequently, traditional church ministry seems like the figure above. The researchers investigated churches with the traditional approach. Christians were discouraged and they had a poorly integrated faith. Spiritual formation affects the whole person, that's why a unified ministry is important.

According to Gangel and Wilhoit (1997), the figure below

shows that the nurturing process of transformation lies at the very heart of the church's ministry. The programs of the church are outgrowths of this singular ministry, rooted and grounded in what the church is called to be: a nurturing, equipping, renewing, and compassionate ministry of Christ in this world. (p. 13)

Figure 2. Christian formation and discipleship and the church's ministry. Adapted from *The Christian educator's handbook on spiritual formation* *The Christian educator's handbook on spiritual formation*, by K. O. Gangel & J. C. Wilhoit, 2007, Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Concluding the research above, spiritual formation is a combination of discipleship, care for, and awareness that is the only foundation of right growth and maturity (Gangel & Wilhoit, 1997).

Spiritual Formation Through Small Groups

According to P. V. Deison, author of "Spiritual Formation Through Small Groups" in *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, "often the church appears to be floating in dangerous currents without a rudder [even if you want help, there are too many people to pay attention on it]" (p. 269).

Peter states that values and morals are continually deteriorating. Mega-churches expand, and more people start congregating, but as much as the church expands, relationships and personal contact also go away. That is why small groups are so vital. The community of a small group is meant to make spiritual formation deeper and stronger. The support of members transforms lives.

“The sense of community is the glue that holds a small group together. It makes the difference between a group as a collection of individuals or a unity of believers” (Deison, 1997, p. 274).

According to Lawrenz (2000):

The church is to be a haven for healing. People who have gone through crisis need a refuge, a sanctuary, a safe place—a community that does not dissect, evaluate, or manipulate their souls, but rather allows them to reside with others under God’s restorative power. (p. 44)

Spiritual Development as Growth

According to Lawrenz (2000):

God’s way of doing things in this world is process. Miracles, as the extraordinary speeding up of process, show that God is powerful enough to do whatever he wants however he wants. Growth, as the ordinary way things happen in the world, shows the way God has typically chosen to work in the world. If we insist that spiritual development occurs only in crisis events, we limit God and disregard his sovereign choice. (p. 31).

The apostle Paul identifies the crucial process of developing: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God, who causes the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

According to Lawrenz (2000), Paul also talks about “growing in faith (2 Cor. 10:15), in love (Eph. 4:16), and in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). Spiritual

formation makes a unified and whole human being. Spiritual development consists of the continually combination of a Christian intelligence, motivation and affect.

Some of the spiritual development happens during a crisis. According to Lawrenz (2000), "Crisis is one of the defining moments for grace. . . . Without grace, crisis leaves people deformed, not formed." (p. 41).

Spiritual Disciplines

The idea of discipline is not as welcome to some persons as to others. [. . .] Christian experience requires discipline of another kind, but a discipline nevertheless. Christian growth and development demand a discipline. It is important that we understand just what kind of discipline is required (Massey 1975, p. 14).

To make our daily living an offering to God in a living prayer, we need direction, discipline, and a guide to true paths. Christ is our guide. According to Pattison (2006), spiritual disciplines are a disciple's response to his grace. They are the means through which we genuinely grow spiritually. They are our means of spiritual formation. Maturing disciples intentionally seek spiritual formation throughout their life.

The fruit of the Spirit we find listed in scripture is the evidence of the Spirit's work of grace and remarkable transformation in our lives: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal 5:22).

As Pattison (2006) talks about the fruit of the Spirit, Ortberg (2002) also says that "disciplines that are spiritual are simply those that help me live in the fruit of the Spirit" which will make you "live your life as Jesus taught and modeled it" (p. 47)

Longman (2009) states that what makes something a *spiritual discipline* is that it takes a specific part of your way of life and turns it toward God. A spiritual discipline is, when practiced faithfully and regularly, a habit or regular pattern in your life that repeatedly brings you back to God and opens you up to what God is saying to you.

In the chapter “Training vs Trying to Be Like Jesus” Ortberg (2002) talks about the importance of following Jesus as your personal model and the transformation you would have through discipline. He says, “Spiritual transformation is not a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely. This is what the apostle Paul means when he encourages his young protégé Timothy to ‘train yourself in godliness’ ” (p. 43).

Ortberg (2002) lists three rules of what spiritual disciplines are not:

1. They are not a measurement (indicator) of spirituality.
2. They are not essential, not enjoyable.
3. They are not a way to exchange favor with God, receive blessings on purpose.

In the book *Spiritual Disciplines* by Massey (1975) explains the importance of some demands in the Christian life. It is a combination of the consequences of the individual apprehension to live as a Christian, collaborate with the Spirit of God, and stay dedicated in a regimented obedience to the biblical teachings.

Massey (1975) discusses four acts of discipline—meditation/prayer, fasting, dialogue, and corporate worship—that will help Christian members “in a unique way to sense the Holy and they especially stimulate them to receive the vitality that is available to us in the grace of God” (p. 12).

According to Massey (1975), meditation-prayer “means giving attention with intention” (p. 40). Through that, it “permits this examination of the self and asks for it” (p. 41), and it can change every time, because it is based on your frame of mind, what is happening in your life at that time, and the way to do it—the course of action.

As it was mentioned before, Massey (1975) states that fasting is one of the mainly spiritual disciplines, and Baab (2007) confirms that. Everybody searches for freedom, but

Jesus is the only one who can give us life in freedom. How can humans receive His instructions and His freedom powerfully?

Baab (2007) states that humans are able to experience liberty in everyday life through fasting.

Fasting, an ancient practice encourages us to grow in true freedom. In fasting, God invites us to experience the kind of freedom that is rooted in healthy discipline and meaningful sacrifice, the kind of freedom that reflects the awesome reality that we have been freed from sin and death. (p. 10)

The author emphasizes that the purpose of fasting in spiritual disciplines is not to punish ourselves, but to step back, reflect and pray to listen what God has to say.

According to a research done by Waggoner (2008), most of the people he interviewed never fast or have not fasted for a long time. When the author asked, in the past six months, about how many times have you, personally, done the following: fasted (going without eating for a certain period of time, to concentration prayer or meditation)? Waggoner (2008) found that 80% of the people interviewed have never fasted in their life, 7% of them have fasted once, and 13% have fasted twice or more.

According to Baab (2007), fasting used to be the abstinence of food, practice from the centuries ago. Christians today are implementing fasting in a variety of ways: abstinence of television and media in general, entertainment, information, shopping, internet, and other practice of the routine life that we like to do.

In the book *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* by Waggoner (2008), he analyses the importance of worship. He says, “God deserves a lot more than service without seeking. He deserves our prayers, praises, and worship. It reeks of ingratitude when we serve without worship” (p. 206).

When Calhoun (2006) talks about spiritual disciplines, he relates it to worship, like Massey (1975) does. Calhoun (2006) says that disciplines are planned manners to give our life and our time to worship God, and he also agrees with Richard Foster when he divides disciplines into *inward*, *outward*, and *corporate*. “Inward disciplines are practiced in the privacy of our intimate walk with Jesus. Outward disciplines affect how we interface with the world. And corporate disciplines are practiced with others” (p. 19).

Besides worship being one of the spiritual disciplines, Calhoun (2006) writes about many other ones, for example, celebration, Holy Communion, the Sabbath, and gratitude. The authors affirms that

thanksgiving is possible not because everything goes perfectly but because God is present. . . . It is a discipline to choose to stitch our days together with the thread of gratitude. But the decision to do so is guaranteed to stitch us closer to God. (p. 30)

Exercising the Spiritual Disciplines of Jesus

In the book *The Jesus Habits: Exercising the Spiritual Disciplines of Jesus*, the author Dennis (2005) cites one comment from K. S. Latourette. “As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet” (p. 1).

Jesus has transformed many lives over millennia. Dennis (2005) analyses the spiritual disciplines of Jesus’ life, as our perfect model. Jesus showed us the habit of seclusion, listening, love, thankfulness, motivation, family priority, obedience, rest, faith, relationships, etc.

Jesus is the consummate example for successful living. . . . Each of these habits can be copied; they can be put to practice in our daily lives. He further gave us the key to happiness, and it comes back to doing what he did. (p. 2)

John 13:15 says: “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you”

The Mission and the Church

What is the mission of the church? According to Ott (2002), our current life changed the way church functions. One of the changes was the freedom to choose.

Williams (2004) analyses this specific change saying:

The core value of society has moved from 'progress' to 'choice'—the absolute right of freedom to choose." 'Choice lies at the centre of consumerism, both as its emblem and as its core value. In this society everyone becomes a consumer. (p. 9)

Although the "freedom to choose" affects the church and the way people see church, this aspect was not the only thing that has changed through the past years. Life is busy, and people are distant from each others. This revolution allowed church to fulfill people's needs, to create a place where people interact and care about each other.

In this fast-paced, increasingly impersonal world, people are hungering for personal experience, personal relationships, and personal involvement. Significantly, these days are not unlike the days of the early church, when the church was not the center of our culture, and when there were many competing voices clamoring for people's spiritual allegiance. But because of our culture's great hunger for meaning, the church has an unparalleled opportunity to introduce people to Jesus Christ and involve them in the fellowship and support of the Body of Christ. (Ott, 2002, p. 2)

Ott (2002) says that the objective of the Gospel has not altered, but people are changing quickly, as well as their relationship and life style. That is why it is crucial for the congregation to be full of energy and vigor. According to Ott, nobody wants a monotonous, tedious, and routine church. Instead of that, Christians need a responsive church that will touch several people and facilitate their development as engaging disciples of Jesus.

Ott (2002) affirms that "We also have an interest in compassion, in bringing God's restoring love into our communities and the world to help as many people as possible to glorify God" (p. 11). One of the missions of the church is to pay attention of

people's needs and then to make them part of the ministry initiative. Once you participate in the church, your relationship with God gets stronger.

The same author wrote another book call *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* and he defends the importance of creating ministry teams in the church. Ott (2004) says, "Congregations are moving from committee-based-status-quo organizations to team-based ministry, from leadership that is primarily concerned with task accomplishment to leadership that develops its people as well as pursues its vision" (p. 1).

The mission of the church, based on Ott (2004) is to bring people closer to God. Serving on ministry teams allows people to build relationships/friendships, obtain support in the journey with Jesus, and be prepared to serve and direct others.

