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ABSTRACT

A FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC EVANGELISM
USING ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP IN THE
INDIANA CONFERENCE

by

Eric Michael Freking

Adviser: Kurt Johnson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC EVANGELISM USING ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP IN THE INDIANA CONFERENCE

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Date completed: May 2022

Problem

Traditional Adventist public evangelism in North America typically sees a large drop in attendance of new converts or potential converts shortly after the meetings end. I have personally held or been a part of around thirty evangelistic series in the past twenty years and have seen this pattern in each of them. The consequences are the loss of new or potential members, who, given more interaction with the evangelist, may assimilate into the church.

Method

An online discipleship program was created and launched in the Summer of 2020 in Indiana. Its purpose was to educate the participant on how to be a well-rounded disciple. The program had seven sections which were called the 7 C's of discipleship.

The 7 C's were as follows: Character of God, Communion with God, Comprehension of His Word, Calling, Community, Conflict, and Culture. All the program was recorded usually short lectures done by me. There were thirty-one lectures the participants viewed. They took a survey prior to beginning the program and then when they concluded each section to assess levels of growth in each area.

Results

Eighteen students completed the online discipleship program. The surveys' results were calculated for the group and then averaged. This was done before the program and after each section. The participants experienced growth in knowledge in each of the sections. Concerning Conflict and Culture, participants expressed a greater understanding of how these subjects play a role in the discipleship process. Calling seemed to have the weakest impact as the participants needed more guidance in identifying their spiritual gift.

Conclusions

The project demonstrated the need to have an organized discipleship program for both members and new converts in a local church. The 7 C's seemed to help the participants understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. The findings suggest that having both members and new converts go through a well-rounded program like this will have positive results on the spirituality of the participant.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC EVANGELISM
USING ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP IN THE
INDIANA CONFERENCE

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

by
Eric Michael Freking

May 2022

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Ministry Context

I currently pastor in the Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and hold the position of district pastor and conference evangelist. As of February 8, 2021, the Indiana Conference holds a membership of 9,002 members and 70 congregations.

From 2016 to 2020, I held approximately four evangelistic meetings per year in the Indiana Conference. English speaking pastors within the Indiana Conference contacted me to hold a 4-week/5-weekend evangelistic meeting. The meetings are conducted approximately four nights per week. I also work with the conference administration for assistance in prioritizing which churches to hold meetings in. In a typical year, I hold four meetings in Indiana.

As of 2019, the United States Census Bureau estimates Indiana has 6,732,219 people living in the state. The following is a breakdown of the racial demographics: 85% White, 10% Black, 7% Hispanic or Latino, and 3% Asian. To the best of my knowledge as an observer, I would say these racial demographics are close to the percentages of people who come to the public evangelistic meetings I conduct.

According to my observations, rarely does someone attend my public evangelistic meeting who does not profess Christianity in some form. The following is the Christian religious demographics of Indiana: 20% Roman Catholic, 14% Baptist, 10% Christian,

9% Methodist, and 6% Lutheran. Sixteen percent of Indiana residents have no religious affiliation.

Politically speaking, Indiana is largely considered a Republican state as the state has only voted for a Democratic presidential candidate five times since 1900.

Affectionally calling its people “Hoosiers,” Indiana is known for its mostly conservative values. Consequently, the vast majority who attend public evangelistic meetings are Republican conservative Christians.

I conduct meetings in a variety of cities and settings. Some of the meetings are held in smaller towns such as North Vernon, Indiana, with a population of nearly 7,000 people, or a larger city like Fort Wayne, Indiana, with a population of 265,000 people. When the meetings are held in a larger city, I have noticed more non-White people in attendance. The meetings are either held at the local church or a rented venue such as a hotel meeting room.

Statement of the Problem

In early 2016, I became the Indiana Conference evangelist. Prior to this, my ministry experience was a Bible worker (2000-2003). From 2003-2005 I attended the seminary at Andrews University. I was hired by the Texico Conference (New Mexico and West Texas) in 2005 where I began my pastoral ministry (2005-2008). In 2008, I joined the Indiana Conference and have pastored there from 2008-present.

From 2000 to the present, I have been heavily involved in public evangelism as a Bible worker, a pastor working with an evangelist, and a solo evangelist. During this time, I have made several observations about public evangelism, notably the problem of retaining new converts.

In Texico, I worked under a conference president who encouraged public evangelism and trained ministers to do it. It was there I began conducting meetings and having success in proclaiming the Adventist message in a public setting. I learned a lot in those early meetings about public evangelism, mostly from failures.

In Texico, I also noticed low retention numbers from previous evangelistic meetings in my district prior to my arrival. I pastored three churches during my time in Texico and given the heavy emphasis on public evangelism in this conference, all my churches had conducted several public meetings in the previous fifteen years prior to my arrival. One church baptized approximately sixty people, only to retain two who were still attending at the time of my arrival four years later. Across the North American Division such observations have been made. Santos (2016) notes, “In the last fifty years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church experienced a net loss of 39.25% of its baptized members which represents over 13 million people. Research has shown that the people most likely to leave the church are recent converts and converts from public evangelism” (115, 116).

Observing such losses challenged me to be more effective in retention following an evangelistic series. It seemed that after the speaker would leave and the hype of the meetings wore off, the visitors and newly baptized would leave not long after. Although many factors contribute to people leaving, there had to be a way to improve the retention numbers.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project was to develop an online discipleship program which emphasizes practical ways to walk with God and become a growing disciple. The

following statement from White (1946) on “practical godliness” influenced what I was trying to accomplish. She writes: “Ministers should not preach sermon after sermon on doctrinal subjects alone. Practical godliness should find a place in every discourse” (178). Practical godliness in my understanding differs from Bible doctrine, which is the main focus of public evangelism. Practical godliness emphasizes the practical Christian disciplines in which each follower of Christ must excel, or the fundamentals of the Christian walk. Public evangelism is critical for many reasons, particularly in how it helps change one’s worldview. However, due to lack of time, public evangelism often does not highlight the basic, practical elements of discipleship that benefit the disciple long term. Therefore, the project and website connected with the project are not devoted to Bible doctrines, but on practical ways one becomes a strong follower of Christ.

To implement this task, I developed a website dedicated to practical discipleship. The program features seven sections of thirty-one video clips that I produced (except for one video). Once the participant completes one video, the next portion of the seven-part program becomes available.

To evaluate the participant’s growth, a pre-assessment survey was used. Following completion of each section, a few questions related to that portion of the program are posed.

