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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL GROWTH PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AT
SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY: THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A SPIRITUAL
MASTER PLAN

by

William Brennon Kirstein

Advisor: Steve Case, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: SPIRITUAL GROWTH PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AT SOUTHERN
ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SPIRITUAL
MASTER PLAN

Name of researcher: William Brennon Kirstein

Name and degree of adviser: Steve Case, Ph.D.

Date completed: Septembber 2011

Problem

Seventh-day Adventist collegiate young adults are disengaging from the church in alarming numbers in North America today. In this context, the need arises for Adventist colleges and universities to be much more intentional about the relationships it forms with its students and the spiritual formation system it is promoting during these years.

Method

A comprehensive spiritual master plan, as well as an assessment process, was developed for Southern Adventist University in order to explore the perceived quality of campus spirituality and how it impacts the lives of students.

Results

In this study, students perceived the following three objectives to be Southern Adventist University's strongest: 1) providing opportunities for students to be involved in serving the needs in the local, surrounding communities; 2) increasing student involvement in on-campus ministries; and 3) encouraging and equipping students to take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives. Conversely, students perceived the following three objectives to be the university's weakest: 1) increasing appreciation for and involvement in corporate worship; 2) equipping students for meaningful Bible study and prayer in their personal lives; and 3) offering students opportunities and training for witnessing to help them realize their role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Conclusions

Jesus chose college-aged young adults as His primary strategy to reach the planet at the establishment of both the early Christian church, as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to powerfully cooperate with the first angel's message, it needs the passionate wiring of young adults. Increasing spiritual needs and financial pressures in higher education call for closer accountability in making a spiritual difference in the lives of students. Establishing a spiritual master plan, identifying university spiritual objectives as well as a means to gather student spiritual perception feedback is vital to an intentional process of promoting student spiritual growth.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY: THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A SPIRITUAL
MASTER PLAN

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

by
William Brennon Kirstein

September 2011

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Across North America today, an increasing number of Seventh-day Adventist collegiate young adults are disengaging from the church. Demographer George Barna (2006) points out that across Christianity, “the most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twenty-somethings—61% of today’s young adults—had been church-ed at one time during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying).” Roger Dudley (2000) of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University noted that it was reasonable to conclude from his research that at least 40 to 50 percent of SDA teenagers in North America were essentially leaving the church by their mid-20s. Current research by Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson (2008) indicates that one of the biggest challenges to the North American SDA Church is the “graying of Adventism” with the median age reaching 51.

It is in light of these alarming Adventist young adult trends in North America that the need arises for our Adventist colleges and universities to be much more intentional about the relationships it forms with its students and the belief/value system it is espousing during these formative years. While Southern Adventist University began the process of developing a comprehensive spiritual master plan for its campus in 1999 (at

the encouragement of then GC President Robert Folkenberg), there remains a vital need to assess the quality of campus spirituality and how it impacts the lives of its students.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to create a comprehensive spiritual master plan for Southern Adventist University, assess current student spiritual perceptions, and make recommendations for changes on campus going forward.

Justification for the Project

On a national level, the “graying” of Adventism trend and the alarming rate of collegiate-aged young adult disengagement and exodus from the church makes focusing on collegiate spirituality a very high priority, especially in consideration of the future of the Adventist Church in North America. It is imperative that church leadership studies carefully why the hemorrhaging of young adults is happening and that they create intentional strategies, which solicit young adult reinvestment in the Adventist Church now. Because of the high concentration of Adventist young adults in Adventist universities, intentional campus research provides a fertile environment for discovering insights into how young adults grow spiritually. On a local level, my own informal research found that of the 2,275 students on the Collegedale campus of Southern Adventist University during the 2007-2008 school year, approximately 1,100 were not attending any of the area Seventh-day Adventist churches on an average Sabbath morning. Student spiritual growth is central to the reason for the existence of Southern Adventist University.

Delimitations of the Project

This project was limited in study to the student population of Southern Adventist University during the 2009-2010 school year. A random sample of 500 students was selected, under the supervision of the institutional research and information technology offices. Each student was emailed a link to a survey located at a dedicated web site.

This project was limited by my lack of experience in assessment, in both instrument construction and result analysis. It was also limited by voluntary levels of student self-disclosure. Only to the extent that a student was aware of their own spiritual growth and was willing to share that journey was the data received as reliable.

Description of the Project Process

The project process involved the following: 1) A chapter of theological reflection, including a overview of biblical principles and practices for young adult ministry, and an overview of principles and practices of young adult ministry from the writings of Ellen White; 2) A literature review on the subject of collegiate spiritual development; 3) A spiritual master plan for Southern Adventist University, as well as SAU student spiritual growth perception findings based on spiritual objectives from the master plan; and 4) Conclusions and recommendations.

A theology for young adult ministry in the Old and New Testaments involves six principles also held as core principles for all ministry: submission, entrainment, obedience, basin authority, equipment, and incarnational ministry. How does the acknowledgement of powerlessness fit one for young adult ministry? How does one establish basin authority in order to impact collegiate hearts? What is the role of student leadership nurture? Specific young adult ministry practices are only sparingly addressed

in Scripture. In establishing a framework for young adult ministry today, what can be learned from Samuel's schools of the prophets and Jesus' call of young adult disciples?

Principles of young adult ministry in the writings of Ellen White include counsel regarding scriptural study, college preparation, practical skills, and field experience.

What value does Ellen White place on obtaining an Adventist college education? What practical skills does she encourage young adults to acquire outside the realm of the theoretical? What field experience does Ellen White want young adults to obtain before going out into full-time work? During her lifetime, what did the practice of young adult ministry look like, especially as evidenced in not only her experience but also the lives of James White, John Nevins Andrews, Uriah Smith, John Harvey Kellogg, Ole Olsen, and James Matteson?

Current literature was reviewed on the subject of collegiate spiritual development. Studies about how a collegiate's belief system changes and what spiritual practices are retained or released were explored. What impact do mission trips have? How do parents influence a college student's spiritually? What spiritual implications do these studies have on higher education? How can recent research into collegiate spiritual development help Southern Adventist University be more effective in accomplishing its spiritual mission?

In helping to ascertain how a student grows spiritually on the campus of Southern Adventist University, a spiritual master plan has been created. It includes specific spiritual objectives as well as a process for assessment. After the instrument was created, the student spiritual growth perception responses were obtained, and have been used to help address policies and budgetary priorities for Southern, and hopefully to also serve as

an encouragement to sister Adventist universities to conduct similar processes of evaluation for their students.

A report on these findings will be formed to share with the administration of Southern Adventist University.

Expectation from This Project

This project will help deepen my understanding of the millennial generation, especially the spiritual temperature of current students on campus, and develop my leadership and equipping skills as Chaplain at Southern Adventist University. This project will help Southern gain valuable feedback from its students, which will enable it to better invest time, personnel, and financial resources to further its spiritual mission. It is also my hope that Adventist education across the North American Division can benefit with similar evaluation processes of student spiritual growth perceptions taking place at other Seventh-day Adventist universities.

Outline of the Project

1. Chapter One identifies the purpose of the project, the justification for the project, the delimitations of the project, and the methodology with which this project will take shape.
2. Chapter Two lays the theological foundations for young adult ministry in the Old and New Testaments, as well as counsel given in the writings of Ellen White.
3. Chapter Three explores current literature on the subject of collegiate spiritual growth, including the formation of young adult spiritual beliefs

and practices, the impact of socializing agents on young adult spirituality, and implications for higher education.

4. Chapter Four includes a spiritual master plan for Southern Adventist University and evaluates student spiritual growth perceptions.
5. Chapter Five discusses recommendations for how student spiritual growth perceptions can help Southern Adventist University invest future resources to help accomplish its spiritual mission.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

The college years have been defined as a four-year window in a person's life when God has maximum opportunity to build a foundation for a life lived for Him (Shadrach, 2003). In today's North American society, a critical decade between 16 and 26 exists where crucial decisions shaping the next fifty years will be made, including the choice of occupation, the decision to marry, and the solidifying of personal values and principles by which one's life will be governed. One percent of the world's population are collegians and represent arguably the most reachable, recruitable, trainable, and sendable category of persons on the planet. To focus ministry efforts in this arena is a very strategic way to expand the kingdom of God.

Adolescence is sometimes considered an "invention" of society (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001). This transitional time between childhood and adulthood was a largely unknown phenomenon before the twentieth century. A relatively new concept, the term "adolescence" gained currency in the social sciences only in the past 100 years, when it was first given prominence by G. Stanley Hall, a late nineteenth century American psychologist. Most of human life has had a lifecycle divided into two parts, childhood and adulthood, demarked by puberty. Prior to the 19th century, puberty began as late as age 17 in women. However, in the past 150 years, the age of puberty in women has

fallen below 12 years, while the legal age for marriage was raised (from 12 to 18 in the United States [USA]). In 1875, the United States Supreme Court allowed tax money to be spent on high school education, allowing the majority of youth to extend adolescence from puberty through high school graduation. In 1918, compulsory high school attendance laws were issued, which effectually meant that children no longer moved directly into adulthood. Thus, society had created a delay (Hestorff, 2006). By 1930, high school enrollment had reached 6.6 million students, and the existence of an American adolescent culture could no longer be denied (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001).

Psychologist John Santrock (cited in Dean et al., 2001) has summarized adolescence as

the period of life between childhood and adulthood. . . . (the process) lasts from roughly 10 to 13 years of age and ends at 18 to 22 years of age, (however) defining when adolescence ends is not an easy task. It has been said that adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture. (p. 45)

Because youth ministry is defined as ministry to adolescents, one would be hard pressed to demonstrate that youth ministry existed prior to the late nineteenth century.

For this reason, it is challenging to find adolescent (let alone late adolescent/young adult) ministry practices from Scripture that speak specifically to an age range as narrow as 4-6 years (18-24). Scripture speaks broadly to the topic of “youth.” In the KJV, scripture mentions the word “youth” 70 times, “youthful” once and “youths” twice. By contrast, scripture speaks sparingly about adolescence, this middle ground between childhood and adulthood. The Bible identifies early adolescents such as twelve-year-olds Manasseh, Jesus, and Jairus’ daughter. We can only guess others such as Isaac, Esther, and Mary the mother of Jesus were in their teen years. Only four people are positively identified in Scripture as being in their teenage years: Ishmael, Joseph, and the kings Uzziah and Jehoichin (Brierley, 1993).

Principles of Young Adult Ministry in the Old and New Testaments

In the search for young adult ministry principles throughout the Old and New Testaments of Scripture, six themes emerged as important principles for consideration. The following themes will be explored in the paragraphs to follow: 1) divine submission, 2) entrainment, 3) obedience, 4) basin authority, 5) equipment, and 6) incarnational ministry.

Divine Submission

There is no more foundational aspect to ministry than divine submission. Certainly collegiate ministry effectiveness starts with the attitude of Joshua in Joshua 5. Standing on the banks of the Jordan, Joshua clearly has Jericho in his sights. This seemingly invincible Canaanite city sits atop a steep inclined hill with eighteen feet thick double walls (Douglas, 1987). Though Israel has no siege engines, battering rams, catapults, or moving towers, Joshua thinks he is ready to fight, ready to charge forth into ministry doing amazing things for God in His name. Josh 5:13-15 says,

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come. (NASB)

The commander's response to Joshua's question as to whether He was for them or for Joshua's enemies is a powerful one. He answers, "Neither . . . but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come (Josh 5:14 NIV)." God says, "I am not your peer! I am not your equal! My loyalties are beyond you and my purposes go far beyond this battle. My perspective is divine and I have already seen the outcome. Now take off your shoes!" Encapsulated in the heart of this dramatic encounter is the first step for all personal victory as well as for ministerial success. Will I surrender my sword, my plans,

my ideas, my will, myself? Will I take off my shoes and admit my powerlessness and ministerial ineffectiveness before the Commander of the army of the Lord, or will I continue to take matters into my own hands, doing what is right in my own eyes? The battle of Jericho is won or lost in this moment for Joshua. Solomon echoes this thought with, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7, NASB). Not only is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom, it is also the beginning of ministry—especially ministry to the powerful, volatile, changing world of collegiates. Removal of sandals is step one.

Entrainment

Dean and Foster (1998) coined a new term, “entrainment,” to describe the process of drawing alongside God, a stopping and listening to the breath of the Spirit in such a way that as He breathes in us, our heart rhythm aligns with His heart. Entrainment with Abraham meant that when God’s heart ached for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham’s heart ached for them as well. It resulted in Abraham pleabargaining with God to save the entire city if there were as few as 10 godly people (Gen 18:32). Entrainment with Moses meant that when God offered to destroy stubborn, wayward Israel in the wilderness and to start over with Moses’ offspring, he refused. Moses’ heart reflected the aching heart of God for Israel, consumed by the same self-sacrificing love that motivated Jesus when He went to the cross. He pleads to forfeit his personal opportunity for eternal life to save Israel, demonstrating a willingness to receive the penalty of the second death if God would have mercy on Israel (Exod 32:9-14, 30-32). Before charging into perceived effective ministry methods, ideas, and actions, the call is to wait before Him.

“Be patient. Hang in there. Incubate. I am your womb, the safe and fertile place where your soul can germinate until you are ready to become who you really are. The music is in between the notes. Wait—not on me but in me.” (Dean & Foster, 1998, p. 62)

There are arguably no greater principles in collegiate ministry than that of sandal removal and entrainment—processes of continual submission and the development of a heart that beats in rhythm with God’s heart.

Obedience

Central to being an effective minister to collegiates is the issue of personal obedience. In Gen 22:1-3, the incredible story of God’s command for Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah begins. “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” Amazingly, this is the eighth direct conversation that Moses has recorded between Abraham and God. (The first 7 conversations between God and Abraham are: Gen 12:1-3; Gen 12:7; Gen 13:14-17; Gen 15:1-21; Gen 17:1-21; Gen 18:1-33; Gen 21:12, 13). This command comes to Abraham, not in a vacuum, but in the context of ongoing dialogue and relationship. Abraham could not reconcile two thoughts: 1) God had planned the future around Isaac, and 2) God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac. The invitation is to live so closely with Jesus that one can recognize His voice for the eighth time, and when one does not understand, to choose by faith to obey anyway.

Early the next morning, Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. (Gen 22:3, NASB)

While the command of God to sacrifice Isaac must have screamed at him through a restless night, Moses says that Abraham got up, picked up his axe and cut wood until there was enough for the offering, then set out. Ministry effectiveness is all about the condition of the pastoral heart. Obedience calls one to live in such a way that one hears His still, small voice, picks up the axe and cuts enough wood for the offering, and sets out.

God is most evident in our ministries not when we are “on fire for Jesus” but when we burn without being consumed. . . . God is not calling us to identify with Moses. God is calling us to identify with the bush. (Dean & Foster, 1998, p. 72)

Basin Authority

Impacting collegiate hearts means following Jesus in the same downward descent outlined in Phil 2, an upside down kingdom Jesus came to create in the realm of servant leadership. Paul reminds us in this passage that true leadership lies in regarding another as more important than oneself, adopting Jesus’ willing, self-descending attitude as He spent His life descending from the glories of heaven to the shame of the cross. Christ calls us to give no concern to rank, establishes authority through the basin and towel of service, and describes servant leadership in the church as an ongoing, disciplined process of becoming a person of no reputation. It is the heart of Jonathan in relation to David, “You will be king, and I will be second to you” (1 Sam 23:17, NASB). It is the declaration of the Baptist, “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30, NASB).

Equipping

In this servant leadership kingdom Christ came to create, pastoral leadership, especially to collegiates in the volunteer-based organization of the church, exists to equip,

encourage, and develop others to be successful in ministry, more successful than the teacher. In Exod 18, Jethro points out to Moses the fruitlessness of leaders trying to lead alone. The ministry demands of Israel were far surpassing Moses' capacity to respond. Moses had a choice, as every leader does. He could individually try to respond to each clamoring need within Israel and thus achieve limited ministry success by addition at the price of personal burnout. Alternatively, he could harness the best of Israel's latent leadership skills and through the process of equipment achieve exponential ministry success and experience personal freedom. In Num 11, we see Moses move from burnout to team leadership and ultimately to freedom and renewal. When Moses cries out for a different type of ministry in Num 11:11, 12, God responds with a compelling suggestion: gather a cadre of volunteers, and God will spread the spirit given to Moses throughout the community for the good of all Israel (Dean & Foster, 1998).