Ministry teams share similar uniqueness, for example, members share a fundamental conviction in Jesus, a familiar vision (bring people closer to God), and enthusiasm to achieve that vision. Ott (2004) mentions that "to give money" is the most common idea people recognize as the ministry function in the church. They see themselves as "program attendees and ministry receivers—spiritual consumers who expected to get something in return for their financial commitment" (p. 4).

In more detail, Ott (2004) divides the main benefits Christians can have, by being part of ministry teams. Some of them were already discussed, like the benefit of fellowship, the benefit of developing leaders, the power to mobilize people for ministry, and the power to accomplish ministry.

The only benefit of ministry teams that was not discussed previously here is the power of promoting discipleship. Ott (2004) points out that

because each ministry team is a center of Christian nurture as well as of service, the proliferation of ministry teams in the life of a congregation de-centralizes responsibility for the development of discipleship and spreads it around. Pastors and specialized ministries of discipleship continue to play pivotal roles in Christian nurture, but the extent to which the congregation fosters discipleship is no longer limited to the energy and scope of their efforts. (p. 11)

In conclusion, the main point of this section was to discuss the mission of the church. It is clear already that the mission is to bring people closer to God and by involving them in small groups, or ministry teams; it creates a strong connection between them with God and other believers in the church.

If one of the purposes of the church is to attract people to team members, Morgan (2004) emphasizes that it is important to pay attention to three main points: the vision, the leader, and the team. The vision requires focus because it magnetizes people to achieve something; the leader because he/she must be an honest and respected person to guide members; the team because they all need to be focused and committed to the same direction. If team members have all the three qualities, then the mission of the church will be accomplished.

Spiritual Mission in Cross-Cultural Ministry

“Ministry is both religious and cultural. The person in ministry answers the call to ministry out of her or his own cultural context and religious experiences,” says Lyghy, Dharmaraj, and Dharmaraj (2006, p. 3). According to the authors, the experience in the ministry can even confront and alter the person’s religious way of living, and/or making them stronger and renewed.

Society is progressively more diverse in race, ethnicity, language, and culture, and somehow the diversity is shown in the church. Lyghy et al. (2006) affirm that “each

person who answers the call to ministry brings a variety of gifts to whatever form of ministry he or she enters. We bring our very being to ministry” (p. 7).

That is the great side of the cross-cultural ministry: each person brings its own faith, tradition, and theological understanding to enrich the practice.

Although God created a multicultural world, many people do not accept the diversity into their lives and churches, because “it forces [them] to change, disrupts [their] cozy patterns, engages [them] in a world where [their] deficiencies are exposed” (Elmer, 1993, p. 23).

According to Elmer (1993), dissimilarities can build stronger connections between people or it can rupture them. The author says, “broken relationships often result from a failure to understand and adjust to the differences we have inherited from a wise God” (p. 24).

One cause of the problem is because what is okay in one culture may not be acceptable in another. Elmer (1993) gives the example of food. In North America, people show love and friendship through inviting someone to have a meal in their home. The same situation, if applied to many parts of Africa, would be interpreted as an indication of a proper and distant relationship.

So, how is it possible to work between different worldwide views? According to Lingenfelter (1996), when working for the mission, we need to be focused on His coming again. The funds and rewards that we build up should be used to serve the demoralized in the name of Jesus.

Jesus traveled from place to place and He adjusted himself to reach each person with His message and love. Elmer (1993) concludes the subject saying, “Building the

unity of the body of Christ is the most effective way of jealously guarding the glory of God. Understanding and handling conflict with greater wisdom, should minimize or prevent the damaging effects of broken relationships” (p. 32).

Lingenfelter (1996) concludes, “What will make the difference is our commitment to Jesus and to his kingdom—watching for his coming, working as his stewards, and serving those who are harassed and helpless with the resources that he gives” (p. 87).

Conclusion

For many years the subject of spiritual formation in evangelical churches has been given little attention. In the last three decades, there is evidence of inquiry regarding spiritual formation. The church’s challenge to reach the younger generation and fight against secularism has called members and leaders to spirituality. This chapter surfaced several definitions of spiritual formation. The common focus of those definitions is spiritual formation as the intentional process of transformation into the image of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual formation is the work of the Holy Spirit, but this process is manifested in each person as spiritual disciplines. Several authors affirmed the revival in the church spiritual formation provides. Among the practices described is prayer. Prayer was evident in the experience of Jesus. Prayer practiced faithfully and regularly brings our soul close to God. A disciple’s response to the work of God is manifested in practices like prayer, worship, celebration, Holy Communion, Sabbath, gratitude, and so on. The spiritual disciplines in Jesus’ life are our perfect model: love, compassion, thankfulness, motivation, worship, obedience, seclusion, faith, rest, relationships, etc.

Willard (2002), a prominent authority in the subject of spiritual formation emphasizes the end of this process as the change the heart that brings a person to express the deeds of Christ. This change brings mission awareness bringing people closer to God connecting them with others inside and outside the church.

The final point in this chapter is to reveal Jesus' cross-culture ministry where He presents Himself to reach others with the message of love and compassion. The great side of the cross-cultural ministry is each person bringing their own faith, traditional, and theological understanding to enrich the practice of spiritual disciplines.

CHAPTER IV

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP AND CONNECT SPIRITUALITY
WITH MISSION: IMPLEMENTATION AND AFFIRMATION

Introduction

When Jesus began His ministry on earth He developed a very strong connection with the Father. His mission to announce the Kingdom of God was evident and it was directly dependent on the knowledge and fellowship He had with the Father. Jesus is our inspiration when we seek to grow spiritually and experience transformation. The triumph over sin comes from a battle against ourselves where Jesus and His power help us to grow spirituality. From this relationship we begin a process of transformation through which we cannot remain silent about what God has done for us. When we share with words the experience we have had with God we embrace the mission of the church. Mission in a spiritual sense is the result of what God is doing in our lives, which at the same time touches and reaches other people. Our highest value is that individuals come to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Everything we are and do is focused on knowing Jesus and living for His kingdom. Our desire is to be used by Him to create connections and environments where this can happen.

When we are connected to Jesus we experience personal transformation. Our primary individual responsibility is to love God and our neighbor. Our identity and ministry flow from our *being* not from our *doing*. We cannot lead others into a deeper

relationship with God if it is not a growing reality in our own lives. Church and ministry leaders need to be on authentic individual journeys if they want their organizations and individuals they are associated with to become communities engaged in spiritual formation. In this transformational process to be like Christ, the Holy Spirit is the agent modeling our being for the glory of God and He does that through:

1. Personal *communion* with the Lord in order to give acknowledgment of our sinful condition and guide us through a repentance process allowing the glory of God shining on us. It will provide a life of hope.

2. A life in *community* with brothers and sisters creating a relationship based in loving each other. This approach will open the doors to invite others from the community to join in the Kingdom life through faith in Christ.

3. Develop a ministry of *compassion and service* to the need, to the broken and to the lost, bringing hope to them.

We recognize that when God brings transformation to and through His church, He does it through the labor of brothers and sisters who are continually being transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit, and who are engaging with and investing in the lives of one another. These are then empowered to minister to others outside the community. As leaders we need to understand the only way we can accomplish Jesus' mission is by a transformation experience. Change is not something easy for churches and people.

As we move into the twenty-first century, church leaders are being challenged and called to move from the past into the future. The realities of our world have drastically changed and the church is being called to change too. Throughout church history our forms have changed with the times so that the message of the gospel can be clearly understood and the function of the church be accomplished. The New Testament is clear: the forms of the church are much less important than the function of the church. Unfortunately today most churches are wrestling with forms and

ignoring the function and thus minimizing the Great Commission. (Hammett, 2002, p. 44)

Function has to do with the mission of the church and the way it reaches the community. It is the system in action. Forms have to do with what we do inside and function with what we do outside of the church. In our spiritual journey the transformation process has to drive us into action on behalf of those who are lost. We are not ready to be connected with the community if we are not connected to God. When I looked at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church, I felt a great need for change so that people could find meaning for their spiritual lives. We had to understand that the religious life is more than just to come to church and have our names in the books. In our pilgrimage to discover the joy of the Christian life we learned that transformation is something that depends on Christ in us. It is our connection with the Trinity that produces a changing and growing relationship.

In the transformation process we distinguish four layers: (a) the transformation from non-being to being in God's creation of man; (b) man's becoming conformed to a divine-human transformation model which introduces a person into a divine reality; (c) transformation in love in which the soul is led into God, while God takes up his abode in the soul; (d) the transformation in glory which awaits us after this life but which the transformation in love already contains a sketch. (Waaijman, 2002, p.456)

Learn the Bible and Understand How It Connects to Your Personal Life

Usually before we become a church member and are baptized we have to study the Bible and make our decision for the principles that are preached to us. The normal process is to have somebody study the Bible with us so that we progressively learn about God. This experience brings a conviction of the truth to the one studying. Most of the time, this kind of work brings a rational conversion. If our goal is just to bring people to Adventism, this method is very efficient. It is not difficult for people to understand and

accept the truth found in the Bible. Since we realized and believed this is the Word of God we cannot contest the message, but surrender to it. The big problem with Christians today is not that they do not know the principles of the Bible but that they do not know how to connect those principles to their personal lives.

When we accept the doctrines of the church and become members, this is the beginning of an extraordinary journey on living and experiencing God in our daily lives. If we remain just in the first step—rational conversion—our experience as Christians will be superficial. This is the major problem of most churches today. At the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church the situation was the same: those members love the Lord deeply, they love the church, they love the message, they love the doctrine, and they are faithful to the truth. Looking superficially from the outside we can say they are healthy members. However, the spiritual life of the church was weak.

As we advanced through this project we discovered that we can learn from the Bible, accept its principles, and even put them into practice and still have a weak spiritual life. We all know that the Bible has an important message for our lives. We also know that learning its message leads to a transformed experience. Furthermore, we recognize that the transformation process comes when we leave the worldly lifestyle for the Christian lifestyle. The challenge is to connect the Bible truth with our personal lives, which will necessarily bring personal growth and involvement with the mission of the church. In our church we saw a commitment with the Bible truths, but we did not see those truths being lived. As a result, the Bible truths were not causing a deeper commitment with the mission.

I always knew the Bible as a great source of spiritual affirmation and a challenge book who call us to be involved with mission. This can become true when the Bible is connected with the daily personal life. So we devised a program for members to access their Bibles on a daily basis, and we prayed as a church asking the Lord for wisdom and guidance in order to implement the project.