Delimitations and Challenges of this Project

I faced several challenges in trying to implement and evaluate this project. First, it was difficult to find those new to the Adventist faith to participate in the program. I asked the conference leaders for their assistance. I encouraged them to ask the pastors in the Indiana Conference to help identify those new to the Adventist Church who would

potentially go through the program. However, after about three times asking and getting no response, I focused instead on those I knew who were new to the Adventist faith. Also, as a conference evangelist, I was acquainted with several who are new to the church but many of them did not have time or interest to go through the program.

Another challenge I faced was the lack of competency several participants had with computers. Some had a hard time setting up a password to begin the program and gave up easily, even though I agreed to walk them through the process. Younger people are generally good with computers, but of the several I asked to go through the program, none did.

A third challenge I faced was the lack of personal interaction. Exploring a biblical view of discipleship is often done one-on-one or in a small group involving personal time together. Gonçalves (2016, 282-289) argues that biblical discipleship takes place either one-on-one or in small groups. He states, “Therefore, I recommend the planning and implementation of a discipleship process at the local church level that takes into consideration the one-on-one approach as well as a community-based structure as found in the biblical examples of discipleship” (288). Considering this, having an online discipleship program lacks the intimacy that would take place in a normal discipleship program. However, there are examples in the Bible of those following Christ who seemingly did not have one-on-one interaction, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (see John 19:38, 39).

Lastly, this project was launched during the COVID-19 outbreak. The year 2020 was going to be a big year for public evangelism in Indiana. The General Conference was set to be in Indianapolis and the Indiana Conference received evangelism funds from

several sources. I was scheduled to conduct four meetings and my plan was to gather data from these meetings. However, none of the meetings occurred. Consequently, I lost much of the potential data for this project. Likewise, much of the year 2021 was looking doubtful for public evangelism. Given these obstacles, I needed to change the direction of my project. I briefly explain my previous proposed project and the changes my advisor and I agreed to.

My original plan was to track baptismal numbers after each meeting, accounting for a strong discipleship program to be implemented. This involved the pastor/elder and me conducting a follow-up Bible series using the Daniel Seminar from Seminars Unlimited. The Daniel Seminar was to emphasize what it means to be a disciple using the life and lessons from the book of Daniel. The Daniel Seminar was also an opportunity to review the unique teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I also planned to encourage participants to go through my online discipleship program while I monitored their progress and encouraged them along the way. By so doing, I would gather data in the area of retention as well as spiritual growth. I planned to track how many were still attending church a year following the evangelistic meeting. However, due to Covid-19 my plans and evaluation changed.

My advisor and I discussed the challenges with Covid-19 restrictions, and he gave me permission to alter my project. Instead of evaluating retention data and baptisms, I would focus on gathering data from those going through the website. The target group would be those who were new to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the evaluation would be their spiritual growth as they went through the program.

The limitations of this project include the difficulty of measuring spiritual growth as it relates to discipleship. Petrie (2016, 87) agrees on the difficulty of accurately measuring someone's spiritual growth when he writes, "This development of Christian faith, being centered around a relationship with Christ, appears to be an intangible and ostensibly beyond scientific measurement." White (1977) made a similar statement, "That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact" (57).

Furthermore, it is hard to measure one's spiritual growth in a short amount of time or by just going through a discipleship program. Spiritual growth is the work of a lifetime and, even then, is hard to evaluate. Therefore, I tried to ask the questions in a way to gauge how that specific section influenced the participant.

In essence, the program was designed to give people practical ways in which they can grow. Consequently, the evaluation is more of measuring how they understand the practical essentials of discipleship.

A second limitation was the bias that could occur because the subjects are acquainted with me, the creator of the program. Naturally, they would be inclined to answer the questions in a favorable light because of our relationship and of my having a generally positive influence on their spiritual lives. It would be interesting to evaluate participants of the program who have no prior relationship to me. Nevertheless, I stressed honest feedback and believe most participants provided such.

Lastly, I hoped for more participants. Although the actual number of participants was sufficient to determine the success of the program, more participants would have been useful. I especially would have liked to have seen more participants from the eighteen to thirty age group.

Description of the Project Process

The process for this project dissertation included (1) development of a theological foundation, (2) reviewing significant literature related to the problem, (3) development of a program to help solve the problem, (4) a narrative of the implementation, and (5) an evaluation of the program results.

Theological Reflection

The theological reflection in Chapter 2 examines retention and discipleship principles found in the Bible. The four main areas of focus were retention and discipleship after the Exodus, in the life of Daniel, the book of Acts, and the epistles of Paul. The specific patterns gleaned from these parts of the Bible as related to retention and discipleship were as follows: (1) God wanted them to know His character; (2) God wanted them to comprehend His Word; (3) God wanted His people to spend time with Him; (4) God's people need fellowship of like-minded believers; (5) God's people would face trials and difficulties; (6) God wanted His people to understand they had a calling and mission in this world; and (7) God wanted His people to be cautious of the unbiblical culture around them.

Literature Review

The literature review in Chapter 3 examined literature related to retention and discipleship in the four areas. First, it discussed the retention challenge of converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Second, it surveyed literature related to successful follow-up and retention principles for new converts. Third, it reviewed literature in regard to essentials of discipleship. Lastly, the chapter discussed discipleship and use of the Internet.

Method of Intervention

Chapter 4 describes the discipleship plan for this project which approaches spiritual growth through the 7 C's of discipleship. There are seven sections in the 7 C's of discipleship. This chapter also discusses the history of Emmaus Ministries in the area of public evangelism and the need of making changes in retention and baptisms. Lastly, the chapter discusses the importance of the Internet as it relates to conveying spiritual information.

Structure of the Intervention

The following is a brief overview of the content of the 7 C's of discipleship and how the project was implemented. All the content of the discipleship program was online. The participants started the program with a welcome video explaining how the program works. It also asked permission to use their information for doctoral research. They then watched an introduction to the 7 C's of discipleship. In this introduction, they were shown how all the 7 C's of discipleship come directly from the Bible. Following the introduction, they began the first C of discipleship.