As author Barry Gane (1997) says, "What is the main responsibility in ministry with young people? One word: equipping. It is your job to find leaders, train leaders, develop leaders, encourage leaders, and to set leaders free to do greater things than you can accomplish (p. 87)." Authors Dean and Foster (1998) echo this sentiment, "Godbearing youth ministry allows room for the trial and error of others, celebrates new faces in the spotlight, and derives genuine satisfaction from watching co-leaders blossom as pastors (p. 100)."

Jesus Himself gave words to this very idea, speaking to His disciples only hours before He went to the cross. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father" (John 14:12, NASB). The pastor's role will be less and less one that is seen up

front, less and less one that sparkles in the spotlight, and more and more one that invests time and energy helping collegiates to grow and develop their spiritual gifts, so that they can shine.

When student leaders are nurtured on a campus and collegiates are set free to lead for Jesus, two things happen: 1) students are more likely to attend the events and 2) a paradigm shift occurs. Instead of students being passive attendees, constantly looking for others to meet their needs, hungry scavengers waiting for scraps, they become invitees onto a team whose purpose is to identify and meet the needs of others—they become chefs preparing the best cuisine, developing a servant-oriented spirit, and becoming more selfless (Jacob, 2006).

Incarnational Ministry

From John 1:14 comes the invitation to incarnational collegiate ministry. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” This verse challenges me to meet collegiates where they are, in their world, not only as spiritual guides, but also as friends, counselors, and fellow pilgrims on a similar spiritual journey. Jesus was not content to operate His ministry to earth from His “office” in heaven. He left His comfort zone and entered one specific human (Mary), and lived as a contributing member of one Jewish family for 30 years. He then spent the next three years of ministry identifying with people like the rejected woman at the well and the hated tax collector. He ate, slept, walked, and sweated with the same 12 men daily for 3 years and even identified with the lowest dregs of society, dying hung between two vile thieves on the cross. “When God chooses to communicate, God uses the language, customs, and social relationships of a particular group of people in a particular time and in a particular place (Ward, 1999, p.

101).” The word must become flesh! Jesus is calling those who minister to collegiates to enter another world. Before one can effectively enter into a different realm, another’s world, one must first die to self. Effectiveness in ministry is directly proportional to internal healing. To the degree that one is open about their own journey, to the extent that one understands who and where they are in their own walk/journey/internal state of spiritual being, to that extent will they have the capacity to be incarnational. This is why the most difficult part of ministry is self-reflection and the spiritual quest for deep healing. “One of the most important things you can do if you’re working with postmoderns is to develop an interior life and to face your dragons” (Rabey, 2001, p. 202). This must be our first work. Then the word must become flesh. “The ramifications of Jesus’ challenge to us in ministry are that we should be intentionally placing ourselves within the midst of youth subculture” (Gane, 1997, p. 56).

Becoming flesh is a journey. Collegiate ministry involves an incarnational, generational journey away from the “adult” way of relating into the realm of the collegiate subculture. It involves a journey into the world of intramurals, cafeteria meals, and social media communication (texting, Skyping, Facebooking). It involves embracing collegiate pain (break-ups, debt, addictions, abuse, and divorce) and listening to spiritual questions and concerns. It involves a spiritual quest from a place of faith to a place of no faith (Ward, 1999). It involves moving from one sub-group to another, learning the language patterns, social system and symbolic framework—past cultural barriers to the social place where collegiates live Ward also states:

Youthwork which is incarnational will see in the life of Jesus a model for ministry. It is essential, not only to good practice, but also to the proclamation of the gospel, that relationships are at the heart of the work. Dean Borgman says that we are called to “waste time” with young people “hanging out” with them. Unprogrammed social time

will form the heart of our ministry as it seems to have done in the life of Jesus. Young people will learn to become Christian because they are in regular informal contact with Christian people who model the faith. The dilemmas and challenges of Christian discipleship will be dealt with as we are on the move from one informal activity to another—car journeys, conversations while going fishing, coffee in the kitchen, a post card sent from a trip abroad. The substance of incarnational ministry is the valuing of contact between adults and young people in the everyday and ordinary things of life. Friendship and relationship will not only be the means of ministry, they will be the ministry itself. (p. 37, 38)

Practices of Young Adult Ministry in the Old and New Testaments

Scriptures speak sparingly of adolescent ministry practices to an age range as narrow as the collegiate window, approximately ages 18-24. Hebrew education was mainly done within the home and it continued to be the primary source until after the return from captivity (Douglas, 1987, p. 904). God called Abraham and placed on him the responsibility to train his children and household to walk in the ways of the Lord (Gen 18:19), with the term “trained men” in Gen 14:14 implying a definite training program supervised by Abraham (Douglas, 1987).

At the time of the institution of the priesthood, priests and Levites, supported by offerings of the people, were to be religious teachers of the nation (Lev 10:11; Deut 31:1-13; 2 Chr 17:7-9; Neh 8:1-8). However, it seems clear that this aspect of their work was not consistently maintained (Douglas, 1987). Apparently, it was because of this ineffective, inconsistent teaching of the corrupt priesthood that Samuel sought to make permanent educational reform by instituting a school of the prophets, first established at Ramah (1 Sam 19:19, 20). Later, other schools were created at Bethel (2 Kgs 2:3), Jericho (2:5), Gilgal (4:38) and elsewhere (6:1). Though mosaic legislation contains no commands requiring the establishment of schools for formal religious instruction, young men, known as “sons of the prophets,” began living in colonies under a leader, the chief

study being the law and its interpretation (Douglas, 1987). Though the age of these men is never clearly defined, these “sons of the prophets” became teachers and preachers who denounced national, family, and personal sins (1 Kgs 20:35-42; 2 Kgs 17:13). Samuel’s schools were a powerful force to restrain the tide of national evils (idolatry, materialism, injustice), and provided for the mental and spiritual training of selected men who were to become the teachers and leaders of the nation (Horn, 1960, p. 879). After the captivity, the Levites assumed a more consistent teaching ministry to the people (Douglas, 1987).

In New Testament times, schools were common throughout Palestine. All Hebrew boys were required to attend them. Even before the days of Jesus, synagogues with schools for the young were found in every important Jewish community (Douglas, 1987). Attached to each synagogue was a room for instruction, and a schoolroom in the Temple precinct is probably where Joseph and Mary found Jesus in a lively discussion with the teachers (Horn, 1960).

Another example of New Testament education would be the relationship between Gamaliel and Saul. Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrin in the apostolic age who was a famous Hebrew scholar and grandson of the great rabbi Hillel, instructed Saul of Tarsus (Horn, 1960). Beyond the education of the synagogue schools, Saul had received advanced theological training under Gamaliel, instruction devoted to the rabbinical interpretation of the law and its application to life (Douglas, 1987). It could be surmised that Saul was at least a teenager, if not a young adult by this time.

Matthew 4

A sermon by Rob Bell (2002) has been pivotal in my thinking about collegiate and young adult ministry. In this sermon, he shared his study into the development of the

Jewish educational system at the time of Jesus. According to Bell, Nazareth was a part of the region in Palestine known as “The Triangle,” a region containing the leading philosophical Jewish thought of the day. This meant that Jesus grew up in the community of leading Jewish thought. There was a discussion going on about what age rabbis should instruct young children in the Torah. One rabbi has said, “Under the age of six, we do not receive a child as a pupil. But from six and upwards, accept him and stuff him with the Torah like an ox” (Neusner, 2005, p. 220).

The Jewish educational system at the time of Jesus, according to Bell (2002), consisted of three levels: Bet Safar (ages 6-10), Bet Talmud (ages 10-14), and Bet Midrash (ages 14+). During Bet Safar training, Jewish boys had a single goal: to memorize the Torah. During Bet Talmud training, Jewish boys added to their memorization of the Torah the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, so that by the age of fourteen, they had memorized all thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. At age fourteen, a Jewish boy was at a crossroads. Only the best of the best would continue on to be mentored by an individual rabbi and receive Bet Midrash training.

It was the dream of every Jewish boy to be chosen, to be worthy to be a rabbi’s disciple. Therefore, when a rabbi was approached about accepting a boy as his disciple, he would test his knowledge to see if he really was the elite of the elite (i.e., “in the book of Habakkuk, quote for me the four references to Deuteronomy in order.”) If he was considered the best, the rabbi would accept him as a disciple, and in turn the disciple agreed to accept that rabbi’s “yoke” (that rabbi’s interpretation of scripture). If, however, the rabbi determined that the student under consideration was not the best of the best, he would say, “You don’t have what it takes to be just like me. I know that you have a

passion for God and for the Torah. Go home, get married, ply your family trade, and pray that your children will grow up to be rabbis, or disciples of rabbis.”

With this background understanding of Jewish education, Bell took us to Matt 4:18-20: “And walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.” Bell asked the question, “Why were they fishermen?” Because Peter and Andrew were not the best of the best. They were not the elite. They were fishermen at home working the family trade because some rabbi somewhere may have said to them, after the first two stages of Jewish education, that they did not make the cut and that they were to pray that their children could someday succeed where they had failed. A few verses later James and John are seen in the same situation.

Then, Bell (2002) made an application to youth ministry. Jewish males were either sent back to the family trade or encouraged to be mentored under a rabbi at the pivotal age of fourteen. When Jesus approaches these four disciples, and the point is especially clear with James and John, they are seen working the family trade. He approaches them and invites them to follow Him at some point after the age of fourteen.

It was the Jewish custom for males to be married by at least the age of twenty, the Mishnah (1933) prescribing eighteen as the age for the bride-chamber. One author points out that on the average a Jewish man could have been expected to be a father at nineteen (Barclay, 1973). Cultural expectations for men to marry were high, the obligation so binding that a man was even to sell a scroll of the law if necessary to raise money (Neusner, 2005). However, of all the disciples, only Peter is known to have been married. According to Matt 8:14 and Mark 1:29, Peter had a mother-in-law, and thus was

married. It was legend that Peter's wife helped in the work of the gospel and Clement of Alexandria reported that Peter and his wife were martyred together (Barclay, 1975).

Other than Peter, Scripture is silent about any other disciples having spouses. The disciple picture that emerges in the gospels is that of a group of single men following a single Jesus for three years. An argument could be made that at least a few, if not most of Jesus' disciples were either in their mid-to-late teens or early twenties.

It would seem that with Jesus the practice of young adult ministry involved not only the selection of these 12 young adult men, but also the daily, intimate investment of His time, His person, and His heart. The idea that the men entrusted with the development of the Christian church after he left were teenagers/young adults is an idea with deep ramifications for youth ministry. Jesus invested and poured himself into teenagers. Jesus chose collegiate-aged young adults as the primary means by which He would reach an entire planet. He chose teenagers to turn this world upside down. Jesus said to teenagers/collegiates, "he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father" (John 14:12, NASB). This thought is staggering (Tanis & Grooters, 2005).

Principles of Young Adult Ministry in the Writings of Ellen G. White

In a survey of Ellen White's writings concerning her counsel to young men, young women, ministers, teachers, students, and youth, four themes emerged as important principles in ministering to young adults. The following themes will be explored in the paragraphs to follow: 1) scriptural study, 2) college preparation, 3) practical skills, and 4) field experience.

Scriptural Study

For Ellen White (1962), there was no more important principle in the spiritual development of young adults than personal study of the Word of God. She counseled students to dig deep into the Bible for themselves and not to be satisfied simply by learning from those who are older.

Young men should search the Scriptures for themselves. . . . The Jews perished as a nation because they were drawn from the truth of the Bible by their rulers, priests, and elders. Had they heeded the lessons of Jesus, and searched the scriptures for themselves, they would not have perished. . . . We must study the truth for ourselves. No man should be relied upon to think for us. (p. 109)

Her counsel to aspiring ministerial students included admonitions to become familiar with every line of prophetic history, every lesson given by Christ and to wrestle with the difficult passages found in the Word of God. The result would be, she promised, a thoroughly awakened intellect (White, 1915). The integrity and wisdom of Joseph or Daniel is available to the young men who study the scriptures (White, 1948, vol. 5). For Ellen White (1955), true strength for young men involved more than mere physical strength. It involved the mind being trained to think, being kept clear and strong by temperate habits and searching the scriptures as for hidden jewels of truth. Medical students were advised to study the Word of God diligently, and in so doing, it would better prepare them to understand all their other duties. Enlightenment always comes from an earnest study of God's word (White, 1943a).

The role and responsibility of teaching as a primary means of building into young men and women eternal truths is a principle of young adult ministry often repeated in White's writings. Teaching how to read and understand scriptures is paramount.

All should feel the importance of the scheme of educating the youth to understand the Scriptures. . . . Lead the minds of the youth from truth to truth, up higher and higher,

showing them how scripture interprets scripture, one passage being the key to other passages. (White, 1946, p. 581)

The intellectual pursuit of no other subject can equal that of Scripture. Students are encouraged to study the lessons of Christ and teachers are admonished to teach in a way that all will be able to understand it; the promise being the enlargement of the mind, the strengthening of the intellect, and vigor to the faculties that the study of no other subject can give (White, 1948, vol. 7). The daily verse-by-verse method of study where the student concentrates on one verse until the thought that God has for him becomes clear is presented as significantly more valuable to the reader than the perusal of several chapters with no definite purpose in mind (White, 1943a).

White emphasizes humble, interactive methods in her counsel to the Bible teacher. “Faithful teachers should be placed in charge of the Bible classes, teachers who will strive to make the students understand the lessons, not by explaining everything to them, but by requiring them to explain clearly every passage they read” (White, 1943a, p. 483, 484). The teacher is to explain to students that he, too, is coming before the Word of God, with humility, as a fellow traveler and learner. Mrs. White (1943a) advised teachers to adopt the following posture:

I will no longer stand so far above you. Let us climb together, and we will see what can be gained by a united study of the Scriptures. . . . Let us study together. . . . The Bible is your guidebook and my guidebook. By asking questions you may suggest ideas that are new to me. . . . Light will shine upon us as in the meekness and lowliness of Christ we study together. (p. 436)

Ministers are advised in their home visitation to draw emotionally and spiritually close to their members and to allow the people to ask questions concerning subjects that seem obscure to them. This principle of “scriptural journeying,” this process of investing time and energy in others by those with spiritual authority with searching, growing young

adults is imperative today. White (1946) goes on to explain, “how often when this has been done, and the minister has been able to answer their inquiries, has a flood of light broken into some darkened mind, and hearts have been comforted together in the faith of the gospel” (p. 438).

The purpose for teachers investing in scriptural study with young adults is not only to deepen their own minds in the things of God, but also to win others to Christ. “The Bible teacher should be one who is able to teach the students how to present the word of God in a clear, winning manner in public and how to do effective evangelistic work from house to house” (White, 1943a, p. 431).

College Preparation

Ellen White has much to say to young adults about the value of an Adventist college education. She was shown that Adventist colleges would have a powerful, sacred influence.

When I was shown by the angel of God that an institution should be established for the education of our youth I saw that it would be one of the greatest means ordained of God for the salvation of souls (White, 1948, vol. 4, p. 419).

The design of all our institutions was for the purpose of educating and developing workers who could be sent out as well-qualified missionaries for the Master, giving young men an opportunity to study for the ministry and preparing both sexes to become workers in the cause. “At our college young men should be educated in as careful and thorough a manner as possible that they may be prepared to labor for God. This was the object for which the institution was brought into existence (White, 1948, vol. 5, p. 11).”

Adventist colleges are called to reach a higher standard of intellectual and moral culture than any other higher education institution in the land. She says,

God designs that the college at Battle Creek shall reach a higher standard of intellectual and moral culture than any other institution in our land. The youth should be taught the importance of cultivating their physical, mental, and moral powers, that they may not only reach the highest attainments in science, but, through a knowledge of God, may be educated to glorify Him; that they may develop symmetrical characters, and thus be fully prepared for usefulness in this world and obtain a moral fitness for the immortal life (White, 1948, vol. 4, p. 425).

Ellen White strongly admonished young adults to pursue Adventist college education.

Young men who desire to enter the field as ministers, colporteurs, or canvassers should first receive a suitable degree of mental training, as well as a special preparation for their calling. Those who are uneducated, untrained, and unrefined are not prepared to enter a field in which the powerful influences of talent and education combat the truths of God's word. Neither can they successfully meet the strange forms of error, religious and philosophical combined, to expose which requires a knowledge of scientific as well as Scriptural truth. (p. 390)

The urgent demand for laborers in the gospel field is cited as a serious reason for young men to receive a college education, which was not to be in any way ignored or regarded as a secondary matter. "One earnest, conscientious, faithful young man in school is an inestimable treasure. Angels of heaven look lovingly upon him" (p. 432).

One purpose for college education was that a love of foreign missions might be instilled in the young adult heart.