It was not easy to have people make the Bible their everyday book. Love for studying Scriptures is related with what we can get from it. And by nature we are selfish and only do things thinking of what we can obtain. But the rewards for studying the Word of God are spiritual and not material. Thus, we challenged our members to engage in a process of spiritual affirmation of their faith. This was not a doctrinal process, but a spiritual one in which the Bible was to reveal the actions of God in our lives. A great change began in the church when I brought a special edition of the Bible called *Communion and Action*, which was printed for a conference in Brazil. That Bible had a beautiful cover as well as study guides at the end. Several sermons about what the Bible means to Christians were preached, and the program climaxed on the day everyone received that special Bible as a gift.

I really believe that what our church members need is to learn how to relate the Bible to their everyday life. Hence, the Bible cannot be used as object that we have to carry to church every Sabbath. Instead, if we want to be connected with God we must see His Word as an interaction through which we listen to His voice speaking to us every day.

In our experience at the Hill Portuguese SDA Church we discovered that our members saw the Bible as God's book. They believed they could find in it the principles

to live a righteous life. Moreover, they understood very clearly that they should study the truth in it. Nevertheless, they did not see the Bible as a book that teaches them how to live. They had great difficulty relating the Bible truth with their daily lives. So, they did not connect with the Father's Word daily. Such daily connection with God's Word is the very agent by which we learn to do earthly things in a heavenly way. As a church we had to rediscover the true meaning of the Bible and its role in our daily lives. This was a transforming experience for the whole community of faith.

Connecting with the Bible everyday is not merely a reading experience. It is more than that. There are some steps that we discovered as church that can assist people in bringing Scriptures to their daily lives. I will mention only five steps, but this list could be even more extended:

1. *The knowledge that the Bible is God speaking to us on a daily basis.* When we have the knowledge that we can listen to the voice of God speaking to us daily we rush to the Bible every day and we will thirst for it. We will not see the Bible just as a book anymore, but the Lord speaking to our hearts.

2. *Studying the Bible daily is a transforming process.* Our sinful nature is always looking for rewards. Whatever we do, we want to know what we are going to earn. By studying the Bible daily, we allow God to change this trend in us. The transformation that results is spiritual growth and learning to live by faith making the Bible part of our lives.

3. *We begin to find a connection between Bible messages and our daily activities.* As we learn from the Bible we begin to see the actions of God in our daily activities.

4. *We become sensitive to spiritual gifts.* It was amazing to see people who believed they were not capable minister in ways appropriate to their spiritual gifts. Naturally, then, many members became involved in mission at the church.

5. *Spiritual affirmation and mission awareness.* After a while, the spirituality of the church grew progressively. The new conviction to live the truth daily by faith brought to our members a sense of community and the wish to become involved in mission.

“As a church we need to rediscover the true meaning of the Bible” (Schuessler, 2009, p. 16). It is about time for us not to see the Bible only as an evangelistic book to save other people but primarily as a book for daily personal transformation sanctifying our characters in the likeness of Christ’s.

The Power of Prayer in the Spirituality and Mission of the Church

The second strategic aspect to connect spirituality with the mission of the church is the power of prayer. In reality, prayer is the channel to reach the source of power for the Christian life. It was difficult for our church to understand what prayer really means. We found that most of our members just prayed in church or when facing a difficult situation. They also struggled to understand some of Ellen G. White’s quotations on prayer. I would like to mention two of those statements.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. . . . His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. (White, 1892, p. 93-94)

These messages are very strong because they speak about lifting people from a human level to a divine level. Regrettably, sometimes we want to bring God down to our level and ask Him to answer our selfish petitions. Thus, the concept of prayer we

attempted to implement shook the faith of the church members. We had to reprogram our minds in order to understand the profundity of prayer. To receive God through prayer we need to open our hearts to Him. If the heart is not completely open to God we cannot feel His presence. Further, our humanity makes prayer a necessity. Since our origin is eternal we do not like death. Our present fallen condition goes against the purpose we were made for. So our bodies and souls cry for God. The only way to find happiness in this life is to be in relationship with God. That is the reason why prayer is a necessity and a privilege for humans.

In our journey of spiritual affirmation we saw prayer as a way to be connected to God. A misunderstanding of what prayer means can compromise Christian growth. When we looked at our church we realized that as members of God's community we did not feel the need to pray and this was related with our understanding of prayer. I was very surprised when I searched for a definition of the word *prayer*. Several dictionaries see prayer as supplication or asking for favor, and so on. Following this line of thinking, people generally see prayer as petition moments in which they come to God to talk about their needs and problems. This kind of information made me conclude very early in this project that if we want to have spiritual affirmation in our Christian lives we must have a deeper understanding of prayer, knowing what it really means. As I set out on a quest to find the real meaning of prayer, I found a definition I appreciated. Ciaravino (2001, p. 5) says that prayer "is God's activity in our lives. Yet it is also our decided turning to God. Prayer is simple communication. In addition, it is profound self-examination. Prayer is carefully cultivated awareness, as well as spontaneous and "inexpressible groaning (Rom 8:26)."

Normally, people see communication as a two-way road in which they speak and listen. However, when it comes to communication with God, for some reason, that rule is different for most people. Human beings can be prompt to speak to God, but few listen to Him. If we want to listen to God's voice speaking to our hearts we have to be sensitive to Him. Also, we must have in mind that there is a very strong connection between the study of the Bible and prayer. These two spiritual tools work together to connect our souls to God. I have seen a lot people studying the Bible without prayer and the result was a profound knowledge of the Bible, but that did not bring spiritual affirmation. The reverse is also true. If we just pray without studying the Bible, our prayers become mechanical and we cannot feel the power of God in our lives. God speaks to us mostly through the Bible and we speak to God through prayer. "Prayer is the human answer to God's activity in their lives" (McConnell, Moody, & Fitt, 2006, p. 58). When we begin to have an interaction with God we see the Bible as a source of power because God is speaking to us through it.

Moreover, interaction with God can be accomplished through spoken words, written words, thoughts, meditation, or song. God desires us to commune with him, and prayer is one way of doing so. Prayer is not mainly for us to self-interestedly ask God for things (as in "give me this"), but to honor and glorify God by spending time with him. Many people think of prayer as being one-directional—we talking to God. Yet, prayer can and should be bi-directional. We talk to God and also listen to what He has to tell us. Besides the Bible, God can also speak to us through other people, through circumstances, but especially through his Holy Spirit, who can put specific words and thoughts in our

minds, and even communicate via audible words (For some verses on God's audible communication see 1 Sam 3:4-14, Ps 18:13, Luke 3:22, Acts 9:4, 2 Pet 1:18).

Hybels (1998) sees prayer as channel of God's power.

Through prayer God gives us his peace, and that is one reason even self-sufficient twentieth-century people fall on their knees and pour out their hearts to him. But there is another reason. People are drawn to prayer because they know that God's power flows primarily to people who pray. (p. 10)

In our search to learn how to connect with God through prayer we had to establish some guidelines as a disciplinary method. We developed some useful ideas for our daily lives:

1. Setup a time everyday to meet God.
2. Define how much time you are staying with God.
3. Find a place to meet God. The same place every day.
4. Make sure this is a lonely place.
5. Do not allow your mind to think two things at the same time.
6. Sometimes be silent with your thoughts thinking about the throne of God.
7. Keep in mind that God is far beyond our ordinary experience.
8. Prayer involves both the mind and the heart—the understanding and the feelings and will—of man.

During these daily prayer moments we need to talk to God like we talk to a friend. Prayer must go beyond petitions. We discovered that we can be related to God in several aspects. So, we implemented five different styles of prayer in our church: (a) worship prayer, (b) thanksgiving prayer, (c) intercessory prayers, (d) confession prayer, and (e) petition prayer (Mull, 2005). Then, we challenged our members to enlarge their territory and look for ways to implement these five styles of prayer in their lives. As a result of

this improved communication with God we can expect a growing interest for other people and deeper engagement in mission to save the lost. Mission awareness is a consequence of our spiritual affirmation allowing the power of God to change our lives every day.

“The single, most important conviction I want to share with you is that *Prayer is a Personal Response to God’s Presence*” (Nigro, 2006). The most meaningful prayer comes from a heart that places its trust in the God who has acted and spoken in the Jesus of history and the teachings of the Bible. God speaks to us through the Bible, and we in turn speak to Him in trustful, believing prayer. Assured by Scriptures that God is personal, living, active, all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful, we know that God can hear and help us. A confident prayer life is built on the cornerstone of Christ’s work and words as shown by the prophets and apostles in the Spirit-inspired writings of the Bible.

Awareness of God’s holiness leads to consciousness of our own sinfulness. Like the prophet Isaiah, we exclaim, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa 6:5). By sinning we hurt ourselves and those closest to us; but first of all and worst of all, sin is against God (Ps 51:4). We must confess our sins to God in order to be right with Him. We do not need to confess them to another human being. But we should confess them directly to God, who promises to forgive us of all our unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). In the book *The Remarkable Prayers of the Bible: And Their Transforming Power for Your Life Today* by J. George (2005), he challenges us to examine the prayers of biblical characters and learn how intercession can change your life. Nehemiah reveals that one can pray anywhere, anytime. Abraham demonstrates that

nothing is too small to bring to God. And Moses teaches us that praying is more effective than complaining

Finally, though we have every reason to express gratitude for God's blessings, prayer is much more than that. Through prayer we personally recognize our dependence upon our Creator and we respond to His love for us, which was revealed by the marvelous incarnation and life of Christ, His atoning provision at the Cross, and His resurrection, as well as His continuing presence through the Holy Spirit.

Developing a Worship Theology: Lifting up God and Building up the Community

Worship is more than an attitude; it is an attitude expressed and the magnitude of the attitude determines the measure of the actions. A lukewarm heart cannot perform boiling hot worship, nor can a rebellious life revere God with any depth of sincerity! (Cornwall, 1983, p. 47)

K. Barth says of worship that it is "the most momentous, the most urgent; the most glorious action that can take place in human life!" (as cited in Allman, 1965, p. 133). W. Nicholls adds to Barth's equation that worship is "the supreme and only indispensable activity of the Christian Church. It alone will endure . . . into heaven, when all other activities of the Church will have passed away" (1958, p. 94). In worship we recognize what is of highest worth—not ourselves, others, or our work, but God. Only the highest divine being deserves our highest respect. Guided by Scripture, we set our values in accord with God's will and perfect standards. Before God, angels hide their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa 6:3).