1. The first section was entitled Character of God. This section focused on what it means to be a disciple. Additionally, this section's strong emphasis was on the loving attributes of the character of God and how He is worthy to be followed.
2. Section two covered the importance of communion with God for the disciple. This section also offered meaningful ways to better read and understand the Bible. The last part of this section focused on the importance of prayer in the disciple's life.
3. The third section was comprehension of His Word. The emphasis of this section was how to study the Word of God and "rightly divide the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The method of Bible study encouraged was the inductive method of Bible study as well as du Preez's (2006), "Messiah's Method" of Bible study. I then took them through a few exercises using controversial subjects to demonstrate how these methods work. Lastly, they were taught how to use Bible study tools such as a lexicon and concordance to enhance their study of the Bible.
4. The fourth section focused on the disciple's calling. The purpose of this section was to emphasize the importance of a disciple's use of their spiritual gifts. This section explored the purpose of spiritual gifts. It also demonstrated how to discover one's spiritual gifts. Third, it discussed the larger picture of one's calling in light of the three angel's messages. Lastly, it explored principles on how to give a Bible study to someone.
5. Section five stressed the importance of community in the disciple's life. We also looked at God's purpose for the church and the disciple's role in that. Another point of this section was the concept of the remnant in the Bible and how it affects

the disciple at the end of time. Lastly, a friend of mine did a short talk on the pitfalls of not being active in a church.

6. Section six emphasized conflict and the disciple. This section had three parts. First, how to deal with conflict that comes from outside of the church. This would include conflict with family members, friends, and employers. The next video focused on conflict from within the church. This part offered principles on how to deal with challenges that sometimes arise with fellow members of your local congregation. Lastly, this section covered biblical principles of how to restore broken relationships.

7. Section seven was the final section that looked at culture and the disciple. This section discussed the negative aspects of culture and how it can impact the disciple. The emphasis of this section was standing for biblical principles regardless of cultural practices. It also looked at biblical issues related to the Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle contrasted with cultural norms.

The discipleship program concluded with a brief review of the program. The video also thanked participants for participating in the program and asked them to complete a post-program assessment. Lastly, it encouraged them to continue the discipleship walk.

Narrative of Implementation

Chapter 5 describes the narrative of how the project was implemented. It looks at the six phases required to complete the project and gather the data. It also discusses the

adjustments made due to Covid-19 and development of the website. Lastly, the chapter describes the demographics of those who participated in the program.

Evaluation of the Implementation

Chapter 6 discusses the outcomes and evaluation of the Emmaus Ministries discipleship program. It measures the growth of participants in each of the seven sections and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the discipleship program. Lastly, this chapter provides a summary, recommendations, and conclusion for this project dissertation.

Definition of Terms

7 C's of discipleship. The 7 C's of discipleship are referred to often in this project. These 7 C's form the foundation of the discipleship program and are believed by this author as essential to any discipleship plan. The 7 C's stand for character of God, communion with God, comprehension of His Word, calling, community, conflict, and culture.

Adventist. Adventist is a shorter way of saying a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Conference evangelist, evangelist. A conference evangelist is a minister who has been set aside to speak at local Seventh-day Adventist Churches for the purpose of lecturing to the public on the distinct message of the Adventist Church through the lens of Bible prophecy. My responsibilities in Indiana are both a district pastor and conference evangelist. As of February 2021, I pastor two churches in the Indianapolis area and conduct 2-3 evangelistic meetings per year.

Convert, new believer. A convert, or new believer, is often defined as someone coming into the Seventh-day Adventist Church from a different denomination, religion, or no religion at all. It can also represent the born-again experience people have when they surrender to Christ.

Daniel Seminar. The Daniel Seminar is a follow-up program used by Emmaus Ministries following an evangelistic series. It is a purchased set of Bible study guides from Seminars Unlimited in Keene, TX. The program focuses on the Seventh-day Adventist message through the book and life of Daniel.

Discipleship program, program. When referring to the discipleship program, I am often referring to the online program I developed which is found on the website: www.emmausroaddisciple.com. Sometimes this discipleship program is referred to as the program.

Discipleship. From my reading, I understand the goal of discipleship as two-fold. The first goal is to become more like Christ in character and purpose. The second is to change the worldview of the follower of Christ to a biblical worldview. For the Seventh-day Adventist disciple, the biblical worldview is based on the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

Emmaus Ministries. Emmaus Ministries is the ministry name I operate under when I conduct public evangelism. The name derives from Jesus walking with His disciples on the road to Emmaus found in Luke 24. My personal website at www.emmausroaddisciple.com is also the link where one can find the discipleship program that is emphasized in this project.

Indiana Conference. The Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the conference and state in which I work under and is a smaller conference in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Public evangelism, evangelistic series, Bible prophecy seminar, seminar, and public evangelism. All these terms describe the same thing in this project. They refer to a public meeting in which a local Seventh-day Adventist Church invites the community to listen to Bible prophecy. These events are held either at a local Seventh-day Adventist Church or at a rented venue. Advertisement for these events is through flyers in the mail, Facebook advertising, and members inviting their acquaintances. The meetings are typically twenty presentations over the course of twenty nights.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RETENTION AND DISCIPLESHIP

A proper understanding of the theological foundations of retention/discipleship determines the methodology the church uses to accomplish this important task. Discipleship methods that do not rely on biblical principles fail to capture God's intent. In this chapter we look at four areas of Scripture as they relate to retention and discipleship principles. First, we look at discipleship found after the Exodus. Second, we look at core discipleship principles in the book of Acts. Lastly, we explore discipleship in the New Testament epistles. Throughout this chapter we also interject Ellen White's comments on what God was trying to accomplish in discipleship with these portions of Scripture.

After the Exodus

Perhaps no portion of Scripture has a more thorough discipleship program than how God taught His people after the Exodus. However, the Pentateuch is often overlooked regarding discipleship because words such as "disciple" are not used (Wilkins 2015, 51). Nevertheless, Wilkins argues that the Pentateuch is full of discipleship principles. Two of Wilkins' (2015, 51, 52) strongest arguments are that discipleship is clearly seen in Old Testament stories such as Moses/Joshua, Elijah/Elisha, parent/child, the Schools of the Prophets, etc., and that discipleship is clearly practiced prior to the New Testament. Paul, who was once a strict follower of the Pentateuch (Phil 3:5), used

this discipleship principle of transferring the faith to able young men (1 Tim 2:2). These New Testament examples lead us to conclude that the Jews believed in discipleship prior to the New Testament being written. The first three chapters in Genesis show that discipleship was introduced by God Himself. God formed Adam and Eve in His image (Gen 2:7). He instructed them concerning good and evil (Gen 3:3) and gave them other instructions. It also seems to be His pattern to have met with them in the cool of the day and commune with them (Gen 3:8). After sin, God instructed them on how things would now change in the world and their relationship towards one another (Gen 3:11-24). Therefore, even though our focus will be after the Exodus, the entire Old Testament is important for a theological study on discipleship.