It is acquaintance that awakens sympathy, and sympathy is the spring of effective ministry. To awaken in the children and youth [and arguably, young adults also] sympathy and the spirit of sacrifice for the suffering millions in the "regions beyond," let them become acquainted with these lands and their peoples. (White, 1952b, p. 269)

White (1952b) maintains that there is much value in studying in Seventh-day Adventist schools the lives of Paul, Luther, Moffat, Livingstone and Carey, and that in the study of other lands, acquaintance with needs arouses sympathies. It is in the process of the

awakening of sympathies for foreign missions that God's purposes regarding the establishment and superintending of foreign missions is entrusted to young men.

But the church may inquire whether young men can be trusted with the grave responsibilities involved in establishing and superintending a foreign mission. I answer: God designed that they should be so trained in our colleges and by association in labor with men of experience that they would be prepared for departments of usefulness in the cause. We must manifest confidence in our young men. They should be pioneers in every enterprise involving toil and sacrifice. (White, 1948, vol. 5, p. 392)

White (1923) states plainly, "The youth are our hope for missionary labor" (p. 320).

Other valuable benefits to young adults in receiving a college education include:

1) the learning of other languages for the purpose of communicating saving truth (White, vol. 3, 1948), 2) the understanding of the mechanism of the human body for the purpose of treating disease (White, 1952a) and 3) for a spiritually strong few, the entering of the nation's leading public universities for the purpose of wider study and observation, to labor for the educated classes, meeting the prevailing errors of our time, as was the custom of the ancient Waldenses (White, vol. 5, 1948).

Practical Skills

While theological and intellectual foundations were high priorities for Ellen White in her counsel regarding young adult ministry, she also spoke of the need to develop practical skills. Three skills that emerged in her writings include medical skills, domestic skills and trades.

White (1951) advised young adults to learn practical medical skills needed to care for the sick. "Young men who have a practical knowledge of how to treat the sick are now to be sent out to do gospel missionary work. . . . Where it is possible, these young men should visit the hospitals . . . laboring disinterestedly" (p. 538). She explained that

going out house to house to give treatments to the sick is one of the purest examples of unselfishness, and that in this ministry they will find access to many hearts, reaching many who otherwise would never have heard the gospel (White, 1951).

Practical skills needed in the administration of the home were also important young adult developments to Ellen White. Knowledge of domestic duties is considered by White to be important and vital to the happiness of the entire family. Every young woman should develop these invaluable skills as she prepares to fulfill her role as a wife and mother (White, 1923; White, vol. 3, 1948). Cooking is often mentioned. White (1943a) admonished both young men and young women to learn how to cook economically, and she stated that education in this realm has a direct influence on one's health and happiness (White, 1943a). "There is practical religion in a loaf of good bread" (p. 313).

White spoke about the importance of trades. "For young men, there should be establishments where they could learn different trades which would bring into exercise their muscles as well as their mental powers" (White, 1948, vol. 3, p. 156). She said it is a great mistake to allow young men to grow up without learning some trade (White, 1982). Jesus gave directions through Moses to the Hebrews that all children be educated to work, to learn trades, and not be idle. Then Mrs. White says, "you should help your children [and thus, even more true for young adults] to acquire a knowledge, that, if necessary, they could live by their own labor" (p. 355). She maintains that there is no more valuable line of manual training than that of agriculture (White, 1982). It appears that having the practical ability to be financially independent is White's main reason for her emphases on trade training for young adults. "Every youth, upon leaving school,

should have acquired a knowledge of some trade or occupation, that if necessary, they could earn a livelihood” (White, 1982, p. 357).

Field Experience

In White’s (1943b) estimation, young adult ministry was considered incomplete if it only involved the inside of the classroom. Field experience was essential in their training, especially ministry experience that involved connecting with older, experienced men. “Young, inexperienced workers should be trained by actual labor in connection with these experienced servants of God. Thus, they will learn how to bear burdens” (White, 1943b, p. 222). White pointed out that training young men, as Elijah trained Elisha, involves a gradual process of taking them from ordinary duties, involving them in small duties at first, and then giving them larger ones as they gain experience. She considered the association of young men with men of experience in city work to be the best kind of training, promising that as this teamwork ministry is done, and as youthful energies are invested to the best of their ability, they will have the companionship of the heavenly angels in their efforts (White, vol. 9, 1948). Medical endeavors, too, were to be undertaken as a partnership training process between young adults and experienced gospel workers. White (1951) advises that young men who have a practical knowledge of how to treat the sick should combine with those of experience to learn how to teach spiritual truth while meeting the physical need, where possible visiting the hospitals and laboring disinterestedly.

Ellen White repeatedly mentions the high value of young men and women being involved in colporteur work. It appears that White (1990) considers this form of field experience to be the best preparation for ministry of all kinds. “The very best education

young men can obtain is by entering the canvassing field and working from house to house” (pp. 31-32).

One of the best ways in which young men can obtain fitness for the ministry is by entering the canvassing field. . . . By meeting the people and presenting to them our publications, they will gain an experience that they could not gain by preaching. (White, 1915, p. 96)

“Canvassers are needed who will enter our large cities with these books. . . . Young men, young women, you are called by the Master to take up His work. There is a famine in the land for the pure gospel” (p. 23).

Practice of Young Adult Ministry during the Time of Ellen G. White

Eighteen hundred years after Jesus handpicked teen/young adult disciples into whom to invest divinity for the purpose of changing an entire planet, a similar pattern emerges again—a pattern where God moves on young adult hearts to mightily advance His kingdom. Major pioneers of the Adventist Church were teenagers/young adults themselves when God began to use and mold them into the founders of this last-day movement. According to Dr. Jud Lake, Religion Professor at Southern Adventist University, ministry to separate segmented age groups was not a common practice for the fledgling Seventh-day Adventist Church in the nineteenth century (telephone interview, July 14, 2010). In light of this fact, there are arguably no better examples of the practices of young adult ministry during the time of Ellen G. White than the ministry contributions of the pioneers themselves, pioneers like James and Ellen White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, Ole A. Olsen, John Harvey Kellogg and J. G. Matteson. As the college years of these seven, nineteenth-century Seventh-day Adventist young adult pioneers are explored, the critical decade of 16 to 26 will be considered. As author Shadrach (2003)

argues, these ten years (16 to 26) in today's North American society are the most critical years where most of the decisions are made that will shape the next 50 years of one's life, including the choice of occupation, perhaps the decision to marry, and the establishment of values and principles by which life is governed. It is because of the importance of these ten years in today's society, that we will examine these young adult years of the pioneers.

James White

During James White's late teen years, his eyes, after years of apparent degeneracy, miraculously became normal, enabling him to see letters clearly. Like a thirsty animal, he threw himself into a 12-week academy, received a teaching certificate, and began teaching, discovering it necessary to study long hours just to keep ahead of his pupils (Robinson, 1976). At age 21, in September of 1842, White heard William Miller for the first time and was impressed to join him in preaching about the second coming of Christ. He immediately purchased a prophetic chart and prepared three sermons: 1) overcoming objections to the time of Christ's coming, 2) signs that indicated Christ's coming and 3) the prophecy of Daniel (Ochs & Ochs, 1974). Also at age 21, James White was pressing through an angry mob of 300 gathered outside a schoolhouse, preaching as scores of snowballs were hurled through open windows (Ochs & Ochs, 1974). He was ordained by a Christian denomination and influenced 1,000 persons to accept the teaching of Christ's soon second coming over a 6-week time period (Ochs & Ochs, 1974).

Ellen White

Before entering her young adult years, several significant events shaped Ellen White. At age 9, she was hit in the head with a rock and wavered between life and death for three weeks (Noorbergen, 1972). At age 13, she was baptized in the Chestnut Street Methodist Church (Numbers, 2008). At age 14, she experienced two deeply significant dreams, dreams beyond the ordinary (Noorbergen, 1972).

At age 17, White experienced heartbrokenness with the other Millerites when on October 22, 1844, Jesus did not return as expected (Numbers, 2008). But only two months later in December, she received her first vision about the Advent people travelling a straight and narrow path toward the New Jerusalem, lighted by the October 22 message, culminating in the 144,000 being sealed and united at Jesus' second coming and being taken to heaven with those resurrected (White, 1985). October 22 had been no mistake, only the event had been confused (Numbers, 2008). Also in her seventeenth year, White received a second vision indicating an angelic commissioning to "make known to others what I have revealed to you" (Numbers, 2008, p. 66).

During her eighteenth year, two more visions came to Ellen White, one confirming Joseph Bates' views on the Sabbath (Numbers, 2008), and a second confirming Edson and Crosier in their Bible study conclusions on the cleansing of the sanctuary (White, 2000). White began to observe Saturday as the Sabbath during her nineteenth year (Graham, 1985).

From 1848 to 1852, when White was 21-25 years of age, she and her husband, James, crisscrossed New England and New York, preaching the Sabbath and shut-door messages (Numbers, 2008). In her twenty-first year, Ellen also received a vision

indicating that now was the time to publish (White, 2000). By age 22, she and James began printing a little paper, *The Present Truth* (Noorbergen, 1972). Two years later, at age 24, she published her first book, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, including messages to the fledgling church (White, 2000).

John Nevins Andrews

After he accepted Christ at age 13 and became committed, despite persecution, to the Millerite movement at age 14, John Nevins Andrews took a pivotal stand for the Word of God in his life at age 20 (Ochs & Ochs, 1974). On September 14, 1849, Andrews responded to a fanatical religious experience by making a final decision to stand for biblical truth. "I would exchange a thousand errors for one truth" (Ochs & Ochs, 1974, p. 37). This pivotal meeting resulted not only in a decided commitment to Scripture, but also caused Andrews to take a stand for the truth loved and proclaimed by James and Ellen White, and Joseph Bates, propelling him into full-time ministry at age 21 (Robinson, 1975). When Joseph Bates believed in 1851 that the Sabbath began at 6 pm Friday evening, and lasted until 6 pm Saturday evening, Andrews (age 22) researched and published biblical evidence contrary to Bates' supposition, namely that Sabbath starts and ends with sunset (Ochs & Ochs, 1974). By age 23, J. N. Andrews had joined the staff of James and Ellen White in the publishing of the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, soon becoming a lead corresponding editor (Chilson, 2001). By age 26, his theological contributions to the fledgling Seventh-day Adventist movement included the prophetic identification of the United States as the two-horned beast of Revelation 13 (Frantzen, 2004). Later accomplishments included helping the Seventh-day Adventist Church become a legal organization, thus securing legal possession of property; the

writing of *History of the Sabbath and of the First Day of the Week*; becoming the third General Conference president; and becoming the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to Europe (Spalding, 1961).

Uriah Smith

At age 21, Uriah Smith first heard the Sabbath message and an explanation of the 1844 disappointment. Accepting these truths, he turned down a lucrative job to join the staff of an academy in Mount Vernon at a rate of \$1,000 per year plus room and board, to join James and Ellen White as staff with the *Review* family for only room and board and no salary, a position in which he would stay for the next 50 years (Chilson, 2001). By age 23, he became editor of the *Review and Herald* (Frantzen, 2004).

John Harvey Kellogg

Between 16 and 19 years of age, while finishing his own high school education, John Harvey Kellogg began teaching at a district school in Hastings, Michigan, first grade through high school (Schwarz, 2006). At age 23, Kellogg graduated from medical school, began working at the Adventist Health Institute in Battle Creek, and became the medical superintendent for the institute—a position he would hold for 67 years (Frantzen, 2004). His later accomplishments included the advocacy of low-calorie diets and exercise; the discovery of the link between smoking and lung cancer; and the development granola and toasted flakes (Frantzen, 2004).

Ole A. Olsen

At age 19, after Olsen spent one winter in the Seventh-day Baptist College at Milton, WI, he took further training at Battle Creek College. By age 20, he had been

asked to take charge of the work in Wisconsin (Andross, 2006). Receiving a ministerial license from the Wisconsin conference at age 24 and appointed by the Wisconsin conference to hold his first evangelistic series at 25, Olsen became president of the Wisconsin conference by age 29 (Andross, 2006). James White referred to Ole Olsen as the “boy president” and commended his work in Wisconsin so much that he was chosen to serve a second term after his first term expired.

J. G. Matteson

In his early twenties, John became bored by the creeds presented by the preacher in his church and began harassing him with questions (Chilson, 2001). Soon he became a ringleader for organizing Sunday night dances at the schoolhouse near his home in Denmark. When questioned as to whether or not dancing was good Sunday keeping, he turned the group’s attention to the study of good books instead. Bible study turned into prayer meetings at the schoolhouse, and as convictions increased within John so did town resistance. In the strong Lutheran town of Manitowoc, Matteson’s spiritual zeal drew town ire, inciting a few fanatics even to try to kill him. As the mob began stoning the building, one stone barely missed his head, passing between a candle and his nose. On another occasion, he was driven from his home by an ax-wielding giant. Matteson became the Seventh-day Adventist’s first missionary to Scandinavia by age 32.

Conclusion

Author Kenda Creasy Dean (2004) says this about teenagers:

Although the brain’s frontal lobes governing reason and judgment continue to develop into adulthood, by adolescence the emotional centers of the brain are well on their way to maturity, giving teenagers their propensity for leading with their hearts. In other words, the adolescent brain is wired for passion. (p. 6)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church critically needs this adolescent/young adult passion wiring if it is to cooperate powerfully with the first angel who flies in midair proclaiming the eternal gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev 14:6).

The promise in Joel 2 of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all people, including young men and young women, our sons and daughters of the last days, is a thrilling promise. “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . your young men will see visions. I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29, NASB). Questions challenge my chaplain heart: What “visions,” dreams, and plans could God’s Spirit be planting in the hearts of passionate collegiates in these last days? How can I be an agent to help release them into ministry, to help be a catalyst for change in our church—perhaps changes that can only be achieved through a Spirit-filled teenager who has the energy, fire, enthusiasm, and worldview to reach this current generation for Jesus?

In the introduction of the book *Red Moon Rising*, authors Grieg and Roberts (2003) call young adults to be a generation of the red moon.

According to the prophet Joel, God’s heavenly logo for such an era is the harvest moon, rising blood red and pregnant with possibilities above us. Such a moon rises over every generation awaiting the one that will finally fulfill the Great Commission, taking the good news of Jesus to every culture and ushering in the kingdom of heaven (p. i).

Currently, the Spirit is mobilizing young adults with fresh vision, sons and daughters who speak prophetically to the culture. These authors have verbalized the unique call to the Adventist Church. As a movement with a last-day message, the Seventh-day Adventist Church understands that one of the last physical signs given to the world pointing to the soon coming of Jesus will not only be massive earthquakes and the sun becoming dark,

but also the moon turning blood-red (Joel 2:30, 31; White, 1950). The Adventist understanding of Jesus' work in the sanctuary, specifically His movement from the holy place of intercessory work to the most holy place of judgment work beginning in 1844, helps to explain that for almost two centuries since then, the world has been living in the era of the Red Moon. This moon is a metaphorical symbol traversing the heavens in this the final night of earth's history. Joel says that during these final days there will rise a generation of sons and daughters upon whom the Spirit will pour Himself out. Young and old alike who, like the men of Issachar, "understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take" (1 Chr 12:32, NASB).

This is the era in which an army of youth will rise to help finish the work (White, 1952a). In the founding eras of both the Christian church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, God intentionally chose teenagers and young adults in whom to invest. May this be the final red moon generation, a generation that experiences the final setting of that moon on earth's history and the forever rise of the Sun with healing in His wings (Mal 4:2).

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In today's challenging economic climate, families increasingly grapple with whether or not private, Seventh-day Adventist college education is spiritually worth the financial investment. University administrators are asked in the accreditation process to set measurable, spiritual goals and then to track the progress over time. Church, conference, and union leadership invest significant time and energy allocating a shrinking pool of tithe dollars into Adventist higher education because the spiritual growth of its young adults is highly valued.

Questions of spiritual accountability arise. Is Adventist higher education making a spiritual difference? Is it possible to measure collegiate spirituality? What factors help a college student most to grow in their relationship with Jesus? Parents may ask whether their son or daughter will grow in their relationship with Jesus if they invest in Adventist education and if it is possible to identify what factors determine if the answer is yes or no. What factors does the student control? What factors do parents control? What factors can the university contribute? What is the most strategic investment of university resources so that lives of students are growing spiritually—time, personnel, budgets?

Scriptures give caution to the subject of spiritual measurement. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that those born of the Spirit are like the wind—having evidence that the

Spirit has been present and active yet not knowing where He has come from before nor what He will do next (John 4:8). The Lord advised Samuel in the selection of a king that the best humans can do is to look at the outward appearance, while God alone sees the heart (1 Sam 16:7). God taught Jeremiah that the human heart is deceitful above all things, and that an individual is incapable of knowing his own (Jer 17:9).