Worship is a natural response of what God is doing in our life. We come before the throne of grace with humble heart in confession, adoration and praise. The sense of being before the Most Holy, and the Most High in worship is an unforgettable

experience. We praise Him for His “mighty deeds . . . according to His excellent greatness” and for His “righteous ordinances” (Pss 150:2; 119:164). To God, His works, and His words, His people give sincere praise.

Worship is the result of intimacy with God. When we acknowledge how great God is our attitude when we come to worship Him changes. Grammatically, *worship* can be either a verb or noun. According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, its verb form includes such synonyms as esteem, exalt, revere, glorify, and respect (Mish, 2001, p. 607). As a noun, it can encompass adoration, veneration, devotion, supplication, and invocation. And its actual definition is “reverence, honor or homage paid to God; ceremonies or services expressing such reverence.” Worship, thus, includes both the attitude and actions that accompany it.

When we enter into the presence of God to worship Him, it is not a contemplative moment, or a praise moment. It is an interaction between a human being and a divine God who want to enter into your life and keep you fresh and faithful to the principles of your faith. This is a renewal experience where we express our appreciation for what God has done and will do in our life. Worship is a spiritually forming experience. Worship is all of our efforts in life to love God and to know Him better. Paul tells us in Rom 12:1-2 to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God and says that true worship is being dedicated to please God. Worship is doing all that we can with our lives to express our love for God by offering ourselves to Him. Worship needs to envelope our whole lives.

Building up the church can be a terrific form of worship. We share in the joy of sharing the gospel. Building up the church is not just a moral responsibility; it is an opportunity to discover great blessings. The blessing of our church community is that we

find God through it and in it. “We are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith” (2 Cor 1:24).

Every Christian church community is a blessing from God and each can become an even greater blessing to us and to others. There is more for each of us to receive from and give to the community if we bring ourselves closer to Jesus and help bring others closer to Him. Jesus asks us to spend our days learning and serving, giving and praying, worshiping with others, and inviting and encouraging friends along the way. If we respond by serving in our church community, we discover the joy of God’s presence with us and hear God calling us into closer relationship.

Bible study and an active prayer life can change the worship experience completely. Slowly we learned that in our worship experience we had to offer something to God. We also realized that God and His angels were watching us as we sang and praised Him; and this awareness made a big difference in the way we worshipped. It was amazing to see the transformation of our worship service. In our journey to combine spirituality and mission, we also realized that worship could be a good way to reach the community. So, we brought many people from the area to worship with us, and the church went to the community to establish house churches. Another aspect we considered was music because of its powerful impact on people’s lives. In addition, we developed a strong connection between the church, the community and small groups. By these elements (studying the Bible, prayer, and worship), the spirituality of our believers grew and mission awareness was enhanced, which resulted in the establishment of small groups.

Furthermore, worship became a transforming process in our church life. The Holy Spirit moved powerfully upon us. Worship is Spirit-led, spontaneous, and unpredictable. Its local forms may vary. The essence of worship, however, is the same everywhere. It involves a growing awareness of the glory and sovereignty of God as well as a response to Him. The Lord moves upon his people touching lives deeply.

The attitude of people coming every Sabbath to the worship service in the Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church changed completely. In the presence of God the heart was opened, and the soul was sensitive to the touch of His presence. As we approached God with our weakness we became more conscious of God's glory and His holy presence. The heart submitted completely to God and the soul surrendered to His touch for cleansing and forgiveness is blessed. As with Isaiah in his worship in the temple (chap. 6) the Holy Spirit convinces us of our sin and we repent before the Lord. We repent from, hard hearts, unbelief, pride, ambition, envy, competition, jealousy, unloved thoughts, status seeking, self-interest, materialism, individualism, blindness to others' needs, words, deeds, disobedience, and fear of others peoples opinion.

The quality of our corporative worship is directly related with the quality of our personal time alone with God, seeking for His face, for His love, and for the assurance that we are not alone. When we feel God's presence in our lives we begin to respond more fully and more freely to the Holy Spirit. Many people like worship because of the music, the praise, the rhythm, however it is in words that we express our response to God's goodness. Worship is not something emotional but reflects a loving relationship involving the body, the mind, and the soul. It is not something that happens just in the church once every week. However, when we have a spiritual affirmation in our life,

worship becomes a lifestyle and you are always worshiping God in your daily life. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life of constant communion with Him releasing ourselves more and more to the Lordship of God. In order to live a worshipful life we have to surrender our being to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Formation of Small Groups as Lifestyle of the Church

Embracing the mission of the church is the spontaneous result of a spiritual reformation in our lives. When we experience spiritual affirmation, mission awareness is something inevitable. Our church in *the Hill* for a long time had not been involved in mission activities. But after we sowed spiritual affirmation the church became eager to be involved with the community and share the Gospel.

As we studied small groups through history we discovered that the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers established small groups as a church lifestyle to preach the gospel (Seaman, 1998). Also, studying the early Christian church we perceived how powerful the house church was in the community.

And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common, and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

So here we see that the early church met together in the Temple but also in houses which gives us the picture of a two winged church—corporate worship on one side and small groups or house churches on the other. Just about every church in the Western world has clung to the corporate worship model and that has been their primary focus for many decades. Most of the present day churches have been focusing on providing

contemporary, relevant worship services that would attract people into the church and hopefully result in a significant number of salvations. But notice that the message in Acts 2:44-45 says: “And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.” Here we have a clear picture of people living in community and sharing in each other’s belongings at a level that would be very difficult for many western Christians to relate to. Most attempts to build a community based on this passage of Scripture where everyone shared everything have ended in failure and disappointment, and I do not believe that this is what small groups should try to replicate. We live in a modern society and trying to turn the clock back 2,000 years and copy a formula used in a totally different time and culture is almost certain to lead to disappointment.

Small groups can provide more than interaction with the community; they can revive the faith of our members. The first step to have members involved with small groups is to carefully study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy to see what God’s purpose for small groups is. In our spiritual journey we learned that before we can establish a good relationship with other people in a house church setting (small groups) we need to have a good relationship with God.

In the beginning of our ministry at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church we sensed that a devastating lack of mission afflicted the membership. People understood their mission as, in the words of a church official, providing a church home for Portuguese Adventists. Find Adventists in the neighborhood and invite them to church was the evangelistic cry. The church had little sense of ministry to the

unchurched, to the marginal, to the poor, or to those who were not Adventists. The neighborhood changed, but the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church did not keep pace. Survival became the church's bottom line, its mission.

In order to become a church in mission the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church had to let go of clericalism and convert members into ministers. Studying the Bible and praying to the Lord we found the concept of *house church* in Scriptures, which was also heavily supported by the Spirit of Prophecy. There is a strong relationship between spirituality and mission. It is our relationship with God that motivates us to be in relation with others. God wants a relationship with His people, not meetings. The Church is the people of God, not a people who happen to meet for gatherings to talk about God stuff. I think sometimes we go through the motions of church and forget the point of it all. It is as if we are going to school for the purpose of getting good grades and not to learn. In many cases we have grown so accustomed with the way we do church that if God did show up, we would not know what was happening.

We have to stop seeing small groups as a program to be implemented and understand that these groups are part of the church's lifestyle. We have to switch from this mentality to see small groups as extension of the weekend-based church. Small groups have major elements that are part of the church life. In reality, they are themselves house churches.

When small groups are fully capable of doing all things of an *ecclesia* then the revolution begins. However, if they are just a back up program associated with large churches, this just becomes a group of people studying the Bible and praying and cannot

be associated with a multiplication movement because mission is out of the agenda.

Discipleship is not really present in this mode of small groups.

The big change began to happen when our members saw the small groups as house churches, which operated like mini-cells mingling the church with the community. In our study we found some reasons why the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church should organize small groups:

1. Through small groups our members experienced a sense of belonging to a family/community.
2. Through small groups our members received and gave love and care.
3. Through small groups our members learned to grow in God's Word and its application.
4. Through small groups our members reached out to those who were not yet in the community of faith.

Small groups (cell groups or house churches) provide a place where people connect to one another as fellow Christians and develop a sense of community and family. Schwarz writes:

Holistic small groups are the natural place for Christians to learn to serve others – both in and outside the group – with their spiritual gifts. The planned multiplication of small groups is made possible through the continual development of leaders as a by-product of the normal group life. (1998, p. 32)

In our project we identified that small groups can fulfill four special needs of people:

1. *Spirituality*—helping people experience Jesus and His saving power in their lives.

2. *Community*—helping people experience Jesus in one other, giving them the sense that they are connected to a *body*, a loving community, as well as to the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

3. *Care*—helping people experience Jesus in their pain and suffering. When many people are most clearly in need of the gospel and most open to God’s presence and the healing, saving power of Jesus.

4. *Service*—helping people experience meaning, purpose, and significance by participating in Jesus’ mission in the world and being involved in something that is not only bigger than themselves, but also life-transforming and enduring.

When we look at what Jesus said in reply to a question from one of the scribes in Mark 12, He said,

The foremost is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, is one LORD; And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these. (vv. 29-31)

For many years the focus has been on the first part of this statement and much of church life has been geared towards worshipping God, and rightly so. However, the second part of Jesus’ statement has been more difficult to cultivate in an ever increasingly busy world, where the pressure on people to perform has never been greater. Such is the pressure that modern culture has placed on our lives that there has been precious little time to focus on “loving our neighbor as ourselves.”

It is very impressive how small groups can fulfill these commandments of Jesus. In the modern society today an individualistic/selfish model of living is growing and relationship has been left aside. Love your neighbor is a major goal of small groups; it is all about relationships and how we can interact with each other. “One of the reasons that

church has become less effective at reaching their communities is because they have fallen prey to the very problem they should be helping to overcome; being too busy to care for people” (Fay, 2007, p. 35).

I strongly believe that all of us at some point face this problem mentioned by Fay in the quotation above. In our busy society running for our way to survive we become so busy that we have little time for our families and friends. But Jesus stated very clearly that these two commandments were the greatest, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . and love your neighbor as yourself.” As we look at churches today we see great emphases in the first part of the commandment, with a great deal of teaching and development with emphases on worshipping God. However, the second commandment *loving your neighbor* has been left behind.

Small groups allow a great opportunity for people to become involved in other peoples’ lives and begin to care for their needs. The church has an effective tool to show the community a group of people that really care about them in a practical way. This became a living reality to us as the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church engaged in mission through the house church program.