Several scholars see the story of the Exodus as a type of salvation in Christ. “The understanding of Israel’s exodus from Egypt as a type of Christ finds its starting point in the New Testament” LaRondelle, (2007, 13). In other words, the exodus story is a type of justification. Dybdahl (1994, 18) concurs, “The Exodus story remains the story of every person today who cries out to God from his or her own place of slavery and is brought to freedom by a powerful and merciful God.” Hence, this Old Testament story is similar to the New Testament discipleship experience in that, once one is saved, the discipleship process begins.

After the Exodus, God revealed to Israel much in the way of salvation, holiness, laws, and health. This was for the sanctification of His people. In speaking of the exodus, Beaulieu (2014, 26) states, the exodus “teaches us about justification and sanctification, in both of which God is involved, not leaving His people in the place where He finds them but leading them to a new understanding of trust, belief, and faith.” A good example

of how justification and sanctification are seen in the exodus story is God's preamble to the Ten Commandments: "I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod 20:2). Deepati (2012, 18) notes:

The Ten Commandments did not arise out of any arbitrary notion of God, but rather as a personal, tender reminder of "the Lord your God" who has redeemed Israel from Egypt. A recovery from bondage, a symbol of redemption, lies at the foundation of the Ten Commandments. Therefore, the Decalogue is not a legalistic code given to Israel, but a redemptive tie that defines the relationship of love that should exist between Israel and their mighty God.

God reminds them that He is the God who delivered them (justification) and is now giving them laws to teach them how to live (sanctification). Consequently, the exodus reveals the retention/discipleship process God used with His people after delivering them.

Exodus and Discipleship

The goal of discipleship is to become like God in character and purpose. This goal is also clearly seen in the Pentateuch. God repeatedly stated "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy" (Lev 11:44). God also frequently reminded His people to treat foreigners with kindness as He treated them when they were in Egyptian bondage (Deut 15:15). Simply put, they were to emulate the character of God in their dealings with each other and with foreigners. This covenant (God's word and laws) was to be written in their hearts and minds (Deut 6:6-8) just as the new covenant was to be written in the heart and mind of God's people (Heb 8:8-10). Having His laws in their mind and heart meant that they had become like Him in character.

God's discipleship plan in the Pentateuch is revealed in the following: (1) the sanctuary and its services, (2) just laws, (3) holy living among nations who were practicing "abominations," and (4) Israel's calling.

The sanctuary was an object lesson for the children of Israel to understand the entire plan of salvation. It taught justification and sanctification as well as glorification, which takes place when Christ returns. Davidson (2005) declares that every major teaching of Scripture can be found in Hebrew feast days found in Lev 23. The sanctuary also taught God's people that He wanted to dwell among them and be their God (Exod 25:8). Understanding that God wanted to be near His people gave the Israelites a sense of acceptance and love. The pagan gods were distant but Israel's God wanted to dwell with them.

Another purpose of the feasts was to give God's people a sense of community and bring them together multiple times per year (White 1942, 281). Furthermore, the sanctuary was designed to stimulate questions regarding the plan of salvation of the young and foreigners (Exod 13:14), pointing forward to aspects of Christ's life, sacrifice, ministry, and future work in the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore, any discipleship plan would teach themes of salvation connected to Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:5).

Nehemiah 9:13 states that God gave Israel "right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments." These commandments were a transcript of His character. White (1959, 106) notes, "Christ came to our world to represent the character of God as it is represented in His holy law; for His law is a transcript of His character. Christ was both the law and the gospel." By living out these commandments they were representing God to each other and to the nations around them (Deut 4:6). These commandments were based on two principles; loving the Lord with all the heart and loving your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-40). The commandments were to be their meditation and study

(Josh 1:8). In other words, God wanted them to understand why these laws were important for relationships and society. They were to have faith that if they kept God's commandments, regardless of circumstances, things would be well with them (Deut 6:18). Not only were parents to teach their children these laws, but God designated the Levites to teach them as well (2 Chron 17:9). Discipleship involves teaching what God requires of us, not in a legalistic manner, but out of a love for Christ (John 14:15).

A third aspect of what God was trying to instill in His people was holiness. He called His people a "holy nation" (Exod 19:6). They were not to follow the abominations of the nations around them (Deut 18:9). Their diet was to be different (Lev 11), as well as practicing other health principles such as personal hygiene. They were to avoid any form of spiritualism (Deut 18:9–12). Their dress and appearance were to differ from the nations around them (Exod 33:6), as well as their agricultural practices. These practices, and many more, were designed to keep them as God's "peculiar treasure. . . amongst all people (Exod 19:5). A retention and discipleship plan would teach holy living as well as expose unbiblical cultural practices.

God strategically placed his people in the crossroads of major world empires for them to be a "light to the Gentiles" (Isa 49:6). By emulating Him and upholding His laws, they were to attract the nations around them to see God's blessings and recognize the true God through His righteous ways. This was their calling and purpose. At Israel's zenith, the queen of Sheba visited Jerusalem. She observed how God's people ate, worshipped, treated each other, and their societal practices (1 Kgs 10:1–10), and glorified the God of the Hebrews for all He had done for His people. This was God's calling for His people,

who gave them purpose and identity to be witnesses of His glory. God's people living at the end of time also have a purpose and identity which God wants to instill in His people.

When developing a discipleship program and retention strategy, one cannot overlook God's purpose for Israel in the Pentateuch. To do so would ignore the foundational books of Scripture. Pastors often see little value in the Pentateuch regarding discipleship and have therefore missed important discipleship principles.

Discipleship in Daniel

Daniel's experience in Babylon, and later Persia, teaches much about discipleship. Daniel, along with other Hebrews, were brought to Babylon as a result of the Jews' failure to uphold their part of the covenant. God now intended them to represent Him among a people who believed in a false religion and false gods. White (1943, 487) states, "God brought Daniel and his associates into connection with the great men of Babylon, that in the midst of a nation of idolaters they might represent His character."