So, if one is incapable of seeing the work God is doing inside the heart of another, and if spiritual self-assessment is unreliable, how should an Adventist university, whose purpose for existence is the spiritual growth of students, measure its effectiveness moving forward? In light of Jesus' words, "By their fruit, you shall know them" (Matt 7:16), what is the fruit criteria that an Adventist university can use to know where best to invest its resources to make a spiritual difference in the lives of its students?

Current research confirms the challenge in trying to answer some of these questions. One researcher concluded that despite the extraordinary amount of research that has been done on the development of college students in the past four decades (over 5,000 studies), there has been very little systematic research done on students' spiritual development (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011, p. 1). Astin continues:

While higher education continues to put a lot of emphasis on test scores, grades, credits, and degrees, it has increasingly come to neglect its students' "inner" development—the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and of self-understanding. (p. 2)

Another researcher points out that there is no clear comprehensive picture, at present, regarding how the goal of developing mature, godly young adults through Christian institutions is implemented and assessed (Ma, 2003). To date, it is argued that there is no established instrument that appears suitable for measuring the perceived impact of Christian campus environments on spiritual development (Ma, 2003).

This literature review begins to explore the subject of spiritual growth and assessment through the college years. The outline for this chapter will be as follows: 1) introduction, including a discussion of definitions and theories for religious development during young adulthood; 2) formation of young adult spiritual beliefs; 3) formation of young adult spiritual practices; 4) the impact of socializing agents on young adult spirituality; 5) implications for higher education; and 6) conclusion.

Definitions

A major challenge in assessing collegiate spirituality lies in the many varied definitions. In today's globally thinking, technologically-connected society, spirituality can mean believing in or practicing almost any system of religious thought or any piece of it that one chooses in a very personalized, handpicked, eclectic system of conviction. What does the term "spirituality" mean?

One researcher summarizes current research on collegiate spirituality as focusing on the pursuit of personal identity (Montgomery-Goodnough & Gallagher, 2007). Other researchers make distinctions between religiosity and spirituality. Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, and Lewis-Coles (2006) define religion as "the degree to which individuals adhere to prescribed beliefs and practices of an organized religion or a higher power"; while defining spirituality as one's "belief in the sacred nature of life in all of its forms" and manifestations, including one's "interconnectedness with other persons and things" (p. 227). Barry, Nelson, Davarya, and Urry (2010) summarize scholars as contending that "religiosity encompasses organized and institutional aspects," including individual beliefs and practices; while personal and transcendent aspects fall within the realm of spirituality (p. 312). Dennis, Muller, Miller, and Banerjee (2004) presents

religion as an “organized belief system with particular rituals and practices which are learned primarily in places of worship”; while presenting spirituality as a “way of being, which predetermines how people respond to life experiences” (p. 220). Ma (2003) defines spiritual formation as growth toward spiritual maturity as reflected in one’s relationships with God, self, and others.

While some of these definitions can be generally helpful in approaching the subject of collegiate spiritual growth, Gay L. Holcomb’s definition shaped the discussion most closely for the purpose of this review, her definition both more comprehensive as well as identifying a growing trust relationship with one’s Creator. She recognizes maturing undergraduate faith as including the following six elements: foundational doctrinal understandings and assent, an ever-developing relational trust in one’s Creator, living a life of integrity where one’s moral actions flow from one’s innermost convictions, achievement of one’s own personal identity, genuine ownership of one’s values and faith, and cognitive complexity as evidenced by critical thinking skills (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004).

Theories for Religious Development during Young Adulthood

Literature on the development of religiosity is more established than that of spiritual development (Barry, Nelson, Davarya, & Urry, 2010).

Holcomb and Nonneman (2004) recognized Fowler as a leading authority in religious development theory, and uses his theory to establish parameters for maturing undergraduate faith. According to Fowler, there are seven stages an individual progresses through in religious development. Of these seven stages, these researchers argue that only three pertain to student development: stage two, mythical literal (reliance

on mystical gut feelings coupled with a complete lack of critical thinking skills, primarily characteristic of children, though some adults permanently equilibrate at this stage); stage three, synthetic conventional (a reliance on external authorities, one's ideology or worldview lived and asserted but not yet a matter of critical and reflective articulation); and stage four, individual reflective (this stage requires one to take a detached, analytical perspective, critically examining values, norms and ideologies—unfortunate tendency to reduce, dichotomize, see the world in black and white, drawn to rigidities of fundamentalism and authoritarian leaders).

Levesque (2002) summarized three theoretical approaches to spiritual development as, 1) daily religious experiences—acquiring of a religious consciousness (such as, through prayer in a religious community); 2) a process of “meaning-making,” where a three-fold picture involves the structure of the individual and his/her impact on significant others and the Ultimate Other; and 3) the role of context, especially parents, in supporting the development of religious beliefs and reasoning.

Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister and Benson (1991) emphasized the importance of core spiritual experiences to promote spiritual development, including both a highly personal relationship between the individual and a higher power as well as unique events accompanied by a cognitive interpretation that affirms a person's belief in a higher power.

These cognitive and spiritual developments in the college years highlight the importance for universities intentionally to create environments where individual, critical reflective thinking can occur. An individual's belief and value system definition hangs in the balance. If time during the collegiate years is not taken by students to examine and

define what it is they believe and will base their lives on as it relates to God, then students can graduate with unexamined inner lives. Dangers include a reliance on external authorities to define what is right and wrong, a tendency to dichotomize and be drawn to rigid fundamentalism, and not having experiences that affirm a person's belief in a higher power. Universities must create healthy settings and outlets for students to question, journey, explore, and listen—the ultimate biased hope being that students find God worthy of both the closest mental scrutiny and the most complete, experiential surrender and submission.

Young Adult Spiritual Beliefs

What happens to one's spiritual beliefs during the collegiate/young adult years? What factors strengthen or weaken one's commitment to spiritual beliefs during this age span?

Repeated studies show that for the majority of young adults commitment to their spiritual belief system tends to either remain stable or increase during the collegiate years (Barry, Nelson, Davarya, & Urry, 2010). For example, raw data in UCLA spirituality in college students findings from Astin and Astin (2003) show that over two-thirds of students answered in the affirmative to the following statements regarding "My religious/spiritual beliefs": Have helped me develop my identity (73%); Provide me with strength, support, and guidance (74%); Give meaning/purpose to my life (67%). Another study found that more than half of the participants reported that their views about religion had not changed, mentioning that their beliefs became stronger or more important than that their beliefs became weaker (Lefkowitz, 2005). Lee (2002), stating that the widely publicized "secularizing" effect of college on students is overgeneralized, affirmed that

while most students indicated no change regarding religious beliefs and convictions (48%), over twice as many students indicated a strengthening of convictions (33%) as indicated a weakening (14%). While counter to what many may believe or expect to be true of young adult spirituality, is it possible that these studies highlight a development beyond the observable surface? Could it be that there are observable spiritual markers that have been applied to childhood or adolescent faith that do not prove to be as reliable when applied to an emerging adult's faith?

Herrmann (2010) followed a group of 18-23 year olds from the time they were 13-17, sampling 2,458 of them and interviewing 230 personally. Though finding that the majority followed the simple moral reasoning formula of needing only to follow one's heart to know what is right or wrong and that the content of personal beliefs comes from within, he discovered a similar trend regarding beliefs in emerging adults. As these teenagers emerged into adulthood, they expressed the same levels of belief in the afterlife and the same levels of belief in the literal view of the Bible as when they were teenagers.

Herrmann's study mirrors in the collegiate years a similar trend identified in the teen years by Smith and Denton (2005), namely that teens tend to follow the faith tradition of their parents. In Smith's study, 3,370 teens ranging from 13-17 years of age were interviewed by phone, 267 of which were followed up with extensive personal interviews. Smith and Denton assert that though unable to state their religion's core beliefs, teens generally seem compliant in believing what their parents believe. Koenig, McGue and Iacono (2008) confirmed that the collegiates in their sample, while reducing their frequency in attending religious services, did so without changing their religious

beliefs. Arnett and Arnett (2002) assert from their study that religious beliefs are important to many young adults for whom religious participation is not.

Young Adult Spiritual Practices

While commitment to spiritual beliefs tends to remain stable if not increase during emerging adulthood, religious/spiritual practices tend to decline, especially during the first couple of years of their collegiate experience. This contrast is a key issue for many concerned parents, pastors, and school administrators. Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno (2003) discovered that the percentage of college students who rated themselves in the highest 10% of spirituality declined over the first year by 4.2%, indicating less religious involvement. Similar results, indicating stable, if not increasing overall spiritual growth, were found in a national study done of 1,200 students by Harvard University, where 25% of students indicated they had “become more spiritual since entering college” and only 7% indicated they had “become less spiritual.” Clearly, students in this survey defined spirituality in terms that went beyond the observable behavioral attendance at a 60-90 minute service once a week. Is it possible that worship attendance is only the visible tip of the spiritual iceberg and that much deeper, more significant growth lies below the observable surface? Have Christian universities, which require worship service attendance, been emphasizing behavior that helps or hinders students from growing the deep, inner spiritual life?

Few studies have been conducted in the realm of spiritual practices of collegiates. Some of the following spiritual practices are among the few that have received limited researched exploration and will be examined: religious worship attendance, devotional practices, mission trips, and rites of passage.

Religious Worship Attendance

Religious worship attendance is arguably the most affected spiritual practice during the college years. Additionally, because worship service attendance is perceived to be arguably the most important spiritual practice by bill-paying parent and grandparent constituents of Southern Adventist University, this issue in particular receives an intensified spotlight.

According to Lefkowitz (2005), attending religious services less frequently was the most commonly described religious behavior change of college students. Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) found the same trend to be true in a study of religious practices between adolescence and emerging adulthood. Sixty-nine percent of emerging adults attended religious services less often, the largest decline being Protestants and Catholics. He discovered that across the board in 46 American colleges, attendance of religious services saw drastic decline from 52% to 29%. However, eighty-six percent of the surveyed population retained their religious affiliation. Students were not changing their beliefs, but they were changing their practice (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007).

While these attendance trends may occur, another study found that attending religious services was one of four college experiences that positively predicted spirituality after one year (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003). Lee (2002) argues in her findings that religious behavior seems to promote religious faith. She discovered that religious service attendance was most highly associated with a strengthening of religious convictions, and that religious service attendance while in college predicts changes in religious convictions to an extent beyond what is predicted by gender or precollege views.

What appears clear is that student worship service attendance is a positive for spiritual development, presuming that this attendance is voluntary. What remains unexplored is the impact that required, mandated worship service attendance has on the individual student. If the two studies conducted by Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007), as well as (Lee, 2002) were conducted in settings where students were required to attend and still resulted with the positives of an allegiance to religious affiliation and a strengthening of convictions, both studies would help to bolster the rationale for continued Christian universities' policies that require worship service attendance. If, however, required worship service attendance breeds attitudes of calloused indifference and/or hostility, what long-term benefit has there been in this university policy? Clearly, a full church sanctuary every week is an excellent recruiting tool for any Christian university, but the question that is unstudied at present is the impact that required worship service attendance has on a student's religious convictions, beliefs, and perceived connection with God.

Devotional Practices

One could predict that there would be a high correlation between devotional practices and spiritual growth. Herrmann (2010), following a group of 18-23 year olds from the time they were 13-17, discovered that the best predictor of meaningful faith in emerging adulthood was, predictably, meaningful teenage faith, and that individuals stay fairly close to their teenage faith trajectories. In his study two critically important faith factors emerged: personal devotional practices and religious experiences. Smith and Denton (2005) confirmed this trend in his assessment of religious American teenagers who retain a high faith commitment as emerging adults, citing the establishment of

devotional lives (praying, reading scripture) during the teen years as an important development. In another study, the number of hours spent per week praying or meditating was found to positively predict spirituality after one year of college (Bryant, Choi, & Yasuno, 2003). Ma (2003) found that personal spiritual disciplines ranked in the list of the top 5 most influential items in spiritual formation of college students.

Another study points out that devotional practices, especially prayer, in isolation from other intimate human relationships do not necessarily equal intimacy with God (Byrd & Boe, 2001). In fact, the interaction of avoidance and stress was shown to predict significantly meditative and colloquial prayer; meaning that if a student found closeness comforting, stress would provoke an increase in proximity-seeking behavior in order to restore comfort lost to stress. The opposite was also found to be true and apparently to apply to one's deity through prayer as well (Byrd & Boe, 2001).

Mission Trips

In youth and young adult ministry, mission trips have seen increased popularity in recent years. Though one study (Beatty & Smith, 2009) related the disappointing find that mission trip participation was a non-factor in the spiritual development of emerging adults as a whole, other researchers disagree. Nuesch-Oliver (2005) discovered that in her qualitative study, international service exposure became a defining experience of their faith journey—by far the majority of students having chosen to voluntarily discuss the impact of a mission trip. Tuttle (2000) found that out of twenty college seniors who'd been part of at least one short-term mission experience during their collegiate years, 18 (90%) mentioned their short-term mission experience in relation to their spiritual growth while at college. Research shows that more than half of high-scoring students had either

1) gone on short-term mission trips; 2) been children of missionaries, living in at least two different cultures; or 3) experienced frequent/significant moves, high exposure to various cultures and ways of living (Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004).

Rites of Passage

Two studies looked at the development of spiritual growth in the emerging adulthood of young Mormons. Barry and Nelson (2005) found that when comparing Mormon and Catholic students, Mormon emerging adults appear far more likely to become adults who are in greater accordance with their religious doctrine than their Catholic counterparts. Differences between Catholic and Mormon student adherence to church values and beliefs were suggested to lie in the expectations or lack thereof of each of the respective churches.

Five clear rites of passage are given to emerging adults in the Mormon church: 1) advancement in priesthood for LDS males ages 18-20; 2) entering the relief society, women's service organization of the church; 3) first-time temple attendance; 4) mission service—2-year required commitment for all physically capable 19-year-old males, optional for females at least 21 years old; 5) “callings” to serve in positions of responsibility (Nelson, 2003). Nelson discovered that for male emerging adults, 86% advanced in the priesthood, 62% attended the temple, and 90% served a mission; 97% of females had entered the relief society. In addition to independence and the ability to care for and support a family, LDS rites of passage were in the top three responses as criteria considered for adulthood—clear roles and responsibilities given them by the LDS Church.

Unfortunately, no similar study has been conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to date. Perhaps there would be merit in future studies being conducted that explore potential rites of passage for Seventh-day Adventists, such as: graduating from a Seventh-day Adventist academy, attending a Seventh-day Adventist college or university, serving for a year as a student missionary, marrying a Seventh-day Adventist spouse, entering denominational employment, etc.

Impact of Socializing Agents on Young Adult Spirituality

It is impossible to separate the development of spirituality from social influences. None of us grow in a relational vacuum. For many college students, that which is “caught” is as significant as that which is “taught” when it comes to the formation of their own belief and value systems. In the paragraphs to follow, the impact of parents, peers, and other adults on the development of young adult spirituality will be explored.

Parents

Numerous studies point to the important positive impact that parents have on the spiritual development of emerging adults. In one qualitative study done with African-American college students, parents were repeatedly reported to have had a significantly important role in encouraging and enforcing spiritual beliefs and behaviors (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006). Though these students described an initial distancing from religion/spirituality due to negative reactions to parental insistence, they described a later return to beliefs on their own. In another study (Herrmann, 2010), 2,458 students were surveyed and followed from ages 13-17 until they were ages 18-23, 230 of which received additional personal interviews. Herrmann

identified parental influence as the most important factor for meaningful young adult faith, specifically identifying parental faith as highly influential in the religious orientation of children, both as teenagers and later as emerging adults. Greenman and Siew (2001) describe similar parental impact in his qualitative cross-sectional study of Master of Divinity students: consistent identification of families of origin as a primary formative influence on their spiritual lives.

Granqvist and Hagekull (2003) point out the importance of adolescent attachment to mother. In his cross-sectional and longitudinal evaluation of attachment and religiosity in adolescence, ages 15-20, he discovered that attachment to parents made six significant independent contributions to one's variance in religiosity, five of which were from attachment to mother. Though this study would involve only the early college years, these researchers argue that these results highlight the relative importance of attachment to parents, particularly to mother, in predicting adolescent religiosity.

Christian Smith (interview) identified the importance of parental modeling of faith, not just talking about it, as the most important factor for American teenagers who retain a high faith commitment as emerging adults (Beatty & Smith, 2009). Though studying a younger demographic (13-17) than the ages of the emerging adult, Smith and Denton's (2005) finding nonetheless can encourage parents, indicating that the majority of teens follow the faith tradition of their parents.