CHAPTER V

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS OF A SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND MISSION AWARENESS PROGRAM AT THE HILL PORTUGUESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

The first and perhaps most critical beginning point for renewal is to understand that the church has an inborn tendency to grow. Growth is in its genes.

Whatever its pathologies, every church has a vital urge toward its own health and renewal. The reason for this is simple and simply profound: The church is the body of Christ. The very Spirit of Jesus is at work in his church, always prodding and drawing it toward life and renewal. (Crandall, 2008, p. 7)

The mission of the church is related to growth. The journey of transformation from a dead church to a living congregation was not easy. In the process of implementation we discovered several factors that contributed to the accomplishment of the project. These factors revealed a desperate church looking for identity.

Necessity of Theological Affirmation

The church lives in a cultural immigration context and because of this, it has developed a sense of relativism through the years. The message was clear: the principles of the church should be adapted to the reality of the refugee immigrants. Adventist theology was shaken by a lifestyle that pleases members and not God. The damage of this approach has weakened the faith not only of the adults but especially the youth of the church.

Lack of Vision of the Leaders

The leaders felt the pain of the declining membership through the years but they did not know what to do. In some way they are waiting for something to happen. The lack of vision and initiatives compromised the spirituality and the mission of the church. As leaders they felt the necessity to challenge the congregation to move forward and to stand firm for the mission of the church, but did very little.

Members' Hunger for Spiritual Affirmation

Members sensed they should do something for the church, but they did not know what to do. In their limited vision, they were working hard to save the church as an institution, but they did not realize that they were the church. Eventually, they came to the conclusion that they needed to affirm their spirituality. As they grew in faith, a transformation process began in the lives of some members, who in turn opened the doors for the implementation of the project.

Parents See the Necessity of Faith Affirmation for the Youth

The young people of the church brought a very liberal approach to the church programs. At the same time they allowed themselves to be involved in worldly activities, which compromised the Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle. Because of this youthful behavior parents urged church leaders to do something to affirm the faith with the new generation.

Worship Restoration

In this area we had a conflict between generations. In order to open the church's door for the community we had to find a way to change our worship service in order to

relate to adult members, unchurched visitors and young people. The church had a very conservative worship approach and the young people complained about it. The tension in this area was high because the youth group wanted change and the adult group wanted to keep it the way it was. The project as a whole called for restoration in the service but in reality the change was not just the way we do it but also the way we felt about it.

The project brought a new concept of worship reconciling adults and youths in their approach to God. This new model—worshiping God in the beauty of His holiness—made a big the difference in the way the church worshiped. Our tastes were put aside and pleasing God with our response to His marvelous love for us was now the approach.

I like what Dr. J. Hayford concluded in his book *Manifest Presence* (2005), because for him worship's ultimate purpose is to reunite all creation under the restorative ministry of Christ. Worship is not an end in itself. It is part of a larger restorative picture given in John's Revelation of the Glorified Christ, to restore all things to God's original intent. Nothing gets done in the heavenly throne room without prayer and worship. Angelic creatures stand before His throne with harps and bowls, representing the prayers and worship of the saints.

The Challenge to Do Mission to the Community

Spiritual affirmation leads to mission. This is the goal of our project. In reality, our members knew that as a church we had a mission but they did not know how to do it. They were unprepared to be involved in something like that. I was surprised to see how spirituality can move a church to mission. The tools to grow spirituality brought into our members' hearts the desire to minister to the community. It was interesting to notice how we saw and did old things in a new way for the Lord. The community began to have a

very important space in the life of the church and the small group's project was the connection between the church and the unchurched people.

The journey of spiritual formation and affirmation brought joy to the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church. The awareness of mission gave the church a renewed sense of responsibility to the community. The attitude of the young people towards mission was changed. The process of involving people with the Lord not only personally but also cooperatively gave new meaning to the church. The results in the life of the members and in the life of the church were very positive in reaching individuals, families as a group, the church as a congregation, and the community. We needed to see mission as a legacy that Jesus left.

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection does add a historical-eschatological definitiveness and concreteness to God's mission. The community of the disciples of Jesus carries on Jesus' mission at the service of God's mission. Witnessing and servanthood are the best are images of Jesus' mission as well as the church's mission. (Nissen & Wijzen, 2002, p. 103)

Measuring Spirituality and Growth of the Church

It is very difficult to evaluate spirituality in people. However, Jesus said in Matt 7:16: "You will know them by their fruits." It is impossible not to see the results of what God is doing in the life of a Christian person. After two years of implementation, the project brought incredible change to the church. Our congregation was growing both spiritually and numerically. The atmosphere and attitude of the members changed completely. It is amazing to see how God changed something so critical and this transformation resulted in many good things. Spiritual affirmation brought a renovation to unpractical old concepts, helped to achieve a peaceful mind, and helped to draw us

closer to God (Watson, 2009). Spirituality not only speaks to growth in communion by God but also means to grow in his transforming power (Talling, 2009, p. 1).

The study results show that God works progressively in the personal life of our members. As church members were trained and challenged to walk closer to God, indicators of church spiritual growth were measured. After two years of implementation, results indicated that 75% of church members were studying their Bibles every day. Data was collected in an informal training session. Out of these 75%, 10% spent more than half an hour and 50% spent at least 20 minutes perusing Scriptures daily. The remaining spent around 15 minutes of their day in Bible study. Evidently, the donation of a new Bible to each member brought a high motivation for them to engage with Word. The purpose of this daily study was to encourage members to apply biblical principles to their daily lives. This experience gave a new meaning to the study of the Bible.

As soon as the first year of implementation of the program was completed, over 10 small prayer groups meetings were held weekly in houses. Information from intercessory prayer ministry shows that 77% of the church members took some time aside every morning to pray. This personal interaction with God every morning studying the Bible and praying created a new spiritual dimension in the life of the church. When the worship ministry implemented the concept of personal and family worship on a daily basis, 48% of the homes began to develop some kind of home worship. This caused an impact on the quality of praise and worship we had in the church's Sabbath service. Finally, the project developed five house churches with an average of 12 members in each. This last step of having church meetings in houses established a connection with

the people in the community making it possible to assist them with their needs as well as preach the Gospel to them.

Spending time with God means looking for His action in our daily routine. This growing relationship reaches a dimension where God is present in every moment of our day. The presence of God in the life of church members was manifested in several areas of their behavior. Their attitude to one another changed. Criticism disappeared and a compassionate spirit became visible. Now people were caring for each other. There was a fellowship and cooperative spirit in the church. The small groups produced a communion between brothers and sisters as they shared their problems in these meetings helping each other. Now people want to be involved in the church. It is wonderful to see so many people willing to give their gifts as volunteers.

The project brought members an awareness that the church building was the house of God. Furthermore, because the church belongs to God, people cared for it and attendance grew. As members grew spiritually, coming to the house of God became a great need for them, which in turn resulted in tremendous growth in attendance. It was incredible to see their commitment to come to church. Participation in church services and activities also grew dramatically. A new approach was developed by the members in relation to it.

This project also brought to the local church a Spiritual Gifts Seminar (see appendix A) that was very helpful. After the seminar, a new understanding of their spiritual gifts helped members and leaders to use their gifts and talents to serve the Lord's Church. It was wonderful to see spiritual gifts as part of the Christian lifestyle.

One of the most important changes at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church was the new attitude to worship celebration. The church developed a sense that in worship they were in the presence of God in celebration and even the visitors had the same approach. The spiritual affirmation led members to the concept of church mission. The community became their target and many projects were developed by the church to reach the neighborhood. The work of small groups was the major means of outreach.

There is no doubt the church began a transformation process and the new behavior was the result of the spiritual growth experienced by members. The knowledge of Bible truths made the word real in their daily lives. The understanding of what it means to have a prayer life made a big difference in the way they serve the Lord. Several programs were created in order to involve the community. Church attendance almost doubled and many visitors came in to participate. Because the spirituality of the church grew, many others aspects of the church also grew: baptisms, attendance, tithes and offerings, participation, and number of members increased.

Impact of the Project's Implementation at the Church

In order to promote spiritual formation and mission awareness, a project involving four areas was established: study of the Bible, prayer, worship, and small groups. These four tools were the key factor to revive the church. It is very important for our study to analyze the impact of these tools in the life of the membership. Each of these tools impacted the church life.

Study of the Bible

As the members of the church began to have daily contact with the Bible their spiritual life grew and the results were seen in several areas of the church's life.

1. *Sabbath School*: Two important things happened in this ministry. First, the Sabbath School attendance increased with people coming on time. Second, the number of members studying the Sabbath school lesson grew.

2. *Elders and Deacons*: These leaders organized a wonderful visitation program where the whole church was visited. Basically, while visiting they study the Bible and pray with members.

3. *Interest for Literature*: The number of people looking for denominational literature in the church bookshop grew, especially, literature on Bible prophecy.

4. *Spiritual Gifts*: After the Spiritual Gifts Seminar (appendix A) many members in the church took this step very seriously, and following the Word of God they began to use their gifts to serve the church. This area of the Christian life is very important because when we use our gifts we are being led by the Spirit. "If the church, the body of Christ, had no spiritual gifts, we would be no more than any secular organization" (Polston, 2006, p. 78).

5. *Stewardship*: As the spirituality of the church increased, tithes and offerings also increased. The faithfulness of the members grew as the project was implemented.

The study of the Bible and the application of its teachings to their daily lives produced one important inner change. It improved their knowledge of what it really meant to live a Christian life. As they advanced in their project, the church put in practice the spiritual disciplines, which revived the members' faith.

Prayer

As members learned to spend time with God in prayer, several segments of the church began to develop and change. The last weekend of each month there was a vigil

meeting. Members shared their testimonies, prayed together, and worshiped in the name of the Lord. These meetings produced a great revival inside the church. We felt the presence of the Lord. The result of the personal fellowship with God brought the need to organize a prayer ministry in the church. Women's ministries, youth ministries, and deaconesses organized prayer group meetings. This prayer network also reached the church's small groups. In the worship service a special moment was put aside for prayer. We called this moment Garden of Prayer and it became a blessing to our members.

Besides the small group activities during the week, some members hosted a house prayer group, which helped to produce spiritual affirmation in the church. This development of the church in prayer increased the weekly attendance at the prayer meetings. On Tuesday nights the church had its official prayer meeting and its attendance increased 200%. Another interesting aspect of the prayer ministry was the weekly agenda of prayer. Every small group of the church had an agenda of prayer. Each week they checked the prayer requests that were answered. The most important thing in this prayer revival was to see members praying for each other. The prayer ministry organized a prayer network where members of the church pray every week for each other.