Biblical narratives are a vital tool that God uses to teach godly principles. Paul states that the Old Testament stories were "written for our learning" (Rom 15:4). Dybdahl (1994, 281) writes of the importance of stories, "Stories are not only more interesting to most people than philosophy or theory; they are memory aids as well. We can remember the lessons of the book because they come to us as stories." Consequently, stories in the Bible are strategically placed for the disciple of God to learn valuable lessons. The narrative portions of Daniel are discipleship in action. "The life of Daniel and his fellows is a demonstration of what He will do for those who yield themselves to Him and with the whole heart seek to accomplish His purpose" (White, 1943, 490). Hence, Daniel's narrative reveals crucial principles of how, one can be a successful disciple amid conflict

and an unchristian culture. Stefanovic (2007, 76) makes the point, “In each narrative, God is shown to be present and actively involved in everyday events, providentially intervening in times of crises.” Using the stories of Daniel to teach discipleship principles could prove to be helpful in the twenty-first century because Western culture is growing more hostile to Christian values.

One of Daniel’s early trials in Babylon was a conflict challenging his identity as a disciple of Christ (Dan 1). White (1943) notes:

The king did not compel the Hebrew youth to renounce their faith in favor of idolatry, but he hoped to bring this about gradually. By giving them names significant of idolatry, by bringing them daily into close association with idolatrous customs, and under the influence of the seductive rites of heathen worship, he hoped to induce them to renounce the religion of their nation and to unite with the worship of the Babylonians. (481)

As noted earlier, God tried to instill in His people a strong sense of calling, holiness, and identity. Now it was the king’s purpose to undo their faith in God. Throughout the book of Daniel, both Daniel and his Hebrew companions are tested regarding whether they will remain loyal to God. Nevertheless, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would be a faithful witness to God (White, 1943, 479). This portion of the story of Daniel is important for new disciples. Through a variety of ways, Satan and the world try to steal our identity in Christ.

Daniel was able to hold true to his faith because of his strong relationship with God. He had a strong prayer life (Dan 6:10), surrounded himself with a strong community (Dan 2:17, 18), and reflected on the Word of God to understand and know God’s will (Dan 9:22). Because of Daniel’s strong relationship with the Lord, God gave him wisdom and special revelations that impressed foreign leaders. The book of Daniel

teaches the importance of strong devotional habits for the disciple of Christ and the importance of community in being a successful disciple.

Trials and conflict are important in discipleship and growth in our relationship with God. White (1911, 261) notes that trials “if well borne, will refine and purify him, and bring him into closer fellowship with Christ.” Each of the narrative chapters of Daniel begin with a tragedy or conflict and end with God manifesting Himself on behalf of His children. The trials and conflicts Daniel faced did not drive him from God but strengthened his relationship with Him. By enduring them, Daniel grew in his relationship with God and glorified Him to others (Dan 6:25–28). Becoming a disciple of Christ will inevitably mean facing adversity. The book of Daniel is helpful in teaching how to succeed when difficulties arise. Furthermore, when persecution arose in the New Testament, the conflict narratives of Daniel must have been a source of comfort for the suffering Christians. In fact, they call the Roman Empire, Babylon (1 Pet 5:13) likely comparing their struggles to the persecution God’s people faced under Babylonian captivity. Hence, the conflict narratives in Daniel have been a source of strength for God’s people for many years.

Daniel exhibited the fruit of discipleship in numerous ways. The fruit of discipleship is obedience to God Word (John 8:31) and demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23). Daniel had a winsome attitude, demonstrated in winning the favor of two pagan kings, as well as others with whom he came into contact (Dan 1:9). Daniel’s Christ-like character was revealed in many ways, such as his desire to save the lives of the other Babylonian wise men who could have been considered his rivals (Dan 2:24). Daniel’s deep concern for Nebuchadnezzar certainly made a deep impression on the king

(Dan 4:19). Jesus' words in John 13:35 that people would know His followers by their love for one another were fulfilled in the life of Daniel.

Daniel exemplified temperance in diet. The book of Daniel shows the relation between diet and health, comprehension, and spirituality (Dan 1). Perhaps the book of Daniel reveals the importance of health in the life of a disciple.

The Daniel narrative also teaches the falsity of spiritualism and the occult. The Babylonians had many unbiblical spiritualistic practices. Elwell and Comfort (2001, 1215) concur that these wise men claimed "to have supernatural powers and knowledge; the ability to foretell the future and to summon evil spirits through charms and magical spells." Chapters 2–6 contrast the inability of the Babylonian wise men to understand the future and Daniel receiving divine revelation. The book of Daniel, particularly chapters 2, 7–12, confirms the importance of disciples understanding prophecy as revealed by God. It also reveals that the disciple of Christ should avoid the occult and spiritualism.

Acts

Acts is an important book in the Bible for those seeking discipleship in practice. The Gospels reveal Christ training the disciples, but in Acts we see them living out the teachings and lessons they learned from Jesus. Oluikpe (2017, 7) states, "The book of Acts is a real picture of the ideal church—a picture that every true pastor and church leader desires for God's people and work in contemporary times." Hence, the book of Acts is invaluable when it comes to discipleship because it describes the conversion of thousands of people and then gives details on how the church disciplined these new believers. Consequently, many books and articles have been written on discipleship in the book of Acts. Also, many discipleship models have been formed using the discipleship

principles found in this book. For this theological reflection, we will look at core discipleship principles found in Acts.

Perhaps the most descriptive verse articulating the nurture and discipleship strategy in Acts is found in Acts 2:42. It states, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The Greek word for “continued steadfastly” is *proskartereō*, to “persist, keep on with devotion” (Kohlenberger III, 1997). Therefore, these core discipleship principles were strongly emphasized among the new converts. Finley (2009, 9) states, “This passage lists three clear elements of New Testament nurture: repeated doctrinal instruction, social fellowship, and a personal devotional life of prayer.” These core principles, as well as others, are found throughout the book of Acts.

Core Principle 1: Doctrinal Instruction

Jesus’ disciples knew that a large part of their mission was to instill the teachings of Christ, as well as the rest of Scripture, in these disciple’s lives. Christ exhorted the disciples to “Go. . . and teach all nations. . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19, 20). When Jesus was with His disciples, He modeled Bible study when He said, “search the Scriptures” (John 5:39). When controversy arose, Jesus appealed to His hearers to understand the Word of God (Matt 19:4, 5). When tempted, Jesus quoted the Scriptures (Matt 4). After Christ rose from the dead, instead of revealing Himself as the risen Christ, He first gave two disciples a Bible study (Luke 24:37). White (1940) notes the importance of what Christ did on the journey to Emmaus:

Beginning at Moses. . . Christ expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Had He first made Himself known to them, their hearts would have been

satisfied. In the fullness of their joy they would have hungered for nothing more. But it was necessary for them to understand the witness borne to Him by the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. Upon these their faith must be established. Christ performed no miracle to convince them, but it was His first work to explain the Scriptures. (799)

Christ modeled many things to His disciples, but one of the most important was His devotion to the Word of God.