TenElshof and Furrow (2000) discovered in a study of seminary students that the most significant predictor of horizontal faith maturity was parental overprotection, implying that greater degrees of paternal control were associated with heightened concerns for social welfare and justice.

By contrast, Arnett and Arnett (2002) discovered in their individualized religious belief research among emerging adults that no relationship existed between childhood religious socialization and current religious attendance.

The relationship between today's college students and their parents is arguably stronger than previous generations, whether for better or worse. "With Millennials entering college, administrators are reporting a huge increase in 'helicopter parents' who constantly phone and email faculty and deans to talk about grades, moods, foods or whatever" (Strauss & Howe, 2006). However, it is clear that collegiates continue to be powerfully impacted by the spirituality or lack thereof in their parents. Students struggle with the conflicted challenge of maintaining spiritual closeness with their parents and family of origin while also journeying spiritually toward adult independence and the individual establishment of owned beliefs and values. Questions for school administration include how best to partner/communicate with parents who are invested in their collegiates developing spirituality while also creating healthy environments for students to journey toward spiritual independence.

Peers

Anyone working closely with collegiates learns quickly the power of peer influence. Surveyors are studying these relationships more closely. Ma (2003) found that living on campus has important significant influence on spiritual growth, suggesting that residential students have more opportunities to benefit from nonacademic influences on campus. Peer relationships were found to have had the highest impact on student spiritual progress, leading to the deduction that living on campus provided for more accountability and the development of relationships.

Gunnoe and Moore (2002), in studying predictors of religiosity among youth aged 17-22, found that in contrast with earlier research identifying parental religiosity as the primary predictor of adolescent religiosity, peer religiosity (such as the percentage of friends attending church when respondents were 16) emerged as the better predictor. Gunnoe and Moore suggest that religiosity during young adulthood is best predicted by three factors: 1) the presence of religious role models during childhood and adolescence, 2) religious youth having religious friends during high school and, 3) religious mothers (Gunnoe & Moore, 2002).

Martinson (2002) identified that in addition to having safe, open environments during the senior high and college years to ask tough questions, being in relationship with peers like themselves is a critical factor for young men/women who stay in the church and lead. Montgomery-Goodnough and Gallagher (2007) found that more than 75% of college students' religious experiences and discussions take place with friends. Social approval from peers for regular church attendance and church activities has been found to strengthen other students' religious beliefs (Lee, 2002).

Romantic peer relationships have also been found to have profound spiritual impact. Granqvist and Hagekull (2003) studied 142 adolescents divided into four groups: stable singles group, stable lovers group, new singles group, and new lovers group. The study found that relationship status change in isolation could not predict religious change; but that religiosity increased for individuals in the context of separation and decreased upon the formation of a new relationship. Uecker, Regnerus, and Vaaler (2007) found that marriage curbs religious decline, specifically religious participation, and predictably, that cohabitation and non-marital sex accelerates diminished religiosity, especially

participation. Lee (2002) found that getting married in college was a significant predictor in strengthening religious convictions.

Other Adults

As emerging adults age, older adult influence on spiritual development increases as well. Nuesch-Olver (2005), in setting out to understand how college freshmen reflect and evaluate their spiritual journey through their high school years, collected 500 spiritual autobiographies over a six-year period. Without exception, students told stories underscoring the power of mentoring and accountability, reflecting on adults who went beyond scheduled youth ministry activities and invited them into their own lives. In another study, apprenticeship early into leadership was an experience cited often as being significant in sustaining their faith and a key factor in keeping young adults in the church (Martinson, 2002).

A qualitative study of master of divinity students revealed a frequent citing of the church's specified influence on spiritual growth, not as preaching or formal church programs, but as significant, key relationships (Greenman & Siew, 2001). TenElshof and Furrow (2000) found in a study of seminary students that relationships between secure adult attachment and vertical total faith maturity were significant and positive. He discovered that faith maturity of seminary students could be explained in part by current adult relational attachments, even above their childhood attachments. This finding suggests that when it comes to integrating faith and psychology, adult attachment figures in a student's life have influence on par with or even surpassing parents in one's family of origin (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000).

Wesley (2006) identified relationships as the top reason young adults attend church, citing identification with other Christians and growth through relationships with others as high values. In an earlier study, first-year college students, randomly assigned in a formal mentoring program with a professor designed to nurture spiritual development, self-reported greater levels of spiritual growth than a control group without a mentor (Cannister, 1999). Supporting these collegiate findings is a study done by Smith and Denton (2005) of 13-17 year old teens. The researchers explained the following from their study: “large majorities of teens from all religious traditions report having non-family adults in their religious congregations who they enjoy talking to and who give them lots of encouragement,” which “help to legitimize and reinforce the religious faith and practices of those teens” (p. 61).

Adult investment in a collegiate’s life is perceived by students to be of high worth. These studies emphasize this reality by the repeated voluntary stories by students invited to reflect on what has helped them to grow spiritually. At a pivotal season in life when young adults are defining their own spiritual belief/value systems and simultaneously wrestling with establishing independence from their family of origin, significant adults other than their parents play vital roles in spiritual development. Mentors, professors, pastors, and work supervisors, by continuing to invest, sharing both their own personal spiritual successes and perhaps more importantly their vulnerable failures, can cooperate in helping to form a network of support. The investment of time and energy, whether or not verbal appreciation or recognition is given by the student or not, is worth it.

Implications for Higher Education

The question is weighed heavily every year by thousands of families facing powerful financial pressure: Is it worth it? Should one invest in a private, Christian university education, especially when state-sponsored universities can be obtained for a fraction of the cost? Should families make the incredible financial sacrifice necessary to enroll their students in a Seventh-day Adventist university—will it make a spiritual difference? Are students who attend our schools of higher education growing in a significantly different positive spiritual direction than they would acquire otherwise?

At best, these are difficult questions to answer. Spiritual growth, while foundational to the existence of Adventist universities, remains difficult to measure in the lives of students and difficult to measure in specific university initiatives. To aim at nothing, however, is to ensure that the target will be hit. The following are a summary of higher education implications emerging from current collegiate spiritual growth studies.

University Spiritual Environment

Private, religious universities are being found to make a spiritual difference. Insights from the national survey of student engagement revealed that private college students reported higher gains than public college students in character development and that religiously affiliated institutions reported greater gains in character development than unaffiliated institutions (Kuh & Umbach, 2004). Astin and Antonio (2004) discovered that while Catholic colleges positively impact character development in civic/social values, Protestant colleges appear to offer activities that enhance volunteerism and religious beliefs/convictions. A similar finding emerged from a study focused explicitly on Lutheran schools, where a greater proportion of church-related college and university

enrollees reported having developed a sense of purpose and integrated faith than did students at public universities (Day, 2000).

Pascarella and Patrick (1991) point out that students at elite, secular colleges are more likely to exhibit a decline in religious commitment and engagement than do peers at other schools. Students in another study perceived nonacademic factors to be more influential than academic factors when it came to the development of their spirituality, citing the top five most influential items as: 1) peer relationships, 2) working through a crisis while at college, 3) personal spiritual disciplines, 4) praise and worship sessions, and 5) Bible/theology classes (Ma, 2003). One implication from this study seems to be that living on campus provides for the development of peer relationships, which students perceived to have had the highest impact on their spiritual progress.

One study seemed to indicate that a university can provide a spiritual climate that either reinforces cultural standards and beliefs or provides one conducive to the exploration of one's identity and beliefs (Barry & Nelson, 2005). Certainly, many Adventist universities have policies and rules designed to reinforce cultural, spiritual practices, such as required worship service attendance. In support of these university policies, Lee (2002) found that students who attended an institution with peers who frequently attend religious services, though undefined as to whether compulsory or by choice, strengthened one's personal beliefs.

But Gane and Kijai (2006) assert that far too often, Christian education has been guilty of coddling our students and that Christian universities must seek to provide an appropriate balance of both challenge and support in the form of a campus perceived to be safe to explore doubts and questions without being unduly judged an infidel. These

authors argue, not only that too much or too little of either support or challenge stunts spiritual development, but also that university approaches toward spiritual growth should emphasize faith maturity and intrinsic orientations to religion, achieved through intentional curriculum and/or specific leadership training.

Investment of Staff/Faculty

A number of studies discussed the role of adults in the spiritual growth of collegiates, emphasizing the importance of as much exposure of students to caring adults as possible (Gane & Kijai, 2006). TenElshof and Furrow (2000) challenge teachers to be willing to have God lead them first into developing and strengthening their own adult attachments and their relationship with God. This inner journey will impact the church (and by extension the university) by having intimate relationships instead of just acting out a leadership role, TenElshof and Furrow (2000) maintain. Because teachers cannot model what they have not experienced, often, the degree to which staff/faculty are willing to process their own brokenness in relationships, both inner and outer, is the degree to which they can join Christ as wounded healers in impacting the lives of their students.

Ma (2003) observed through her study that working through a crisis was second highest on the list of perceived influential items in collegiate spiritual formation. Because this insight was unprecedented in previous research, she advised that a greater priority should be given to formal and informal support programs/services to assist students in psychological/emotional pain. Bryant and Astin (2008) identified four implications for staff/faculty in helping a student process spiritual struggle as: 1) acknowledging the reality of spiritual struggle, 2) appreciating the variety, 3)

communicating legitimacy, and 4) providing space for contemplation—establishing climates where staff/faculty are willing to be candid about their own struggles.

In another qualitative study, the implication of the importance of connecting students with older adults, being invited into their lives beyond “required” youth ministry events arose (Nuesch-Olver, 2005). Nuesch-Olver also suggested a need for thoughtful, reflective leaders to initiate discussion of “taboo” ideas to help students analyze their own biases and to see how Jesus is relevant in our pain today.

Marcia (1991) hypothesized that individuals develop their identity in two steps, (often seen during late adolescence and early young adulthood): 1) breaking from childhood beliefs to explore alternatives in a particular area (termed, “identity moratorium”), and 2) making a commitment to their individual identity in that particular area. In light of these hypotheses, a significant role that faculty members could engage in with students is one of challenging their thinking, encouraging students to consider a range of alternatives rather than simply reinforcing adult preferences (Clarke & Justice, n. d.).

Co-curricular Student Involvement

The co-curriculum of a university is a critical factor in the spiritual development of students. Braskamp (2008) points out that having strong religious beliefs was not a significant predictor of high engagement in religious practices and activities, arguing that habits of the hand were more significant for many students than habits of the head or heart. In support of Braskamp’s findings, Filkins and Ferrari (2004) discovered that as undergraduate engagement in mission-related activities increased, so did a student’s

understanding of the university's mission and values and their belief in the lasting impact of the university's values on the lives of students after graduation.

Another spiritual growth implication for universities emerges around the concept of missions. Gane and Kijai (2006) summarize their findings with the conclusion that it is worth it to invest in youth ministry, significantly benefitting both youth and congregation, specifically mentioning the impact of short-term missions. Nuesch-Olver (2005) points out the importance of regular exposure of students to the brokenness of humanity. She proposes that international exposure to missions must continue to be provided with multiple opportunities and that domestic exposure to brokenness remains an important link to ongoing spiritual growth in collegiates, as well as adults.

Every year, on the campus of Southern Adventist University, the stories of returned student missionaries echo the truth of this finding. Nine to ten months of international exposure to humanity's brokenness within a student missionary's experience continues to powerfully impact the spirituality of an entire campus. Year after year, those who've given a year of international service return to campus changed individuals, spiritually deeper, missionally broader, many eagerly taking ministry leadership positions both on and off campus. Time invested by students in both domestic and international exposure to brokenness activities have been observed to have had reciprocal spiritual impact, local community service encouraging students to invest internationally and vice versa.

Young Adult Spiritual Growth in Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education

From a 10-year longitudinal study, Dudley and Muthersbaugh (1996) discovered a number of factors impacting the spiritual growth and attachment of young adults to the

Seventh-day Adventist Church. In year seven of this project, 755 young adults aged 21-22 participated. Several findings are relevant to Adventist university spiritual life.

Adventist young adults who found programming (defined in this study as Sabbath school, Bible studies, youth groups, church campouts, choir, Adventist Youth Society, Missionary Volunteers, or other such programs) so relevant and interesting that they looked forward to attending were found to be more likely to be committed to the organization. Those young adults who are actively involved in the life of the church body, through directly conducting congregational events, actively sharing their faith, or by participating in the social life of the church tended to experience ownership and thus increase in attachment with the church.

Another theme that emerged was that the most important conflict area for young adults centered on the practice of church standards. Those young adults who experience disagreement with the church in this area are less likely to be psychologically attached to the community. These recommendations from Dudley and Muthersbaugh (1996) have important ramifications for Adventist universities. His recommendations include: creating interesting and relevant religious programming, providing opportunities for young adults to take active leadership in the various aspects of congregational (or campus) life, and to engage in dialogue on church standards with the aim of establishing reasonableness and relevancy.

Dr. Jane Thayer, in 2000, published an article in the Journal of Adventist Education describing how Andrews University is responding to the issue of the spiritual assessment of its students. In the article, she describes the impossibility of measuring an internal state, pointing out that spirituality cannot be studied directly, only its

“concomitants, correlates, and consequences” can be observed. It is for this reason that Andrews has chosen to talk about measuring “spiritual indicators” instead of “spirituality.” In this journey, Andrews has recognized that social science research does not completely represent reality, and that inherent in reductionist empirical study is the potential weakness that the measurement of spirituality will lead to a focus on behaviors and a “check-list religiosity.” Though that threat is real, the author points out that a behavioral checklist is not an inevitable consequence.

One assessment method for the campus included the development of a Freshman Religious Life Profile, which attempted to measure spiritual indicators using a number of scales: a Christian practices scale, a volunteer activities scale, the Christian Commitments scale, and a discipleship index. A number of other methods are also being used. Dr. Thayer pointed out that unless assessment findings lead to improved student life, the investment in human and financial resources in spiritual assessment is not justified.

In 2008, Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson published “Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile.” In this report, 931 telephone interviews were conducted in 2007 and 2008, church members randomly selected from 58 local conferences in the United States, Canada, and Bermuda. Several themes emerged that shed light on the trends of Seventh-day Adventist young adults.

First, the survey showed a trend toward the “graying of Adventism” in North America. The median age for Seventh-day Adventists in North America is 51, as compared with the median ages of 36 in the United States and 35 in Canada (Sahlin & Richardson, 2008, p. 5). When the data was broken down by generations, today’s teens

and young adults, the Millennial generation (ages 14-31 in 2008, born from 1977 through 1994) was seen to be heavily under-represented making up only 14% of the SDA church as compared with 26% of the median populations of the US and Canada (p. 6). One of the author's stark conclusions from this data is that the church has not made young adult ministry a major priority.

Secondly, the survey showed a substantial percentage increase in the number of Adventists in North America who have acquired college degrees in the past two decades. In 1990, 24% of church membership acquired a college degree as compared with 40% in 2008 (Sahlin & Richardson, 2008, p. 26). The authors point out that this increased trend toward acquiring college degrees is part of larger trends in North American society, today's employment market requiring more education for good jobs to support a family above the poverty level. Regardless of the reasons, however, it is clear that the Adventist university campus is becoming increasingly important as a location for vibrant, intentional, strategic ministry to Adventist young adults. Upping the ante even more is the chilling statement made by Sahlin and Richardson, "Research has shown that members who grow up in the denomination and attain the highest levels of education are more likely to leave the church" (p. 26).

In 2007, an initial attempt by key Seventh-day Adventist education administrators was made to produce "A Guidebook for Spiritual Master Planning on Seventh-day Adventist Campuses of Higher Education." In the rough draft of this guidebook, five tasks are identified in the process including: 1) organizing (team leader appointment and committee organization), 2) appraising campus status (clarification of what constitutes spiritual outcomes), 3) building a spiritual master plan (identifying spiritual indicators),

4) implementing a spiritual master plan (developing an assessment process), and 5) assessing a spiritual master plan (analysis, evaluation and dissemination of results to key constituencies). To date this guidebook remains unpublished, highlighting the need for continued progress in this important arena of collegiate spirituality and campus renewal.

Conclusion

A small, but growing body of studies is showing explicitly what may have been implicitly known for decades—that private, Christian university settings do positively impact the spiritual growth of students. The literature review on the subject of spiritual growth assessment in college students has highlighted the need for continued research in this arena. With so few studies being attempted to identify student spiritual growth factors in private, Christian university settings in general, the number of studies exploring the spiritual impact of Adventist universities on the lives of its students is much fewer, and thus the need much greater.