It was wonderful to see the impact of prayer in the lives of the members individually as well as in the life of the church as a whole. The project brought a new approach to prayer to the church and this new vision of prayer made a significant change. As a people of the Christian faith we are called to build both the individual and the corporate prayer life of the church into a more powerful and dynamic force.

We believe that it is mainly through prayer that the guidance and will of God for our lives can be known. Therefore, prayer should be an important part of our lives individually and together.

To know God's will in prayer, we must to be filled with God's Spirit, who make intercession for the saints, and in the saints, according the will of God. To be filled with God's Spirit, to be filled with God's Word, is to know God's will. (Bounds, 2007, p. 53)

In this project we learned that a range of prayer meetings exists not only for those who need to pray through the burdens that they believe have been given to them, but also as an encouragement for those who want to catch the spirit and joy of praying and come to know God's leading for their own lives.

Worship

The third tool that reached our congregation powerfully was *worship*. In this area the church and members changed in several aspects. We developed a new liturgical approach for the worship service. Previously, the church had a very traditional liturgical service. The change involved more time for music and prayer between songs. The new service implemented an interaction between the worship leader and congregation in their approach to God. Music became a worship response to God and worshipers praise Him as a response of the blessings and actions of God in their lives during the week. Another very important aspect developed in this area was home worship. The church praise ministry together with the corporative worship leaders stimulated members to develop a personal worship at their home. This became a great blessing for the church. The results were wonderful as the attendance of the visitors increased.

This new concept of worship changed completely the Sabbath in our church. Even in the other church meetings we had a new approach about how to celebrate the Lord.

Music in our church has a new meaning now and, when we sing, we express something very important in our adoration to God. We came to the conclusion that Christian worship impacts all of life. All of us worship something, whether we know it or not. We may not physically bow down to it, or offer it songs of praise and adoration, but whatever we devote most of our time and attention to is often, what we worship.

The Bible says that one day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:9-11). He alone is worthy of our worship and praise. One day, both those who choose to worship Him and those who have refused His free gift will acknowledge that He is Lord above all. When that day comes, only those who have chosen Him will go on to live with Him in eternity.

Small Groups

The last tool that helped our church change was small groups. This tool produced incredible changes as we worked to fulfill the church's mission. Since members were meeting each other weekly they built a close relationship. The groups also helped members to develop a good friendship with people from the community. The early church concept of house church was implemented. The project brought a sense that each group is a mini-church having affiliation with the main church. The personal ministry department began to work through the small groups. Appropriate training was conducted by the department in order to prepare members to reach the community. Through small groups members saw the opportunity to be involved in the mission of the church. A new vision was embraced by members in order to reach the community.

The house church or small groups opened the door for a connection between the church and the community. In the Portuguese culture there is great prejudice against the

Adventist church, but the Portuguese people very easily accept an invitation to come to a house instead of the church. These small groups opened a great opportunity for the community service ministry. Members and community began to have a close relationship in these meetings and as a result many needs of the people were brought to the table. The community services of the church had the opportunity to do a wonderful job to help members and people from the community. God was opening doors for the gospel by this ministry.

The house church project made connections between different areas of the church, bringing it together as a whole, giving members a greater sense of belonging. The deep intimacy with God and with each other was the first purpose of small groups. God is the author of transformation. We cannot, by following certain steps, doing the right thing, bring about transformation in our own lives or the lives of others. The most we can do is simply be open to transformation; to put ourselves—and our groups—in the best position possible for God to do his work (Peppers & Miller, 2008). The Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church began a transformation process where spirituality and mission became the most important thing. The tools used in the project greatly impacted the life of the church and that of its members individually.

Steps to Mission Development at the Church

“Success in our mission as a church requires persistence, and longsuffering, in the daily grind of the mundane and difficult aspect of ministry” (Norman, 2007, p. 10). We cannot avoid the pain of transformation but the Lord’s Spirit will help. We have to move ahead with the strong conviction that God is with us. It was very challenging to help a church that had completely lost sight of evangelism to recapture the mission. We have to

understand that mission is not obligation but a lifestyle of the church. We are called to spread the gospel and bring sinners to Jesus. As Christians we follow Jesus who said, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” (John 20.21). We are called to serve God by living and proclaiming the good news. It is not the church of God that has a mission, but the God of mission who has a church.

For the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church, God’s mission is about transformation—transforming individual lives, transforming communities, and transforming the world. As we follow Jesus Christ, we believe that in three ways the Holy Spirit reveals God’s mission to us: (a) through the Bible (fellowship), (b) through the life of the Church (witness), and (c) through the needs of the community (service).

Mission is the result of a conviction that God has a plan to save the lost. As the spirituality of the church grew, members became available for service. The desire to do mission was something that came to their hearts by daily communion with the Word of God. They were also challenged to learn how to give Bible studies. Several training sessions prepared the great majority of the church to be involved in an evangelistic project (appendix D). The best way to evaluate what was really happening in the life of the members was calling them to participate in a public evangelism crusade.

In the middle of 2008, during our Sabbath service, we challenged members to get one Bible and give Bible studies to somebody. It was amazing that 95% decided to be involved in this mission program. After three months, we invited a young evangelist from Brazil to come to our church and preach for 12 nights in a row in order to have a harvest campaign. In those evangelistic meetings more than 100 people from the community

attended and 53 continued to study the Bible. We also noticed that 95% of the church members were involved in the campaign. In the end 25 people were baptized.

After that evangelistic crusade, members changed their attitude in regards to evangelism. The mission of the church became a priority and every segment of the church was doing evangelism in some way. A social program was organized to open the doors of the church to the community. It was amazing to see members witnessing for Christ and through the life of the church people the greatness of God was revealed. Perhaps, most importantly, members became familiar with Scriptures and were able to accurately and coherently present the gospel to others. “Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). Always being prepared means diligent Bible study, memorizing Scripture, and praying for divine appointments—God-given opportunities to share with those whose hearts have been prepared by the Lord to hear His message of salvation.

The last step in the development of our church mission was involving members with the community. Through the work of small groups we grasped the real picture of the needs of the community. In connection with the church’s social service we reached and helped over 100 people each week with food and Bible studies. As we approached the Lord, our sensitivity to serve was aroused and we opened our doors and hearts to the community. The Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church brought their individual expertise to the service of the community. Members volunteered eagerly. They brought more than spirit and intention to the task at hand. They brought a broad range of practical skills with which to remedy conflicts, improve communication, restore personal integrity,

and even handle failure in virtually every aspect of life. This ministry was only possible because of the small groups.

As we recognize Jesus Christ working in our life affirming our faith, we will desire to tell others about Him and what He has done for us. This is relatively easy when the Holy Spirit is our guide and when we have some Scriptures verses to share. The Word of God is like a seed which, when planted in the human heart, can bear fruit for eternal life (John 4:36). Jesus is calling us to become part of His ministry. The great commission is a challenge to God's church to go and preach to the world making disciples for His kingdom.

When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom he wasn't talking about heaven for which he was preparing his followers but about something that was happening in and on this earth, through his work, then through his death and resurrection, and then through the Spirit led work to which they would be called. (Wright, 2008, p. 203)

The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the implementation of the project at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church are described in the following paragraphs. My hope is that it will enable laity and pastors to evaluate and adapt this project according to their needs.

Conclusions

When a church embarks on a program of spiritual affirmation mobilizing members to mission, there will be more membership involvement in the in-reach and out-reach of the church. Spiritual growth brings mission awareness and will help foster active and positive participation in outreach efforts. There will be an increase in newcomers participating in church activities. Renewed Bible study brings help for daily living and renews our spiritual lifestyle. As we find the real meaning of the truth of the Word of God, prayer becomes a life necessity in our daily activities.

The implementation of the project brought a new meaning to corporate worship opening the door for members' participation. The spiritual affirmation of them will enhance the development of small group ministries. The organization and promotion of this house groups' ministry is the key to an active and vibrant mission-oriented church. There is a dire need for the implementation of this spiritual project in churches that are stagnant or dying. This spiritual formation and mission awareness program, when administered effectively in immigrants' churches, will supply opportunities for spiritual and numerical growth. Thus, the project presented at the Hill Portuguese Seventh-day Adventist Church is a model to follow. It enables the laity and the pastor to coordinate training and outreach activities and provides a strategic response to churches that immerse themselves in more and more activities without a clear vision of where they are heading.

The external aspect of the project is to mingle members with the community creating the positive image of a caring immigrant church in the neighborhood.

Recommendations

The conclusions of the study have implications in two main areas: practice and future research. The research holds implications for pastors, church leaders, officers, members and Portuguese churches worldwide. These recommendations are:

1. A replication of the study should be done using another ethnic group. A comparative analysis should then be carried out to determine if they are applicable to other cultures.
2. This study gives insights and awareness for churches in need of a spiritual and mission program.

3. It is a fact that the work cannot be finished without the involvement of the laity. Therefore, Pastors ought to understand the need to let lay leaders play a significant role in the mission development of the church.

4. Findings from this research study provide management tools to Pastors with large congregations of Portuguese speaking members.

5. Pastors and members are challenged to become more aware of the needs and concerns of the immigrant community around the church, and through this project, seek to reach them and invite them to a family-friendly church.

6. Churches that are dying or experiencing lack of growth have the opportunity to study this project, and by God's grace, seek to implement it.

7. This spiritual affirmation project brings members to focus on mission. However, the project cannot be implemented as a program that usually has a beginning and an end. The people have to understand that the reason for the project is to bring the church to a true Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle.

8. Pastors have an obligation to be faithful to the principles of the Bible and to the counsels of the Spirit Prophecy as they implement the project. The liberal and contemporaneous approaches to reach outsiders could be very dangerous creating criticism and conflicts inside the church.

A sociological study on Portuguese-speaking immigrant churches should be of interest to pastors, members, and church organizations dealing with this cultural group. Moreover, we recommend this study for two reasons: (a) members of immigrant churches living outside their cultural area in a religious environment tend to behave in a very liberal way, and (b) an understanding of this specific phenomenon that occurs with the

Portuguese-speaking members will help them to revalue their faith in order to be effective in ministering to others.

APPENDIX A

THE “SPIRITUAL GIFTS” SEMINAR

I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

appropriate committees in the church but that we might live as faithful disciples in the world.”

Why should I know about Spiritual Gifts?

- 1) I Corinthians 12 :1 - We should know about spiritual gifts.
- 2) I Timothy 4 :14 - We should use them.
- 3) I Peter 4 :10 - We are responsible for them.