The disciples followed their Master's example by persistently teaching Bible doctrine to new converts. In commenting on this portion of Acts 2:42, Kidder (2011, 76) notes, "In the area of church growth it became clear to us that the more we know about Jesus, the more we want to share Him with others." Kidder (2011, 76) goes on to state that thriving churches today make understandable, practical Bible teaching a top priority. This includes a strong emphasis on the Word of God in the Sabbath Schools, divine worship, as well as mid-week studies. If churches want to return to the experience of the early church, they must be committed to the teaching and preaching of God's Word and showing others how to study for themselves.

Core Principle 2: Fellowship and Community

The second core discipleship principle found in Acts is fellowship and community. Christ's followers devoted themselves to "fellowship, and in breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42). For three and one-half years Jesus exemplified the importance of fellowship and community. In Coleman's (1964, 37-48) chapter on "Association" he points out that Christ's master plan of evangelism was investing time in twelve men. Coleman (1964, 37) states, "Having called His men, Jesus made a practice of being with them." Mark 3:14 declares that "he ordained twelve, that they should be with him." Christ's "whole ministry evolved around them" (Coleman, 1964, 42). Jesus attempted to

establish a loving connection with each of them and create community. By being with Him, they experienced from the Master what it meant to be a follower of God and to minister to people. Coleman agrees, “They were getting the benefit of everything he said and did to others plus their own personal explanation and counsel” (Coleman, 1964, 43). The disciples had the benefit of seeing Jesus’ devotional habits, such as prayer and study of the Scriptures. They saw how He dealt with difficult people, how He lived His everyday life. All this came from fellowship and associating with Him.

Christ’s emphasis on fellowship and community inspired the disciples to prioritize these ideals in their discipleship (Acts 1:14). In fact, the Bible suggests that some met daily to fellowship with one another (Acts 2:46). A good example of the connection between discipleship and fellowship is the story of Barnabas and Paul. Following Paul’s conversion, some Christians were hesitant to receive him. However, Barnabas befriended Paul and an important friendship developed, a friendship that would later bear much fruit in ministry as they traveled throughout the region building up the kingdom of God. Like Paul, people who experience a conversion often must begin anew with friends and even family. God intends the church to fulfill this important need in every person.

Paul understood that when a mature disciple befriends and fellowships with new converts, they model what it looks like to walk the Christian life. Paul was intentional in bringing young men close to him so that he might transfer his knowledge to them. He did this with Timothy, Titus, Silas, Mark, and likely many others. Paul wanted them to then transfer this knowledge to others, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others

also” (1 Tim 2:2). This transference was to be done in the context of discipleship, which can only be accomplished by investing time with someone.

Fellowship should not only be in spiritual contexts, but also in less formal settings. White (1942, 143) comments on the strategy of Jesus in drawing people to follow Him. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.” White (1915) also states that we should use these fellowship opportunities to share Christ:

To all who are working with Christ I would say, wherever you can gain access to the people by the fireside, improve your opportunity. Take your Bible, and open before them its great truths. Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse. The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private homes, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches. (193)

Kidder (2011, 77) notes, “Growing churches today, like the model in Acts 2, places a strong emphasis on fellowship.” Church members should be deliberate in mingling with people in social settings. They can use their hobbies to interact with people in a way to show they care. Churches should not neglect informal socials that may not be religious in nature. Therefore, discipleship must emphasize fellowship, not just in spiritual contexts such as public worship and Bible study, but also on a recreational level.

Core Principle 3: Prayer

Jesus’ devotion to prayer is exemplified in the Gospels. His example inspired the disciples. (Luke 11:1). White notes:

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.

Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among men, was often in prayer. Our Savior identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. (1977, 93)

The followers of Christ became men and women of prayer. Prayer is mentioned more in the book of Acts than in any other book of the Bible. So much so that Kidder (2011, 76), referring to the book of Acts, writes that “we might as well call it the book of prayer.” The disciples prayed and praised God in good times and in times of desperation. They “truly believed that the power is in God and the way to release it is through prayer” (Kidder 2011, 76). Christ taught His disciples that He would go to heaven on their behalf and, that, by praying to the Father in His name, they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples understood the importance of having the Holy Spirit and Acts states that “the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52). The Holy Spirit would give them boldness, wisdom, and strength. It would soften hearts, remove obstacles, and unite believers (Acts 1:14). White concurs, “Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?” (1977, 94). The disciples devoted themselves to humble prayer knowing that this would unleash the power of God’s Spirit in their lives and the lives of others.

Kidder’s research shows the connection between prayer and growing churches. He states, “As we studied successful Adventist churches, we discovered that they displayed a strong emphasis on prayer, manifested in praying pastors and leaders and average members too.” Prayer is the only active channel of communication with the God

of the universe through His Son that can help us discern and effectively accomplish our mission. The book of Acts testifies that prayer is a pivotal part of the success of discipleship and must be taught, promoted, and exemplified by mature Christians.

The Epistles

The New Testament epistles were written for a variety of reasons. Some were written to encourage the saints who suffered from persecutions (1 Pet 4:12–14). Others were written to help solve practical problems the saints were facing as they were doing mission in different cultures (1 Cor 11:16). Paul wrote several epistles to clear up theological issues (Gal 1:6), ecclesiastical problems (1 Tim 3:1), and even immorality issues (1 Cor 5:1). But perhaps the most important reason for the epistles was for readers to become mature Christians (Eims, 1978, 46, 47). Paul describes his goal as he labors in preaching, writing, and witnessing, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col 1:28, 29). Additionally, Paul writes to the Ephesians “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). These passages in the epistles help us to understand the goal of discipleship, as well as how disciples interact with each other.

Love

Throughout these epistles, the writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, describe virtues God wants in His followers. Paul and the other writers describe characteristics of mature disciples. Perhaps the most often mentioned virtue found in the New Testament is the

Greek word “agape,” which is translated love. This word is used in the epistles well over one hundred times. Paul, under inspiration, uses this verse in a variety of ways (Eph 5:25). Believers are compelled to love one another as Christ loved us (Eph 5:2). In Gal 5:22, Paul writes that love is the first fruitful evidence that one has the Holy Spirit. White (1911, 262) notes, “One of the strongest evidences of true conversion is love to God and man. Those who accept Jesus as their Redeemer have a deep, sincere love for others of like precious faith.” Paul wants disciples to understand that they are to imagine themselves in another person’s situation and then to treat those people as they would like to be treated.