Questions that emerge from this literature review include: Are students in Adventist universities growing spiritually? Is it possible to identify different environmental, relational, or programmatic factors that most positively benefit Adventist student's spiritual growth? Where should Adventist universities allocate personnel, time, and financial resources to best position the institution for students' spiritual growth?

The chapters that follow will focus on the development of a spiritual master plan for Southern Adventist University, student spiritual perception data and recommended strategies to move the campus forward spiritually in an attempt to answer some of these questions.

CHAPTER IV

SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY SPIRITUAL MASTER PLAN

Introduction

In December 2006, I was brought to the campus to interview for the position of chaplain. President Gordon Bietz brought me to his office and challenged me that if hired one of my responsibilities would be to work with committees on campus to develop a spiritual master plan for the university. The previous chaplain had started the process with the spiritual life committee, but during the interim the process had stalled. In the 2008-2009 school year, focused committee work resumed. The spiritual life committee was reassembled and President Bietz's challenge of both capturing in words the spiritual atmosphere of the school and attempting to articulate measurable spiritual goals for the future was undertaken, "making explicit that which has been implicit on the campus of Southern Adventist University for years" (Bietz, fall of 2006, conversation).

By the spring of 2009, a draft of the spiritual master plan was accepted by both the Student Services Committee and the University Senate. It awaited final approval by Southern Adventist University's Board of Trustees before it became an official, strategic document for the university. Board approval was voted in February 2010.

Spiritual Master Plan Document (Version 5/05/09)

Preamble

This document is an expression of the importance to Southern Adventist University of spiritual growth in its faculty, staff, and students. It has been prepared by the Spiritual Life Committee of the university and is considered to be a dynamic statement that will be updated as needs and circumstances require. This document is intended to help clearly define goals and objectives for improving the spiritual life of the university family, and for assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of these goals and objectives.

In the '08-'09 Undergraduate Catalog, the chapter entitled "This Is Southern Adventist University" defines the mission, core values, institutional goals and educational philosophy of this university. From that statement of identity come the stated spiritual goals and objectives of this document. There is a statement of a philosophy of assessment, followed by a proposal regarding assessment methodology for this plan. Finally, a statement regarding regular review of the plan leads to concluding remarks.

History and Process

During the 1998-1999 school year, the president of the General Conference encouraged every Seventh-day Adventist college and university to develop a spiritual master plan for its campus. Southern's response, in the spring of 1999, began with Associate Academic Vice-President Katie Lamb and Chaplain Ken Rogers spearheading a Spiritual Master Plan Committee to begin to develop a plan for the campus. Preparation work included: collecting spiritual master plans from other SDA institutions,

conducting student and faculty focus groups, conducting parent surveys, and using Valuegenesis as a testing instrument with students.

In 2002, the Adventist Accreditation Association made the following recommendation:

That the Spiritual Life Subcommittee be reactivated with the Campus Chaplain serving as chair (or secretary) and with meetings taking place at regular intervals. This will enable the chaplain to interact with other spiritual leaders on campus among faculty and staff and will bring greater intentionality and coordination in the planning of the spiritual activities. (Report of the Visiting Committee for Southern Adventist University, October 27-30, 2002, p. 7)

This recommendation was accepted, and between 2002 and 2007, the Spiritual Life Subcommittee began to meet regularly. The Noel-Levitz Students Satisfaction Inventory, the Senior Exit Questionnaire, and the ACT Alumni Survey provided tools to evaluate campus spirituality.

During this same time, Seventh-day Adventist University administrators and NAD officials began meeting to discuss the need for intentionalizing plans for spiritual growth on campuses of higher education. Out of this emerged "A Guidebook for Spiritual Master Planning on Seventh-day Adventist Campuses of Higher Education." Gordon Bietz, Bailey Gillespie, Ed Hernandez, Ella Simmons, Enrique Becerra, Garland Dulan, Greg King, Jane Thayer, Rich Carlson, and Richard Osborn collaborated in its completion. It is in this environment that a new emphasis began to emerge on SDA campuses of higher education that each university create its own spiritual master plan. From 2004-2006, initial attempts were made by the university chaplain and the Spiritual Life Committee to develop a comprehensive spiritual master plan for Southern Adventist University.

In the fall of 2007, the process continued. The '08-09 Spiritual Life Committee is made up of the following individuals: chaplain, Brennon Kirstein—chair; president, Gordon Bietz; vice-president for student services, Bill Wohlers; senior pastor of the Collegedale church, John Nixon; two representatives of the school of religion, Doug Tilstra and Alan Parker; three other faculty members, Lisa Diller, Andy Nash, and Carlos Parra; two students appointed by the Student Association, Doug Baasch and Kimberley Benfield; and two students appointed by the Campus Ministries department, Nate Dubs and Eliud Sicard.

It is the stated purpose of this document that every administrative decision, every classroom lecture, and every extra-curricular activity be conducted in such a way that the advancement of our spiritual mission be our highest priority.

Our Spiritual Goals

Students of Southern Adventist University will grow in a vibrant, responsible relationship with the Lord, while learning to build their lives on Christian beliefs and values in order to develop a passion for ministry and service to the world in harmony with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Spiritual Master Plan Objectives

1. To help students grow in a vibrant relationship with the Lord.
 - a. To encourage and equip students to take personal responsibility for their spiritual life. This responsibility is foundational to a vibrant relationship with God.

- b. To equip students for meaningful Bible study and prayer in their personal life.
 - c. To increase appreciation for and involvement in corporate worship.
 - d. To involve every student in significant mentoring relationships that will enrich the students' personal relationship with God.
 - e. To offer each student opportunities and training for witnessing that will help them realize their role in the mission of the church.
2. To help students build their lives on biblical beliefs and values.
- a. To help students understand the biblical doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the curriculum and religious programming of the university.
 - b. To develop in students an understanding of how their discipline can be shaped by Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and values within each academic department.
 - c. To create participatory environments that are structured so that students can ask questions, examine their beliefs and values, and investigate different paradigms in healthy and constructive ways.
 - d. To teach and model habits of wholeness in the physical, mental, social, and spiritual realms.
3. To develop in students a passion for ministry to the world in harmony with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- a. To increase student involvement in on-campus ministries.

- b. To expose students to and involve them in serving the needs of people in the surrounding communities.
- c. To expose students to and involve them in national/global service, so that every student recognizes the value of service to others.

Assessment

Philosophy of Assessment

There are significant challenges inherent in measuring or assessing spirituality. The quantity of external performance does not necessarily indicate the quality of the internal experience. While we recognize that internal experience often leads to external changes, it is all too easy to show conformity to the external standards without having the internal experience. We choose to assess the qualitative effects of what we are doing as well as the quantity of external activities.

Process of Assessment

1. Noel-Levitz Survey: This biennial survey measures student expectations and the degree to which these expectations are being met by the institution. Items related to spiritual growth and campus spirituality have been added as an assessment for Southern. Continued use of this instrument will be part of the assessment process.
2. Senior exit questionnaire: Administered every year.
3. ACT Alumni survey: This biennial survey asks for input from students who have graduated two and three years previously.

4. An internal instrument will be developed by Institutional Research to ask specific questions relevant to the objectives of Southern Adventist University.

Review of Spiritual Master Plan

Regular review of the assessment results will be made at least annually to see how well the objectives of this plan are being met and what additional strategies might be established to successfully attain them. The Spiritual Life Committee, Student Services Committee, University Senate, and Board of Trustees will be involved in this review process.

Conclusion

After attending Southern Adventist University, every student should be able to say they have had the opportunity to grow spiritually during their collegiate experience here. Our responsibility is to provide the environment where students feel safe in searching for, wrestling with, and growing closer to God and to equip students for a lifetime of service. Our commitment is to continue assessing progress toward this goal, seeking His wisdom and guidance in continual improvement. Let it be said of the administration, faculty, staff, and students of Southern Adventist University, "We will serve the Lord."

Spiritual Master Plan Assessment Process

In the winter of 2010, Monte Sahlin, senior consultant at the Center for Creative Ministry, was hired to construct and analyze the "Southern Adventist University Student Spiritual Life Survey," an instrument intended to help measure the spiritual growth

perceptions of current students in relationship to twelve spiritual growth objectives of the Southern Adventist University spiritual master plan. On April 12, 2010, Southern's Institutional Review Board approved the survey tool as part of the annual assessment. In the IRB approval process, the following was outlined as parameters for this study: 1) Brennon Kirstein would be the principal investigator; 2) all participation must be voluntary; 3) data must be kept in a secure location; 4) study would be concluded and ready for annual presentation; and 5) at the end of the study, data collected must be destroyed in an appropriate manner.

In late April 2010, a random sample of 500 students was selected, under the supervision of the institutional research and information technology offices. Each student was emailed a link to the 59-question survey located at a dedicated web site. While no direct compensation was given to all participants, 25 were randomly chosen to receive \$20 as an incentive. A total of 186 responses were received, representing a 37% response rate, within minimum standards for a probability sample survey. At the 95th percentile of reliability, the standard allowance for sampling error in this study was ten percentage points (+/-).

Findings on 12 Spiritual Master Plan Objectives

In the discussion of these findings, I have chosen to organize the survey results in relationship to twelve spiritual life objectives. A summary will be included at the end of the findings.

- I. To help students grow in a vibrant relationship with the Lord.
 1. To encourage and equip students to take personal responsibility for their spiritual life (see Table 1).

Table 1

Percentage of SAU Students Who Feel Encouraged to Take Personal Responsibility for Spiritual Life

Agree strongly	62%
Agree some	32%
Disagree some	4%
Disagree strongly	2%

Table 1 depicts a very high majority of students who perceive that they have been encouraged to take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives, 94% agreeing either “strongly” or “some.” A similar trend is seen in Table 2 with 86% of students answering that they have grown “much” or “some.” Interestingly, among those who indicated “much growth,” the highest response (21%) indicated that their growth was “mainly through my own private activities,” followed closely by “mainly because of being a student at SAU” (19%). This data can be encouraging to leadership at SAU because almost 1/5 of its student population indicates a faith growth perception of “much growth—mainly because of being a student at SAU.” Also encouraging as the ultimately desired outcome is that another 21% of students indicate “much growth—mainly through my own private activities.”

Spiritual master plan objective 1A is that an increasing percentage of students will come to take personal responsibility for their own spiritual lives. During the university years, it is the hope of every Adventist institution of higher education to create environments, curriculum, programming, policies, and most importantly, personal relationships that influence a student to perceive that they have grown much in their faith “mainly because of being a student at X university.” However, on the other side of

graduation, as a student moves on into the work force and away from the environment of the Adventist university, the ultimate test of faith comes. Have lasting values and beliefs been instilled? Has a personally owned and developed friendship with Jesus been adopted? Table 2 shows the percentage of growth in faith among SAU Adventists.

Table 2

Percentage of Growth in Faith Among SAU Adventists

Much growth, mainly through my own private activities	21%
Much growth, mainly because of being a student at SAU	19%
Much growth, mainly because of other groups or ministries	12%
Some growth	34%
No real growth	14%

Another encouraging finding in the comparison of Tables 1 and 2 is the percentages of students who disagree that they have been encouraged to take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives (7%) and who indicated “no real growth” in relation to their faith over the last year (14%). In comparison with Table 1, only 7% of students do not feel that they have been encouraged to take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives, and only 14% indicate “no real growth” over the last year in relationship to their faith. While we would hope for zeroes, these numbers are remarkably low.

2. To equip students for meaningful Bible study and prayer in their personal life (see Table 3).

Table 3

Percentage of SAU Students Who Have Learned How to Have Meaningful Bible Study and Prayer in Personal Life

Agree strongly	20%
Agree some	54%
Disagree some	20%
Disagree strongly	6%

Results from Table 3 show that only 20% of students “agree strongly” that they have learned how to have meaningful Bible study and prayer. An equal section of the campus indicates that they “disagree some” (20%), with the majority indicating that they “agree some” (54%). Clearly, the data in this table show a need on campus. Questions that arise include, what does “meaningful” Bible study mean to students? Is there a question about “study” vs. “devotional reading?” Are there different kinds of prayer that could be experimented with?

Table 4 depicts frequency of student engagement in various spiritual disciplines. By far, the most frequently indicated spiritual practice is that of prayer, 83% of students indicating that they pray daily with a total of 95% engaging in prayer at least weekly. Conversely, reading the Bible dropped to less than 1/3 of students participating daily (29%), slightly more reading their Bible weekly (38%), and another 33% noting that they read their Bibles once a month or less. “Meditation,” however it is defined in the student’s experience, is shown to be a frequently engaged personal spiritual practice (74% at least once a week), more than Bible reading (67%, at least once a week) or reading other spiritual books (28%, at least once a week). Conversely, only a very small

percentage of students indicated that journaling was a frequent spiritual practice. Only 4% of students self-reported daily journaling, and only 15% at least once a week.

Table 4

Percentage of Spiritual Practices SAU Students Engage in

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Never
Prayer	83%	12%	--	--	--
Read the Bible	29%	38%	18%	10%	5%
Meditation	31%	43%	11%	11%	4%
Read other spiritual books	12%	16%	30%	32%	10%
Journal	4%	11%	13%	23%	49%

3. To increase appreciation for and involvement in corporate worship (see Tables 5-10).

Table 5

Percentage of SAU Students with Increased Appreciation and Involvement in Group Worship

Agree strongly	23%
Agree some	40%
Disagree some	27%
Disagree strongly	10%

In Tables 5-10, student attitudes and perceptions regarding corporate worship are examined. Table 5 shows that while 23% of students “agree strongly” that their appreciation for/involvement in corporate worship has increased and the majority of

students at 63% agree to some degree, an interesting 37% disagree. Table 6 looks at how corporate worship is perceived across a variety of services available on campus. One recognized weakness in Table 6 is the comparison of regular student attendance percentage total (238% due to the attendance at multiple worship events) and the student perception of the worship event considered “most helpful” total (100%). Conceding the need for instrument refinement in the future, valuable student perceptions still emerge.

Vespers is clearly not only the most regularly attended corporate worship service but also strongly considered the most helpful. In stark contrast is the disparity between the heavy attendance of students at both dormitory worship (58%) and campus religious convocations (57%), and the small percentages of students who perceive them as “most helpful,” 9% and 5% respectively. Arguably the most significant finding in this data is the very strong student perception of small groups, 21% of students indicating that they regularly attend a small group and 21% of students identifying small groups as “most helpful.” Similar high student perceptions appear in relationship with family worship (17% attendance/13% “most helpful”) and “other group” (33% attendance/20% “most helpful”). Is it possible that students perceive corporate worship helpfulness in direct relationship to size—the smaller the audience setting and increased levels of participation, the greater the appreciation?

Table 6

Percentage of SAU Students Who Attend Spiritual Activities Regularly and Percentage of SAU Students Who Find Them to be Helpful or Meaningful on a Personal Level

	Regularly attend	Most helpful/meaningful
Vespers	69%	32%
Dormitory worship	58%	9%
Campus religious convocation	57%	5%
Small Group	21%	21%
Family Worship	17%	13%
Other Group	33%	20%

Tables 7-9 address student perceptions and attendance of corporate worship at Sabbath morning church services, specifically. Church attendance frequency appears to be an encouraging pattern. Students indicated that 70% attended church 3 out of the last 4 Sabbaths and the remaining 30% attended once or twice. When students were asked to identify where they went to church, students struggled to limit their answers. Table 8 shows answers that equal 148%, indicating perhaps a flaw in instrument construction, but also supporting the prevailing observed trend of multiple church attendance, “church-hopping.” Predictably, a high percentage of students (79%) chose one of the various church services offered by the Collegedale SDA Church (Renewal, Connect, and Adoration), the on-campus church, as their preference. However, a mildly surprisingly high number of students (45%) indicated “another church.”

Table 7

Percentage of SAU Students Who Attended Church Somewhere in the Last Month

One	13%
Two	17%
Three	27%
Four or more	43%

Table 8

Percentage of SAU Students Who Attend the Collegedale Church on Campus or Some Other Church in the Area

Collegedale Renewal	38%
Collegedale Connect	25%
Collegedale Adoration	16%
Another church	45%
Multiple answers	24%

Noteworthy in Table 9 is student perception that while church services often receive high marks for inspiration (72%) and God's presence (71%), the majority of students also perceive a significant sense of obligation (59%). Sermon content received high-perceived marks for biblical content (55%, "very well"), while addressing social problems was the lowest (21%, "very well"). Of the twelve objectives, this area of corporate worship appreciation and/or involvement received one of the lowest student scores. Several important questions emerge. Does the quality of corporate worship need

to be addressed on campus—i.e., quality of speaking, prayer, testimony, music? Does the form of corporate worship need to change—i.e., smaller numbers and venue, shift to small groups? Does the volume of required worship need to change, fewer requirements and more choices? Does the required worship policy system itself need to be altered, possibly even eliminated?