II. Definition of Spiritual Gifts

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

Romans 12:6-8

I Corinthians 12:4-11

I Corinthians 12:27-31

Ephesians 4:11-12

III. Spiritual Gifts Description:

- 1) Wisdom -- the gift of translating life experience into spiritual truth and enabling others to apply such wisdom.
- 2) Knowledge -- the gift of knowing the truth of God through the study of Scripture, intuition, and experience.
- 3) Administration -- the gift of organizing human and material resources for the work of Christ.
- 4) Apostleship -- the gift of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to other cultures and foreign peoples.
- 5) Shepherding -- the gift of guiding and empowering others to faithful service.

- 6) Faith -- the gift that empowers an individual or group to hold fast to their convictions regardless of external circumstances.
- 7) Miracles -- the gift that recognizes and facilitates the miraculous power of God in the world.
- 8) Prophecy -- the gift of speaking God's word clearly and faithfully.
- 9) Leadership -- the orchestration of the gifts and resources for ministry.
- 10) Giving -- the gift of supplying physical and material needs for ministry.
- 11) Compassion -- an exceptional empathy that moves one to action on behalf of others.
- 12) Healing -- the gift of channeling God's healing power to those who are afflicted in body, mind, or spirit.
- 13) Discernment -- the ability to separate truth from erroneous teaching and rely on spiritual intuition to receive God's guidance.
- 14) Teaching -- the ability to share spiritual and scriptural truths with others in a transforming way.
- 15) Helping -- the gift of supporting the demanding work and workers of Jesus Christ.
- 16) Evangelism -- the gift of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.
- 17) Servanthood -- the gift of providing for the spiritual and material needs of others without condition.
- 18) Exhortation -- the gift of exceptional encouragement and hopefulness.
- 19) Tongues -- the ability to communicate the gospel to other people in a foreign language not studied.
- 20) Interpretation of Tongues -- the ability to understand and translate the gospel when it is communicated in a foreign language not studied.

IV. The Spiritual Gifts Process

- 1) Identify your gift.
- 2) Use your gifts.
- 3) Avoid abuse.

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

1. Identify your gift

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

How do you identify your spiritual gifts?

- 1) Take a spiritual gifts inventory.
- 2) Have the body of the church affirm your gift.
- 3) Have the Lord confirm your gifts through prayer.
- 4) Experiment – use your gifts in a ministry.

2. Use your gifts

The development of the spiritual gifts is related to:

- 1) Your experience.
- 2) Your service.
- 3) Your conviction.
- 4) A specific call

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

Verifying your gifts

- 1) Confirmation by the church body .
- 2) Confirmation by the Lord through intercessory prayer

3. Avoid abuse

Abuses of Spiritual Gifts:

- 1) Gift projection - “Why don’t you have my gift?”
- 2) Gift exaltation - “My gift is better than yours.”

V. Spiritual Gifts Benefits

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

APPENDIX B

THE “SMALL GROUP” SEMINAR

The “Small Group” Seminar, Part I

In the Early Church

- 1) All lay members participated in the pastoral care and evangelism.
- 2) The leaders were the apostles and evangelists; they went everywhere planting new churches.

“It is not the Lord’s purpose that ministers should be left to do the greatest part of the work of sowing the seeds of truth”.ChS, 67.

“Let ministers and lay members go forth into the ripening fields”. ChS, 67.

The Early Adventist Church

- 1) The church followed closely the New Testament model.
- 2) In the first fifty years after the organization:
 - a. The pastors evangelized.
 - b. The lay members had the pastoral care of the churches.
 - c. The apostasy in this period was smaller.
- 3) The Worship Service on Saturday.
 - a. Every Saturday we found them at the church, praising the Lord.
 - b. That provided them with the feeling they belonged to a body of believers.
 - c. That conviction was strengthened by the camp-meetings, where they met hundreds and thousands of other Adventists.
 - d. This helped them to understand that they belonged to something much larger than the small group in the local church.
- 4) Sabbath School.
- 5) Small Groups.
 - a. In the Small Group there was spiritual growth of the members and evangelism.
 - b. It also assisted the relationship needs and friendship among the people.
 - c. It was known as social meeting.

The Church of the Future

- 1) The Adventism today is no longer practicing the biblical model of the New Testament.
- 2) We need to revive the fire of the Adventism and return to our origins.
- 3) This requests a renewal:
 - a. In the work methods.
 - b. And in the involvement of the members in the ministry.

The main work of the pastor is:

- 1) To train, make disciples and evangelize.

“The minister should not feel that it is his duty to do all the talking and all the laboring... He should educate helpers in every church”. ChS, 69

- 2) To Restore the Lay Ministry in the Church.

“Ministers should not do the work which belongs to the church... They should teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community”. ChS, 69.

To establish Small Groups

- 1) Why the Small Groups?
 - a. Because it is a return to our biblical origins and to the early Adventism.
 - b. As the Adventist church grew, we lost the spiritual affirmation that we had in the small groups meetings.
 - c. We need to recover the emphasis that the early Adventists put in the small groups.
- 2) Advantages of the Small Groups.
 - a. To have relationship and friendship among the people.
 - b. To share the Christian life.
 - c. It is ideal to evangelize.
 - d. To help the new members to become disciples.
 - e. The leaders care for the members.
 - f. Reduce Apostasy.
 - g. The reason for the loss of members in the church is lack of love and friendship.
 - h. We rarely lose a person that joins a small group. (next section follow below)

The “Small Group” Seminar, Part II

1. How has evangelism developed in the Adventist Church?
 - a. 1st Period: Prophetic Evangelism (1844 – 1900).
 1. The camp meetings were established as a medium for evangelism and revival.
 2. The main approach was to plant churches.
 - b. 2nd Period: Institutional Evangelism. (1900 – 1980).
 1. The main approach was evangelistic preaching centralized on Christ.
 2. The bible studies and the evangelistic sermons became a key part of the meetings.
 - c. 3rd Period: Evangelism of Relationships. (1980 till today).
 1. It became difficult for large numbers of pastors and congregations to get involved in the traditional public evangelism.
 2. This period was characterized by personal testimony and for attending the needs of the people and establishing friendships, to then speak about Jesus.
 3. A union between public and personal evangelism occurred.
 4. The small groups always were part of God’s plan
2. In the Israelites:
 - A. The plan of God the consisted of:
 1. Dividing the nation into tribes.
 2. Dividing the tribes into families.
 3. Dividing the large families into small family nucleus.
3. In the Ministry of Moses:
 - A. Pastor Moses had one congregation of more than two million people and to manage them he needed to:
 1. 60 000 leaders of 10.
 2. 12 000 leaders of 50.
 3. 6 000 leaders of 100.
 4. 600 leaders of 1 000.

God’s people actually needed a competent leadership and balance in each level of their organizational structure.

4. In the ministry of Jesus:

- A. When Jesus was ready to establish the Christian church, He started with a small group.
- B. Luke 6:13-16 shows that He chose 12 disciples.
- C. Jesus spent most of his time with individual training and in small groups.
- D. Christ wanted to emphasize the importance of personal relationships and the training in the teaching and salvation of people.
- E. Jesus acted in this way because people are saved individually. His objective was to have relationships that save lives.

5. The primitive Christian church:

- A. The first believers were called “the family of believers” (Gal. 6:10).
- B. In the first century Christian life was centralised in the home.
- C. There was a balance between the meetings in homes and public meeting.

“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ”. Acts 5:42

“When both are combined, with the blessing of God, a more perfect and thorough work may be wrought”. Christian Service, 121.

6. What can we learn from the experience of the primitive Christian church? Acts 2:42 - 47

- A. There was companionship – love, care, sharing, nutrition – with one another.
- B. “...To the fellowship and to the breaking of bread”. Acts 2:42 (Fraternize).
- C. They prayed together... “the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42 (Prayer).
- D. “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”. Acts 2:47 (The Result of Testimony).

7. Early Church Model:

- A. Bible Study – “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” Acts 2:42.
- B. Fraternization – “the fellowship, to the breaking of bread”. Acts 2:42.
- C. Prayer – “to the breaking of bread and to prayer”. Acts 2:42.
- D. Testimony – “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”. Acts 2:47.

APPENDIX C

EVANGELISM SEMINAR

THE HILL PORTUGUESE

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

THE PROBLEM OF EVANGELISM

- A. High percentage of drop out.
- B. Small percentage of involvement.
- C. Remember Example of Lazarus.

Seminar Purpose

- 1. Emphasize the importance of discipling in “evangelism”.
- 2. Identify the key elements involved in discipling.
- 3. Explore ways of integrating discipleship into evangelism activities.

Why discipleship is important?

- 1. It is the church’s clearest purpose—the divine command (Matt. 28:18-20).
- 2. It is the natural result of integrated lordship.
- 3. Without discipleship, evangelism deteriorates into manipulative performance (Many people feel that evangelism is an event, while actually it is a process).
- 4. Discipleship is the secret to and the desired outcome of effective spiritual ministry.

Key issues

- 1. Leadership goals.
- 2. Leadership expectations.
- 3. Leadership focus.
- 4. Evangelistic methods.
- 5. Discipling process.
- 6. Training.

7. Resource allocation

Discipleship Definitions

1. Spirituality is the realized lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. Lordship is intimacy with God through the indwelling Christ integrated into daily life. It is the result of accepting Christ as Savior, Lord, and present within us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
3. Disciple is one who walks with, learns from, and lives in submission to a master in order to become like the Master.
4. Biblical discipling is the art of shaping the life of an individual into growing partnership with God. It begins with assurance of salvation through the acceptance of the Gospel, and then continues integrating Christ's lordship into every area of daily life.
5. Spiritual disciplines are the tools of discipleship. They work to help us focus on Jesus Christ, explore principles, and integrate discipleship into every area of life.

Describing the Disciple

1. Passionately loves Jesus Christ.
2. Maintains intimacy through daily devotional life.
3. Integrates Christ into every area of life.
4. Makes Christ the priority in all decisions.
5. Actively shares Christ.

Key steps to discipleship

1. Accept the gift of salvation (Eph. 2:4-5).
2. Focus on Jesus Christ (Col. 2:6-7; 3:1-2).
3. Explore God's word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
4. Accept God's will—decide to follow the convicting of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).
5. Claim God's power—promised reality (Phil. 2:12-13; Gal. 2:20).
6. Act in faith—move forward in God's will (Eph. 2:10).