Perhaps the most descriptive verses on love are found in 1 Cor 13. There Paul makes several points as to how love plays itself out in a believer’s life. One can understand the Bible and all its mysteries, but without love it is futile (1 Cor 13:2). He writes that love is patient, kind, does not boast or envy, is not rude or jealous (1 Cor 13:1–13). White (1956) pens how important this chapter is to the disciple of Christ:

The Lord desires me to call the attention of His people to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Read this chapter every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength. Learn from it the value that God places on sanctified, heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christlike love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless. (1091)

Not only were Christians to love one another, but that love was to deepen as they walked with God (1 Thess 3:12). The epistles make it clear that loving one another is the pillar fruit of true discipleship.

The metaphor that Paul and other writers use to describe this relationship among believers is “brother.” In the epistles, “brother” is used over fifty times in a symbolic sense. “Brother” can also be applied to the relationship between women or between

women and men (2 Tim 4:21). The notion is that we should look at each person as a child of God and that we are a family with Christ as the head. Paul articulates this point in Phlm 16 when he asks Philemon to embrace a runaway slave as a brother in Christ. We are to love church members as we love family. The patience, kindness, generosity, and compassion that we show family members are to be extended to our church family.

Humility

Humility is a concept that runs throughout the epistles as a vital characteristic a disciple of Christ must possess. In Titus 3:2, Paul encourages Titus and the believers to show “humility to all men.” Peter uses the image that we should “clothe ourselves with humility” (1 Pet 5:5). Perhaps Paul’s most significant message on humility is found in Phil 2:5–11:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.

If one wants to be a true follower of God, he must have the mind of Christ. He will not seek attention and will be willing to sacrifice anything for God (Heb 13:15). This is true greatness in the sight of God.

Throughout his epistles, Paul uses the metaphor of a servant to describe our relationship with God and with one another. In some of his epistles, he begins by telling his readers that he is a servant of Christ (Phil 1:1, Titus 1:1). In so doing, he wants the reader to understand that their main purpose is to serve God and one another in humility. In Phil 2:3 Paul writes, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*” They were also to submit to one

another (Eph 5:21) and not to retaliate when mistreated (1 Pet 2:22, 23). White (1911, 477) highlights these Christian virtues, including humility. “Renouncing all that would hinder him from making progress in the upward way or that would turn the feet of another from the narrow path, the believer will reveal in his daily life mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, forbearance, and the love of Christ.”

When Christ dwells in the heart, the fruit of humility will be cherished and shown. The believer’s highest objective will be to show love for Christ through humble servanthood.

Sound Doctrine

Another vital concept in the epistles is sound doctrine, which is important because it unites the brethren. False doctrine divides people and creates disunity (Eph 4:14). Multiple epistles mention false teachers trying to influence believers with false doctrine (2 Pet 2:1–3; 2 John 7–9). Paul uses strong language in Rom 16:17, 18. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” He also warns that unsound doctrine will categorize the last days (1 Tim 4:1). Paul’s remedy is for members to embrace sound doctrine by studying the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16) and suggests that spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament were given to maintain sound biblical ideas (Eph 4:8–14).

Trials

The book of Revelation implies that the devil hates God's people (Rev 12:17). Therefore, he tries to make life difficult for the disciple of Christ. Trials are also an important factor in character growth. White notes:

Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them. He sees that some have powers and susceptibilities which, rightly directed, might be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to assail them that they may be purified. (1942, 471)

The epistles have much to say about trials and difficulties. Peter states that trials purify our character so that we might be ready when Christ comes (1 Pet 1:7). Peter also encourages his readers to remember how Christ reacted to sufferings and to emulate Him as our example (1 Pet 2:21–23). Paul encourages the Corinthians to view trials in a positive light, for they bring us closer to God (2 Cor 4:17). He also counsels them to view trials in light of eternity, and that suffering is temporary (2 Cor 4:17, 18).

Summary

In conclusion, the Bible is full of discipleship principles. Following the Exodus, God laid out a detailed retention and discipleship plan for the children of Israel. This included understanding His character. Spending time in communion with Him. He also wanted His people to understand His words and the deep principles behind them. God also wanted them to spend time together in loving fellowship. Lastly, they were to be careful not to be influenced by the unbiblical cultures around them.

The book of Daniel is an excellent example of discipleship in action. Daniel was called to represent God in a hostile environment. Two discipleship principles helped

Daniel as he faced opposition. His strong devotional habits and his community of friends.

The book of Acts stands out in the Bible in retention and discipleship. Three core principles stood out. First, new converts were taught biblical doctrine. Second, the church leaders built strong community. Lastly, the source of their strength and success lied in devotional habits such as prayer.

The New Testament epistles add to the biblical picture of discipleship by describing Christian virtues that will be exhibited in the mature follower of Christ. These virtues include love and humility. Paul and other New Testament authors also emphasized the importance of teaching and believing true doctrine as well as avoiding the false doctrine circulating at that time.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been written about discipleship as it relates to retention following public evangelism. Much has also been written about the challenges of retaining converts through public evangelism. Emerging from this discussion are three key areas that constitute our focus. First, literature pertaining to follow-up principles and retention of converts are examined. Ministers and researchers from a variety of denominations have offered follow-up principles for new members in the context of their denominations. The primary focus for this research, however, is follow-up for public evangelism conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination (hereafter Adventist) context. The review focus mostly on published material from the last ten years. Nonetheless, because of timeless principles on retention, the review also includes a few authors from more than ten years ago.

Second, the essentials for a discipleship program are looked at. Many pastors, researchers, and scholars have contributed to biblical discipleship over the past decade. Arising from this research are important principles for the discipling process. Also, the Adventist understanding of the essentials for discipleship is explored.

Third, works pertaining to internet use for engaging new converts in discipleship are reviewed. Most people, particularly the younger generation, rely on the Internet for information. Therefore, literature related to the Internet and discipleship are examined.

The Challenge of Member Loss in the Adventist Church

Adventist churches worldwide are faced with the challenging task of discipling, which includes retaining new converts following their baptism (Doss 2017, 151). A 2013 study showed that the Adventist Church loses forty-three members for every one hundred gained (Tracey 2013). Doss (2017, 151) indicates even higher loss percentages: “But starting in 2011, between 0.5 million and 0.75 million people have left the church every year (ASR 2016:5). This loss is in the range of 50% to 75% of the number who join the church each year.”