Table 9

Percentage of SAU Students Who Experience at Least One of the Following during Worship Services on Campus or Where They Attend Church

Inspiration	72%
God's presence	71%
Joy	63%
Obligation	59%
Boredom	26%
Awe or mystery	25%
Spontaneity	21%
Frustration	14%

Table 10

Percentage of SAU Students Who Feel the Following Items Are Dealt with in the Sermons Heard on Campus in Religious Activities

	Very well	Fairly well	Not at all
Bible content	55%	37%	8%
Encourages spiritual growth	47%	48%	5%
Stimulating thought	37%	49%	14%
Relevance to everyday life	35%	58%	7%
Encourages witnessing	34%	51%	15%
Addressing social problems	21%	53%	26%

4. To involve every student in significant mentoring relationships that will enrich the students' personal relationship with God.

Table 11

Percentage of SAU Students Who View Faculty Member as a Mentor, Even If Never Verbally Mentioned

Yes	67%
No	22%
Not sure	11%

Tables 11 and 12 address student perception of faculty mentorship. Eighty-five percent of students surveyed either “agree strongly” or “agree some” that at least one faculty member has enriched their relationship with God and 67% consider at least one

faculty member a mentor. Another 33% answered “no” or “not sure” when asked if there was a faculty member who they consider a mentor, while only 15% indicate that they cannot identify a faculty member who has enriched their relationship with God.

Table 12

Percentage of SAU Students Who Believe Faculty Members Help Enrich Relationship with God

Agree strongly	44%
Agree some	41%
Disagree some	11%
Disagree strongly	4%

5. To offer each student opportunities and training for witnessing that will help them realize their role in the mission of the church (see Tables 13-14).

Table 13

Percentage of SAU Students Who Feel There Are Witnessing Opportunities at SAU to Get Involved with

Agree strongly	60%
Agree some	33%
Disagree some	6%
Disagree strongly	1%

In Tables 13 and 14, students are asked to reflect on their perceptions of both witnessing activity opportunities available to them and their role in the church's mission. While a high majority (93%) either "agree strongly" (60%) or "agree some" (33%) that SAU provides opportunities for witnessing, a much smaller number of students feel settled in having found their role in the church's mission. Only 15% "agree strongly" that they have found their role, though when combined with those who "agree some" still equal a majority (58%). In light of the searching and growing nature of the college years, this finding should not be surprising. If anything, perhaps the fact that 58% agree to some degree with the statement is surprising. How would other, post-college adults answer the same question? This data draws attention to at least two considerations: 1) witnessing opportunities and "finding one's role in the church's mission" are two very differently perceived issues by students; and 2) objective five needs wordsmithing refinement, narrowing with fewer words to one objective, not two.

Table 14

Percentage of SAU Students Who Found Role in the Church's Mission

Agree strongly	15%
Agree some	43%
Disagree some	33%
Disagree strongly	9%

II. To help students build their lives on biblical beliefs and values.

6. To help students understand the biblical doctrines of the SDA Church (see Table 15).

Table 15

Percentage of SAU Students Who Have a Deeper Understanding of Bible Doctrines of the Adventist Church

Agree strongly	26%
Agree some	60%
Disagree some	11%
Disagree strongly	3%

Eighty-six percent of students surveyed indicated that they either agree “some” or “strongly” to having a deeper understanding of SDA doctrines. While an encouraging response, more exploration is needed. Clearly, this question is very general and a more closely refined instrument is needed to explore what else students understand in the arena of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. Specifically, what does “deeper” mean? What was a students’ doctrinal understanding level starting point as he entered the university? Of the 28 SDA fundamentals, how are students growing in their knowledge of each?

Conversely, the fact that 14% of students “disagree” that their understanding of SDA doctrines have deepened in their experience at SAU is of concern. Regardless of whether a student chooses to adopt or adhere to these doctrines or not, this data invites more intentional strategies to be developed that at minimum encourage basic levels of knowledge and understanding.

7. To develop in students an understanding of how their discipline can be shaped by SDA beliefs and values within each academic department (see Table 16).

Table 16

Percentage of SAU Students Who Have Learned How Adventist Values and Beliefs Relate to Academic Major

Agree strongly	40%
Agree some	36%
Disagree some	18%
Disagree strongly	6%

Turning to student perceptions of academic departments, Table 16 addresses how effectively Adventist values have been perceived to have been taught within academic disciplines. Forty percent “agree strongly” that Adventist values have been integrated into their discipline, another 36% “agree some,” 18% “disagree some” and 6% “disagree strongly.” In a positive light, a high majority (76%) of students agree that Adventist belief/value integration is happening within academic departments at SAU. However, in relationship to a number of other objectives in this survey, a notably higher number of students disagreed on this particular objective (24%). It would be fascinating in future studies to cross-tabulate student major with this question to see how each academic department is perceived by its majors in relation to Adventist value integration.

8. To create participatory environments that are structured so that students can ask questions, examine their beliefs and values, and investigate different paradigms in healthy and constructive ways (see Table 17).

Table 17

Percentage of SAU Students Who Feel a Safe Place to Ask Questions and Examine Beliefs and Values Exists on Campus

Agree strongly	39%
Agree some	45%
Disagree some	14%
Disagree strongly	2%

Student perceptions of campus openness are addressed in Table 17, in which 39% indicated that they “agree strongly,” and 84% of students agree at least some that they have had participatory environments where they were encouraged to ask questions and examine their beliefs. Because Southern Adventist University has a reputation for positioning itself on the more conservative side of the Adventist higher education landscape, this finding was a surprising one, in that often the more conservative the setting, the less tolerance or encouragement there is for exploring dissenting views or positions from the traditional, doctrinal beliefs of the organization. While this question does not preclude the latter of still being the case, this question does beg other questions to be asked. Where are those “safe places” on campus where students are encouraged to ask questions and examine their beliefs? What settings best facilitate student

participation—the classroom? Sabbath schools? Small groups? Q&A lunch forums with guest speakers, etc? Private, peer-to-peer, one-on-one discussions?

Conversely, 16% disagreed that they had experienced settings on campus where they were free to ask and examine.

9. To teach and model habits of wholeness in the physical, mental, social, and spiritual realms (see Table 18).

Table 18

Percentage of SAU Students Who Perceive at Least One Faculty Member Has Shown Them How Faith Touches the Whole of Life

Agree strongly	52%
Agree some	34%
Disagree some	13%
Disagree strongly	1%

In Table 18, a notable proportion of students “agree strongly” (52%) that at least one faculty member has shown them how faith touches the whole of life; 86% indicating that they agree to some extent. Of consideration is that the survey question itself does not explore the four different realms intended in objective 9, namely the physical, mental, social, and spiritual realms. A future instrument could be constructed to more closely examine these four realms. A familiar consistent minority (14%) continues to disagree with many of the questions asked.

- III. To develop in students a passion for ministry to the world in harmony with the mission of the SDA Church.

10. To increase student involvement in on-campus ministries (see Table 19).

Table 19

Percentage of SAU Students Who Have Volunteered in at Least One Community Service Activity or Religious Ministry

	On-Campus	Off-campus
Yes	76%	83%
No	21%	12%
Not sure	3%	4%

Seventy-six percent of students surveyed indicated that they have volunteered their time in at least one on-campus community service activity or religious ministry during their Southern experience. It is interesting to note that slightly more students (83%) indicated that they have volunteered in at least one off-campus community service activity or religious ministry during the same time period. Both responses are illustrative of prevailing activist trends among Millennials to get involved and make an active, practical difference.

11. To expose students to and involve them in serving the needs of people in the surrounding communities (see Tables 20 and 21).

Table 20

Percentage of SAU Students Who Feel SAU Has Opportunities to Get Involved in

	Community service	Religious outreach
Agree strongly	64%	65%
Agree some	32%	30%
Disagree some	4%	5%
Disagree strongly	1%	1%

One of the most encouraging insights from this survey is that of the twelve spiritual objectives, students perceived this objective to be the strongest. As can be seen in Table 20, while virtually no difference was perceived by students between the categories of “community service” and “religious outreach,” a very high percentage of students perceive that the university has provided them with opportunities for involvement, 96% agreeing either “strongly” or “some” to community service, and 95% agreeing to either “strongly” or “some” to religious outreach. Table 21 paints a picture of an active student body in relationship to time invested in volunteer hours given to community service programs or religious ministries in the last month. Although 31% said they had not volunteered any hours in the last month, over half of those surveyed (53%) said they had volunteered at least three hours, 20% of which indicating that they had volunteered 10 hours or more. A recognized weakness in the statement of this objective is that it is really two goals in one addressing “exposure” and “involvement.” Wordsmithing is needed.

Table 21

Percentage of Volunteer Hours Given to Community Service Programs or Religious Ministries in the Last Month

Ten or more	20%
Five to nine	16%
Four	10%
Three	7%
Two	9%
One	7%
None	31%

12. To expose students to and involve them in national/global service, so that every student recognizes the value of service to others.

Table 22

Percentage of SAU students Who Feel Opportunities to Get Involved in National or Global Service Exist at SAU

Agree strongly	46%
Agree some	40%
Disagree some	12%
Disagree strongly	2%

Central to Adventist convictions is that the church has a unique, worldwide mission, to reach “every nation, kindred, tongue and people,” for Christ. Table 22

addresses student perceptions of involvement opportunities at SAU for national and/or global service. Forty-six percent of students “agree strongly” and 86% agree at least “some” that they have had opportunities for involvement. Programs such as the student missions program and the “ShareHim” evangelistic preaching of the Evangelism Resource Center are well established at SAU.

But what opportunities are students perceiving when they answer this question? What does “national or global” service mean to SAU students? How can more varied ways be created so that a student can experiment in service for a short time frame during their SAU experience in every unique academic discipline—not just the traditional opportunities of preaching and teaching? How can the 14% who disagree and say they have not had opportunity for national and global service be reached? Regardless of how leadership chooses to move forward with this data, this finding is encouraging in that a high majority of students feel that they have had multiple opportunities for service nationally and internationally. Again, the objective dual wording of “expose” and “involve” needs to be wordsmithed so that it contains only one objective.

Summary

In the summary chart below, student perception percentages have been ranked in relation to Southern Adventist University’s spiritual master plan objectives (see Table 23).

Table 23

Objective SAU Student Perception Ranking

Objective Student Perception Ranking	Agree Strongly	Agree Some	Disagree Some	Disagree Strongly
<i>Objective 11:</i> Local community ministry	64%	32%	4%	1%
<i>Objective 10:</i> On-campus ministry	65%	30%	5%	1%
<i>Objective 1:</i> Personal responsibility	62%	32%	4%	2%
<i>Objective 9:</i> Habits of wholeness	52%	34%	13%	1%
<i>Objective 12:</i> National/global service	46%	40%	12%	2%
<i>Objective 4:</i> Mentoring relationships	44%	41%	11%	4%
<i>Objective 7:</i> SDA values discipline integration	40%	36%	18%	6%
<i>Objective 8:</i> Environments for questions	39%	45%	14%	2%
<i>Objective 6:</i> SDA doctrines	26%	60%	11%	3%
<i>Objective 5:</i> Witnessing and church role	29%	48%	19%	4%
<i>Objective 2:</i> Bible study and prayer	20%	54%	20%	6%
<i>Objective 3:</i> Corporate worship	23%	40%	27%	10%

In this study, students perceived the following three objectives to be Southern's strongest: 1) providing opportunities for students to be involved in serving the needs in the local, surrounding communities; 2) increasing student involvement in on-campus ministries; and 3) encouraging and equipping students to take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives. Conversely, students perceived the following three objectives to be Southern's weakest: 1) increasing appreciation for and involvement in corporate worship, 2) equipping students for meaningful Bible study and prayer in their personal

lives, and 3) offering students opportunities and training for witnessing to help them realize their role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Within these findings, it is interesting to compare students' perception of Southern's strength in equipping and encouraging students to take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives while also perceiving a much lower score in the area of equipping students for meaningful Bible study and prayer.

In regard to the top perceived spiritual strength of Southern, it is true that there are many opportunities for students to be involved in ministry/service to the local Chattanooga community. In the 2010-11 school year through campus ministries outreach ministries alone, not including very active student clubs in the student association, an average of 400-500 students per month have participated in serving the local Chattanooga area through the following ministries: Westside 4 Jesus, Patten Towers, Advent Home, Hungry 4 Jesus, Flag Camp, Chattanooga 4 Christ, Operation Atlanta, God Is Our Song, Prayer Tag, Metamorphosis, and Preach the Word.

In regard to the top perceived spiritual weakness of Southern, it is also true that while student appreciation for corporate worship is largely held in high regard for some venues, such as vespers and Sabbath morning church worship services, other corporate worship settings are widely held in lower esteem, such as residence hall worships and religious convocations.

Several questions arise from this data: Is it possible for a campus to have too much corporate worship? What is a healthy rhythm of corporate worship as it relates to the development of other aspects of a students' spirituality? How does the requirement of worship service attendance actually impact a students' spirituality? What impact does

required worship attendance have on the student on the other side of graduation when there is no academic structural setting to enforce attendance? In light of a very vigorous corporate worship attendance policy, why are Southern's students perceiving corporate worship as one of the weakest of its twelve spiritual objectives?

Data from this survey has been carefully reviewed by the Spiritual Life Committee and recommendations for change to administration continue to emerge from this data. One specific strategy incentivizing small groups on campus has already been submitted to strategic planning and been budgeted for next school year. In Chapter Five, I will attempt to wrestle with some of the difficult and challenging questions that emerge from the data and offer suggestions for how Southern might move into the future.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the challenge of articulating spiritual objectives for the campus through Southern's spiritual master plan agreed upon by university leadership, the steps of student spiritual growth perception assessment and the creation of initiatives based on that information follow. This cycle of annually reviewing spiritual objectives, assessing student spiritual growth perceptions and creating spiritual initiatives gives the spiritual life committee clear working parameters and focus, and helps to inform strategic planning leadership as it wrestles with the responsibility to allocate budgets and personnel. In Chapter Four, the focus was on the first two aspects of this ongoing, annual three-fold process: 1) the establishment of spiritual objectives for the campus in the spiritual master plan, and 2) the assessment of student spiritual growth perceptions. In this chapter, new action steps will be the focus, recommendation ideas for how to more intentionally create environments where students can grow spiritually at Southern Adventist University.

Part of my motivation for investing time in this DMin project is the alarmingly painful exodus of so many collegiate-aged young adults from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Part of my motivation for this DMin project has been a desire to get a clearer picture about current spiritual perceptions of students at Southern Adventist University. Haunting questions include: At the end of the day when students

graduate and move out into the rest of their lives, is Jesus fully loved and embraced as Savior and Lord? Will our graduates, after two, three, four years at this Adventist university simply join the exodus or will their experience here have contributed to not only an anchoring of beliefs and values but also a liberating freedom to experiment, innovate, and serve others with every ability and skill acquired, fully committed to serving Him and others for a lifetime? How do these students perceive their spirituality? What is the spiritual temperature of the campus? Are there relationships, policies, systems, and environments at SAU that contribute to spiritual health? If so, let us continue investing resources with renewed commitment and strategy. Are there relationships, policies, systems, and environments at SAU that though unintentional are actually hurting our students' spiritually? If so, let us be just as intentional to change, eliminate, and reallocate with renewed commitment and strategy. Perhaps a middle ground question as well: Are there relationships, policies, systems, and environments at SAU that do not accomplish enough to make them worthwhile and therefore should be deleted or changed to become worthwhile?

Conclusions

1. Jesus chose college-aged young adults as His primary strategy to reach the planet at the establishment of the early Christian church as well as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church needs the passionate wiring of young adults if it is to powerfully cooperate with the first angel's message.
2. Trends in Adventism show both a "graying" effect in North America with young adults leaving the local church, and increasing numbers of Seventh-day

Adventists acquiring college degrees. Both trends make Seventh-day Adventist university campuses increasingly important for intentional, strategic ministry to young adults.