Points to remember

1. The Holy Spirit is the one who changes hearts.
2. The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers change and growth.
3. The Holy Spirit provides the only appropriate motivation for discipling.
4. At best, we help people open their lives to the Holy Spirit through experiences, information and skills.

5. We can only lead from our own experience.
6. Personal testimony is a powerful tool in discipling.
7. Discipling is a process—not an event or a destination.
8. We are pilgrims together on the discipleship journey.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Gospel

1. Knowing what Christ has done and is doing for us.
2. Its application to ourselves and those around us.

Most problems in our lives or in the church occur in areas of Gospel/Lordship:

1. Failure to integrate Gospel.
2. Failure to submit to Lordship.

Cause of the problem is often in the area of Vision or Presence.

1. Loss of Vision distorts the Gospel.
2. Loss of Presence distorts Lordship.
3. Best answer - combine Vision & Presence = it transforms the way we live.
4. Place to start - Vision -> Gospel -> Lordship -> Presence.

Ways to Improve Vision

1. Study stories of God's working with people.
2. Meditate on the life of Christ.
3. Develop a prayer life -- talking with God as with a friend.
4. Memorize Scripture.
5. Understanding the Gospel.
6. Accept reality of Christ's death for you.
7. Accept fact you are the object of God's unconditional love.
8. Study truths of the Gospel.
9. Accept fact that salvation is entirely the work of God's grace.

Integrating Lordship

1. Pray for Holy Spirit to guide you to what He wants.
2. Ask the questions:
 - a. What difference does Jesus Christ make?
 - b. What difference does the Gospel make?
 - c. How would the visible presence of Jesus make a difference?
 - d. Make Christ the priority in decisions.

Enhancing Awareness

1. Accept Christ's promise => "I am with you..."
2. Accept reality of Holy Spirit in your life - the presence of Jesus Christ.
3. Make room for God in your daily life.
4. Practice the Presence of God.

INCREASING DISCIPLESHIP

Lordship Model - Looking at a Dynamic Gospel

The "Act" of salvation

1. Christ dies on Calvary.
2. God gives His Son.

The "Condition" of salvation

- Accepting the gift of grace.
- Surrendering to Jesus as Lord.
- Dying to self.

The "Content" of salvation

1. The Holy Spirit bringing the person of Jesus Christ.
2. His righteousness.
3. Forgiveness.
4. A "new creation."

The "Consequence" of salvation

1. Discipleship.
2. Obedience.
3. Sharing

Presenting the gospel

1. Key Points:
 - a. We have all sinned.
 - b. The wages of sin is death.
 - c. Christ died for us.
 - d. If we confess and accept Him, He forgives and gives us eternal life.
 - e. The new life in Christ.
 - f. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

KINGDOM TO KINGDOM

Spiritual Growth Model

2. How does God work in our lives?
3. What becomes the motivating force in life?
4. How do we grow in our development or the relationship with God?
 - a. Discipleship.
 - b. Dimensions.

Discipleship is:

1. Multi-dimensional.
2. God focused—not self or church focused.
3. Systemic—it must include all of life.
4. Process oriented.
5. Growth aimed.
6. Relationally based

Discipleship Dimensions

“To comprehend and enjoy God is the highest exercise of the powers of man.”
(EGW, RH 5/30/1892)

The spiritual dimension => God is Spirit, we are spiritual—created for a life integrated in God.

1. Knowing God.
2. Knowing Scripture.
3. Experiencing God.
4. Practicing spiritual disciplines.
5. Integrating the spiritual into all of life

The mental dimension => the experience with God begins in our minds and carries over into all of life.

1. Habits = pathways in the minds.
2. The mind—virtually limitless capacity.
3. Understanding truth—moving beyond information storage.
4. Thinking biblically—challenging culture.
5. Developing a biblical philosophy of life

The physical dimension – The body impacts all other dimensions.

1. Disciplining physical desires.

2. Conditioning the body temple.
3. Strengthening for service.
4. Prioritizing time and effort.

The emotional dimension – Decisions are most easily determined by our emotions.

1. Recognizing emotional scars from sin.
2. Emotional healing required for growth.
3. Integrating the gospel—foundation for healing.
4. Often begins through human relationships

The social Dimensions => Relationships are the context in which spiritual growth takes place.

1. The family:
 - a. Context for initial growth.
 - b. Support base for continued growth.
 - c. First context for discipling.
 - d. The Church (as the “Body of Christ”).
 - e. A celebrating fellowship.
 - f. A ministering community.
2. The world:
 - a. Site of the Great Controversy.
 - b. Target for redemption.
 - c. Context of daily spirituality.
 - d. Location for redemptive relationships

Discipleship Growth Areas:

1. Move into application disciplines:
 - a. Financial discipleship.
 - b. Sabbath keeping.
 - c. Time management.
 - d. Simplicity.
 - e. Integrate into life:
 - f. Family relationships.
 - g. Witnessing.
 - h. Tithes and offerings.
 - i. Sharing.
2. Implications for Evangelism for pastors:
 - a. Determine being before doing.
 - b. Recognize primary task.
 - c. Recognize gifts.

- d. Redefine success.
- e. Develop new skills.

Implications for Evangelism for Laity:

- 1. Renewal.
- 2. Equip.
- 3. Outreach.
- 4. Reaping.
- 5. Nurture.

Preparing Steps for Evangelism:

- 1. Preparing the church for revival.
- 2. Preparing the members for outreach.
- 3. Preparing the field for harvest (small group is the best way).
- 4. Preparing the souls for celebration.

Preparing the new members for spiritual growth:

- 1. Activities should be planned for follow-up and involvement after baptism.
- 2. Additional Important Activities:
 - a. Follow-up meetings.
 - i. Nurturing.
 - ii. Discipling new members.
 - b. Activities for Follow-up and Involvement:
 - i. Spiritual friend or spiritual guardians.
 - ii. New Members Committee that is responsible for the integration of new members.
 - iii. New Members visitation, once per week during the first month and once per month for the first year.
 - c. Practical Activities – Follow-up Meetings:
 - i. Make provision for the follow-up meetings to be conducted by the local evangelists/pastors.
 - ii. Interests that are not baptized yet will be harvested by other denominations if we don't follow them up.
 - d. Practical Activities – Nurturing:
 - i. For at least three months after the crusade, the local churches will conduct, every Wednesday and Friday evening, evangelistic meetings based on the study of Daniel and the Revelation, and the Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA Church, Life and Teaching of Jesus.

- ii. Present clearly the message of Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 9. Keep alive the hope of the soon coming of Christ.
 - iii. Identify the little horn and his activities in the dark ages and in the closing events as in Daniel 7, 8, and Revelation 13.
 - iv. Identify the church of prophecy in Daniel 8.
 - v. The study of 2300 days should point both to the true church that proclaimed the truth that was cast down to the ground by the little horn and the start of the investigative judgment in 1844.
- e. Some Vital Subjects are:
 - i. The study of the Sabbath.
 - ii. Tithing.
 - iii. Spirit of Prophecy.
 - iv. The latter rain.
 - v. The counterfeit latter rain.
 - vi. The change from Sabbath to Sunday.
 - vii. The Bible Reading for the Home and the Pictorial Aid for the Bible.
 - viii. Assign spiritual guardians to newly baptized members.
- f. See that in the house of newly baptized members they have:
 - i. A Bible, SS Bible Study Guide and a song book.
 - ii. Train them to have regular and evening family worship.
 - iii. Be alert to notice those who were absent from church services and visit them immediately.
 - iv. Be sensitive to their needs, both spiritually and physically.
 - v. Encourage them to buy and read earnestly the Spirit of Prophecy books.
 - vi. Involve them in small groups.
- g. Practical Activities Discipling New Members:
 - i. Integrate the new members into action teams/Sabbath School, Action Units, or Small Group ministry.
 - ii. Pair each new member with one who is experienced in missionary activities.
 - iii. Involve the new members in all activities of the church.
 - iv. Train them to participate in church services and in missionary outreach.
 - v. Conduct Lay Preacher Training programs in the church.
 - vi. Use the Personal Ministry Handbook for this training program or other good sources

APPENDIX D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**THE HILL PORTUGUESE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

A Church Evaluation Questionnaire for the Last Decade

01. Before coming to South Africa, what country did you live in?

☐ Portugal ☐ Angola ☐ Mozambique ☐ Other Country

02. What is your educational level?

- a) Elementary ☐
- b) High School ☐
- c) College/University ☐
- d) College incomplete ☐
- e) Master or PhD ☐

03. What language(s) do you speak?

- a) English only ☐
- b) Language other than English ☐
- c) Portuguese only ☐
- d) Portuguese and English ☐
- e) African and English ☐
- f) English and a European language ☐

04. How long have you been attending this church?

- a) Over 10 years ()
- b) Less than 10 years ()
- c) Less than 05 years ()

05. Do you remember the last evangelism campaign that we had in our church?

- a) Yes ()
- b) No ()

06. If your answer to the question five was yes, do you remember the name of the evangelistic speaker?

- a) Yes ()
- b) No ()

07. In the last ten years, how many evangelistic campaigns did you have active participation?

- a) 1 or 2 ()
- b) 3 or 4 ()
- c) More than 5 ()

08. Do you remember the results in baptism of any campaign in the last ten years?

- a) None ()
- b) 01 to 10 ()
- c) 11 to 20 ()
- d) 21 to 30 ()
- e) 30 to 50 ()
- f) Over 50 ()

09. How many people did you give Bible Studies to in the last ten years?

- a) None ()
- b) 01 to 05 ()
- c) 06 to 10 ()
- d) 11 to 15 ()
- e) 15 to 20 ()
- f) Over 20 ()

10. The membership of The Hill Portuguese SDA Church decreased drastically from 200 to 40 during the last 15 years. In your opinion, what reasons caused this drastic decrease? (You may mark more than one).

- a) Lack of spirituality ()
- b) The church become weak as religious bodies ()
- c) Lack of pastoral motivation ()
- d) Church secularization ()
- e) Low level of commitment ()
- f) Poor worship services ()
- g) Lack of Discipleship ()
- h) The church lost the mission ()

11. How committed were you with the mission of the church in the last ten years?

- a) Extremely Committed ()
- b) Very Committed ()
- c) Moderately committed ()
- d) Not committed ()
- e) Not sure ()

12. Do you believe that our church can turn around and begin to grow again?

- a) Yes ()
- b) No ()

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1976 to 1978- ENA Academy, Brazil

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November 1997 to October 2003 – District Pastor of the Texas Conference of
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