3. While there is no clear comprehensive picture for how developing godly young adults in Adventist universities is implemented and assessed, there are significant dangers inherent in spiritual growth assessment that must be carefully avoided, including a focus on behaviors, a “check-list” religiosity, and an inability to know one’s own or another’s heart.
4. Increasing financial pressures require students, parents, and university administration to answer questions of spiritual and financial accountability—Is Adventist higher education making a spiritual difference?
5. Very few studies have been attempted to identify student spiritual growth in private Christian settings, even fewer attempted to explore spiritual impact of Adventist universities on students. The need for intentional spiritual growth perception assessment with a corresponding reallocation of university resources and policy review is great.
6. Establishing a spiritual master plan, identifying university spiritual objectives as well as a means to gather student spiritual growth perception feedback is vital to an intentional process of promoting spiritual growth in students.
7. Of twelve spiritual objectives outlined in Southern Adventist University’s spiritual master plan, students perceive local community ministry involvement, on-campus ministry involvement, and encouragement to take

personal responsibility for their spiritual lives as the top three objectives being met.

8. Of twelve spiritual objectives outlined in Southern Adventist University's spiritual master plan, students perceive appreciation for and involvement in corporate worship, equipment for Bible study and prayer, and understanding one's role in the church as the bottom three objectives being met.

Recommendations

I recognize that it is much easier to ask questions than to come up with answers, and that many of these questions will linger long after this project is over. Proper research, however, answers questions and also fosters additional research by sparking additional questions. Based on this study, I would like to focus on six recommendations for both future research and strategic initiative action on the campus of Southern Adventist University; needed systems that I believe are conducive to collegiate spiritual growth. Some of these systems have been in place for many years and call for continued commitment. Some of these systems have yet to be created. The following paragraphs will serve as both an evaluation of current campus strategies and recommendations I would like to see happen on the campus of Southern Adventist University, as well as recommended subjects ripe for future research.

Recommendation 1: Corporate Worship

Of the twelve spiritual objectives, students indicated the least strength of agreement in the area of corporate worship appreciation and involvement—23% agreeing strongly and 40% agreeing some. For many years, Southern has embraced rich systems

of corporate worship on its campus. Current corporate worship systems at SAU include weekly events like vespers, residence hall worships and church services as well as special times of spiritual emphases throughout the year like InTents (fall week of prayer), student week of prayer, religious convocations, etc. For many years, also, Southern has adopted required worship service attendance policies, intended to help facilitate student spiritual growth. With a worship attendance system requiring students to come to corporate worship services, many students meet the minimum requirement of simply being physically present, but mental and spiritual engagement appears to be far away—evidenced by ongoing conversations, texting, etc. Does a required worship attendance system help students in the ultimate goal of a fully surrendered heart to the Lordship of Jesus and a lifetime commitment of service to others? Does it hinder? This question has been debated for years. Certainly, true heart worship and heart surrender to Jesus can never be mandated, controlled by policy, or required.

In any event, questions arise about how to best invest in students so that during their university experience the kingdom of God can advance the most. How can Southern create incremental environments and opportunities for a student who only begins his university experience meeting the minimum spiritual requirement of physical attendance to move toward a fully mentally- and spiritually-engaged commitment to Jesus and others for a lifetime at graduation and beyond? How do we move a campus from a smorgasbord of random, stand-alone spiritual events into a coordinated system where corporate worship, devotional worship, small groups and service/outreach become more intentional and integrated?

For the average, middle-of-the-spiritual-bell-curve student who “consumes” the large corporate worship event up to 5 times on an average week, it is no wonder that passive indifference/boredom begins to set in for many students. Two large gathering residence hall worships, one religious convocation, one Friday vespers event, plus Sabbath morning large corporate worship—is this rhythm of large, corporate worship gatherings the best strategy to help our students to best grow spiritually? How does this rhythm of corporate worship prepare a student for the spiritual realities of young adult life in the average local church beyond graduation? Is there a possible contributing correlation between low student spiritual perception scores in a mandatory worship attendance university setting and the larger young adult exodus trend seen within the larger Adventist Church?

One recommendation is that further research needs to be done to explore the spiritual effectiveness of required worship attendance. An instrument needs to be created to measure the impact—positive, negative, neutral—of required worships at a Christian college or university.

A second recommendation is that corporate worship at SAU become a primary vehicle for inviting students into LifeGroups. More than simply an end in itself, corporate worship would become the catalyst, the excuse, the event at which an invitation to students to take the next active step in their relationship with Jesus is extended. Corporate worship then would frequently invite students to take a next step outside the passively consuming comfort zone of the church pew—a small step into LifeGroups. A culture of LifeGroups could be developed across campus that would become a gradually stronger part of the spiritual experience at SAU. A preferred future would include

hundreds of small groups of students meeting weekly in informal settings for intimate Bible study and prayer. Then when this culture has been widely established, I could envision transitioning the campus off a required worship attendance system altogether. All future worship events, corporate or otherwise, would be a voluntary free choice for students—the same voluntary, free choice that will be awaiting them outside of Collegedale.

Recommendation 2: LifeGroups

One of the strongest survey results addressed the perceived student spiritual importance (defined in terms of “helpfulness” and “meaningfulness”) of small groups. These student survey responses correspond with one of Southern’s strategic goals for enrollment growth to 4,000 students in 2020, the identified high priority of structuring intentional small student communities. The larger “graying” of Adventism trend in the North American church suggests that relational interconnectedness is becoming more and more crucial in keeping Adventist young adults invested in the church. The impact on Adventist churches of waves of Southern graduates who have experienced several years of LifeGroup worship could be transformational.

LifeGroups would be an initiative where small group ministry would be integrated into the worship infrastructure of Southern Adventist University. It would involve the creation of student jobs as LifeGroups leaders, incentivizing student participants to choose LifeGroups as both an alternative for worship credit while at Southern as well as a valuable way of doing life and ministry far beyond graduation, and the hiring of campus ministries’ personnel to oversee and nurture these student leaders. In addition, the potential of faculty also becoming involved in LifeGroups has fertile

ground for the development of mentoring relationships. Faculty could provide the setting of host homes (popcorn, apples, and a living room) while students still take the lead. In essence, these LifeGroups could become the core, tribal, family units on campus. More important than the content covered during the weekly gatherings would be the relational interconnecting that could take place.

LifeGroups would help provide students with environments that 1) help students interact directly with the life-transforming agent of Scripture (as opposed to “consuming” someone else’s interaction); 2) form small campus “families,” tapping into the tribal power of friendships; 3) unite students into groups poised for ministry; and 4) transition a student along the spiritual growth continuum from passive reception of corporate worship to actively serving the local Chattanooga community beyond the comfort zone of Southern’s campus.

Recommendation 3: SDA Doctrines

Though 86% of students surveyed indicated that they either agree “some” or “strongly” to having a deeper understanding of SDA doctrines, much of what this means remains unexplored. For example, what does “deeper” mean? Future research could be conducted to better ascertain what level of SDA doctrinal knowledge a student arrives on campus with and what level of knowledge they leave with. Another future research question could address how students are growing in their knowledge of each of the individual 28 SDA beliefs. Deeper questions could address one’s relationship to these biblical beliefs beyond the minimum level of knowledge to explore levels of belief, acceptance, and how these beliefs are shaping decision-making.

Recommendation 4: Bible Study

In light of the survey results indicating that only 20% of students “strongly agree” that they are equipped for meaningful Bible study and only 29% indicate that they read the Bible daily, and another 33% indicate that they read their Bible once a month, I believe this area is pregnant for closer study. Future research could focus on what methods of Bible study students would find the most appealing and effective. What settings would students find the most conducive to help involve them in a deeper experience with the Word. Certainly, one of the challenges of Bible study in a university setting is the tendency for it to become just one more subject, one more book among the many subjects and books where academic, intellectual energy is required—rather than THE transforming agent that transcends not only all university study, but all of life itself. Because of this inherent campus struggle, I believe physically getting off campus could be an asset to students on this journey. I could envision several off-campus spiritual retreats being offered each year where structured time environments are created for students to individually invest in Bible reading and study along with quiet, reflective meditation and prayer.

Recommendation 5: Interdisciplinary Assimilation of Adventist Values

One of the aspects of this study that remains largely unexplored is the spiritual perception students have of individual academic departments across campus. When 40% “agree strongly” and 36% “agree some” to having learned Adventist values and beliefs within their discipline, what exactly do these students mean? It would be fascinating in future studies to cross-tabulate student major with this question to see how each academic department is perceived by its majors in relation to Adventist value integration. Adapting

a future spiritual growth perception instrument to acquire this student feedback would give department chairs valuable information to address both curriculum and staffing.

Recommendation 6: Missions

One of the most positive results of this study lies in the strength of student perception identifying involvement in outreach and missions. Eighty-three percent of students identified that they had volunteered in at least one community service activity or religious activity during their time as a student. Eighty-six percent of students agreed either “strongly” or “some” that they had opportunities to get involved in national or global service at SAU. Perhaps students’ answers reflect their perception of well-established programs such as the student missions program and the “ShareHim” evangelistic preaching trips of the Evangelism Resource Center. As these two systems of national and international missions are currently configured, both in terms of personnel and financial investment, a student at SAU is limited in their university-provided opportunities. A student can either choose to preach a series of the 28 fundamental doctrines of the Adventist Church in a public evangelism campaign for three weeks or serve in various positions across the globe as a student missionary for 9 to 12 months.

One recommendation is to expand university-provided short-term mission opportunities for students. I believe there is a strong percentage of campus that is currently not being tapped into who would passionately get involved in missions if additional and varied opportunities were shaped and provided for them. These mission trips could feature opportunities where no training is needed such as: crisis response (i.e., Katrina, Haiti, tornadoes in AL/TN) construction (churches, schools, and orphanages), Vacation Bible Schools, and medical. Ten-day to 2-week mission trips need to be offered

during the summer as well as during each of the major breaks in the school calendar, both Christmas break and spring break.

A second recommendation is to expand long-term student mission opportunities as well. What would it be like if student missions included a “summer only” option? How many more students would choose to participate in missions, if they could go for 3 months and not have to deal with the additional complication of missing a year of school? What if there was also a 6-month student missions option? A student could choose to serve for a summer term and first semester and be back in school in January. Alternatively, a student could leave in January and serve internationally through the second semester and summer, and be back in time for school to start the following August. With the goal of helping students to take incremental steps toward the post-graduation goal of a commitment to a lifetime of service, missions on the campus of SAU could offer 5 incremental options: 1) 10-day disaster relief, 2) 3-week ShareHim evangelistic preaching, 3) 3-month student missions term, 4) 6-month student missions term, and 5) 9-12-month student missions term. Then beyond graduation, a lifetime of service.

Future research could focus more closely on what students mean by their answers. What opportunities are students perceiving when they refer to national or global service at SAU? How can more varied ways be created so that a student can experiment in service for a short time frame during their SAU experience in every unique academic discipline—not just the traditional opportunities of preaching and teaching? How can the 14% who disagree and say they have not had opportunity for national and global service

be reached? Building on this perceived strength could help to establish Southern's spirituality in terms of service, both locally and globally.

APPENDIX

SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY STUDENT SPIRITUAL LIFE SURVEY

1. To what extent was the fact that Southern is a Christian university a significant factor in your decision to enroll here? *Mark just one answer.*

- ☐ It was very significant
- ☐ It was somewhat significant
- ☐ It was a factor, but not significant
- ☐ It was not a consideration at all
- ☐ I don't recall

2. Over the last year, how much have you grown in your faith? *Mark just one answer.*

- ☐ No real growth
- ☐ Some growth
- ☐ Much growth, mainly because of being a student at SAU
- ☐ Much growth, mainly because of other groups or ministries
- ☐ Much growth, mainly through my own private activities

3. Circle the number that best shows the assurance of eternal life that you have.

Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 Very certain

4. Out of the last four weekends, how many have you attended church somewhere? ____

5. How many of the following do you attend regularly?

Check as many as are true for you.

- ☐ Worships in your residence hall
- ☐ Worship with your family or roommates (if you do not live in a residence hall)
- ☐ Religious convocations on campus
- ☐ Vespers
- ☐ A small group for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship
- ☐ Other religious group activities

6. Which of these spiritual activities is most helpful or meaningful to you personally?

Check only one item.

- ☐ Worships in your residence hall
- ☐ Worship with your family or roommates (if you do not live in a residence hall)
- ☐ Religious convocations on campus
- ☐ Vespers
- ☐ A small group for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship

☐ Other religious group activities

7. Do you attend the Collegedale church on campus or some other church in the area?

☐ Collegedale Church: ☐Renewal ☐Adoration I ☐Adoration II ☐ Connect

☐ Other: _____

Please check the box that most accurately indicates how often you personally engage in each of the following spiritual practices (Daily, At least once a week, At least once a month, Once in a while, Never)

8. Prayer

9. Meditation or reflection

10. Reading the Bible

11. Reading other spiritual books

12. Journaling

13. Conversation with another person about spiritual topics

14. Expressing my faith through the arts or music

15. Expressing my faith through some kind of social action

16. How often have you had personal conversations with faculty members at SAU about spiritual topics? *Check just one answer, please.*

☐ Many times ☐ Several times ☐Occasionally ☐At least once ☐Never

17. Is there at least one faculty member whom you think of as a mentor, even if you have never said this to them?

☐Yes ☐ No ☐I am not sure.

18. During your time at SAU have you volunteered your time in at least one community service activity or religious ministry *on campus*?

☐ Yes ☐No ☐I am not sure.

19. During your time at SAU have you volunteered your time in at least one community service activity or religious ministry *off campus*?

☐ Yes ☐No ☐I am not sure.

20. In the last month, how many hours of volunteer time have you given to one or more community service programs or religious ministries?

_____ hours

21. During your time at SAU have you ever traveled out of the area for a mission trip, ERC trip, or similar volunteer project?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am not sure.

22. Have you ever served for a summer or longer as a student missionary or a Taskforce worker, Americorps member, etc.?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I am not sure.

To what extent have each of the following statements been true in your experience with SAU? Check the box that best describes your answer. (Agree strongly, Agree some, Disagree some, Disagree strongly)

23. I am encouraged to take personal responsibility for my spiritual life.

24. I have learned how to have meaningful Bible study and prayer in my personal life.

25. My appreciation for and involvement in group worship has increased.

26. At least one person among the faculty has enriched my relationship with God.

27. I have a deeper understanding of the Bible doctrines of the Adventist Church.

28. I have learned how Adventist values and beliefs relate to my academic major.

29. I have had a safe place to ask questions and examine my beliefs and values.

30. At least one faculty member has shown me how faith touches the whole of life.

31. I have opportunities at SAU to get involved in witnessing activities.

32. I have opportunities at SAU to get involved in community service.

33. I have opportunities at SAU to get involved in national or global service.

34. I have learned that service to others is a key part of the Adventist faith.

35. I have found my role in the church's mission.

How well do you feel these items are dealt with in the sermons you hear on campus in religious activities? Check one box in each row.

Very well Fairly well Not at all

36. Relevance to everyday life

- 37. Stimulating thought
- 38. Bible content
- 39. Encouraging spiritual growth
- 40. Encouraging witnessing
- 41. Addressing social problems

How often do you experience each of the following during worship services on campus or where you go to church? (*Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely*)

- 42. A sense of God's presence
- 43. Inspiration
- 44. Boredom
- 45. Awe or mystery
- 46. Joy
- 47. Frustration
- 48. Spontaneity
- 49. A sense of fulfilling my obligation

Before you are done with this survey, please answer the following demographic questions so we can classify the statistics from this study.

- 50. What is your status at SAU?
☐ Undergrad ☐ Grad student
- 51. How many years have you been at SAU, including this one? ____ years
- 52-53. What year were you born? 19_____
- 54. What is your major? _____
- 55. What is your marital status?
☐ Single ☐ Married
- 56. What is your religious affiliation?
☐ Baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

☐ Grew up Adventist, but not baptized

☐ Member of another faith: _____

☐ None

57. What is your ethnic background?

☐ African American or Black

☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ White

☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Other: _____

58. Were you born as an American citizen?

☐ Yes ☐ No

59. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male

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Areas of Expertise:

Leadership Young Adult Ministry Student Missions

Experience

Chaplain, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, TN, 2007 to Present

- Developed Renewal, a collegiate student-led Sabbath morning worship service at the Collegedale SDA Church
- Expanded student missions program
- Initiated LifeGroups, student-led small group infrastructure system on campus

Associate Pastor, Collegiate/Young Adult, Forest Lake SDA Church, Orlando, FL, 2005 to 2007

- Increased weekly attendance at Deeper, young adult led worship service
- Weekly preaching
- Established collegiate and young adult leadership teams

Associate Pastor, Youth, Calhoun SDA Church, Calhoun, GA, 1998 to 2005

- Developed earliteen, youth, collegiate, and young adult leadership teams
- Facilitated youth-led evangelistic campaign
- Led church through a ten-month transition period for search of senior pastor

Education

Andrews University, Master of Divinity

Southern Adventist University, Bachelor of Arts