The people leaving the Adventist Church joined the church in a variety of ways. Some were raised by Adventist parents. Others joined through personal Bible studies, reaping/decision seminars, and some joined through public evangelism (Trim 2014). Even though retention rates through public evangelism are much higher than many believe (Burrill 2007, 34-37), there is still room for improvement. Doss (2017) makes the point when he states, “we all have personal anecdotes of high membership losses. When I was an MDiv student in a field school of evangelism in Colorado we baptized sixty persons, of whom only about ten remained a year later” (151).

Many factors contribute to these losses, such as the person not being completely committed at baptism, family and work conflict, lack of retention plans, and failure to properly disciple. Nevertheless, the study shows that the Adventist Church must improve retention and discipleship. Finley (2009) summarizes this problem:

Any evangelistic plan that does not include a comprehensive strategy to nurture and disciple new converts is incomplete. When the number of people baptized becomes

the criterion for success rather than people growing in Jesus as disciples, the Great Commission becomes distorted. (10)

Burn (2017, 209) also argues that Adventists need a paradigm shift in their evangelism goal. He points out that in our mission statement we have a high emphasis in proclaiming the message that overshadows discipleship. He contrasts the 2011 mission statement of the church, which highlights discipleship, with the current mission statement of the church, which emphasizes proclaiming the message. This failure, he argues, contributes to the worldwide problem of lack of discipleship with which the church struggles. With these losses in mind, it is imperative that Adventists improve in retention and discipleship.

Follow-up and Retention Plans for New Converts

After surveying both Adventist and non-Adventist literature on the topic of retention and follow-up for new believers, three key areas arise as essential in a retention program: (1) Acceptance, (2) Understanding, (3) Ministry.

Acceptance

“Leaving the world and becoming a believer often means leaving friends and relationships or even suffering abandonment from former friends,” writes Crees (1993, 26). In a 2010 study by Thayer, pastors, who were chosen for their success in member retention identified “acceptance” as a top need of new converts. Social acceptance into the church culture can often be the determining factor in retention.

Adventists place high emphasis on biblical truth but often overlook the social needs of new converts. Failure to meet the social needs of new converts can result in their leaving even though they believe biblical truths. Thayer (2010b, 11) quotes one pastor,

“People come into the church primarily on the doctrine level but leave primarily on the social level.”

Adventist beliefs are radical for most people, including other Christians. Thayer (2010a) compares new membership with “culture shock” because much of Adventism is countercultural. Furthermore, new converts are introduced to lifestyle changes that can cause tension at home or in the workplace. Given these new changes, new members need a strong support system from the church. Experienced ministers, evangelists, and researchers have made several suggestions for accomplishing social acceptance. These include small group ministries, spiritual guardians, and members being intentional about making new believers feel welcome.

Involving new members in a small group is perhaps the most recommended strategy in current literature (Warren, 2016). Experienced evangelist, Russell Burrill (2007, 266) states, “Probably the most important thing that can be done to assimilate new members is to get them into a small group”. Burrill goes on to suggest that converts “rarely, if ever” leave the church if they get into a small group (2007, 266). Rainer (2007) states that his church uses Sunday school as a small group and found that retention is five times more likely after five years if new believers attend. Small groups provide the fellowship, acceptance, and knowledge converts need as they assimilate into the church.

Burrill (2007, 264) proposes that the most important factor in someone remaining in the church is that they make friends. Therefore, churches must be intentional in connecting members with newcomers. Spiritual guardians, preferably called spiritual mentors (Burrill 2007, 263), are recommended by experienced evangelists (Finley 2009, 10). Spiritual mentors are mature Adventists who understand the needs of new members,

help them assimilate into the church, and encourage them to have a strong devotional life. Lawless (2005) observed higher retention rates when a new member connected with a mature member. He reported, “We greatly reduced the numbers dropping out, or going out the back door” (45).

In summary, a low percentage leave the Adventist Church because of theological issues (Richardson and Sahlin 2013). In contrast, many leave due to a lack of intimate connection with the church family. White (1946, 352) rightly notes: “God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith.”

Understanding

Another important retention factor is a person having a solid understanding of the Word of God. Gallaty (2015) asserts that an understanding of God through His Word lays the foundation for discipleship. He argues that this was Jesus’ primary strategy with the Twelve. He compares the ancient Greek way of gaining understanding, which, he argues, is how most Westerners think, with the Hebrew way of gaining understanding. In Western thought understanding begins when one “understand yourself.” In the Hebrew mind understanding begins when one “understand God.” Gallaty’s point is that understanding who God is through His Word is top priority for new converts.

Understanding God can be broken down into two sub-categories: (1) a person’s understanding of the basic teachings of Scripture, and (2) the importance of developing a strong devotional life. Regarding understanding basic teachings, most Christians have a short list of beliefs they deem important to understand prior to membership (Warren

2016). Adventists feel that a basic understanding of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs is important for new members (Burrill 1996, 27). These beliefs give converts a well-rounded, biblical picture of Christ (Damsteegt, 2005, viii).

Many who become Adventists often require multiple series of studies to ground them. Crees (1993, 26) claims that churches should review these teachings until converts can “articulate them for themselves.” White (1946, 343) concurs:

How much better it would be for the cause, if the messenger of truth had faithfully and thoroughly educated these converts in regard to all these essential matters, even if there were less whom he could number as being added to the church.

Therefore, as soon as new members come into the church they should be enrolled in some type of setting where they go over these teachings again. Some sort of small group setting can be used to accomplish this.

Small groups are important for acceptance, as previously mentioned, but are also the top recommendation as a conduit to establish converts in the fundamental teachings of the church (Burrill 2007, 263; Finley 2009). Thayer’s study (2010) stated that small groups do not always work well in Adventist churches, particularly English-speaking churches (Thayer 2010b). However, there are multiple platforms pastors have used to function as small groups in order to reiterate the fundamental teachings of the church (Thayer 2010b). These include a new believer’s Sabbath School, weekly prayer meeting, or a special designated time for the specific purpose of discussing Adventist biblical beliefs.

Regarding understanding, some churches/members mistakenly overemphasize non-essentials with new converts. Thayer (2010a, 6) sites a minister, “In all the churches I’ve pastored, when someone leaves, it’s because some member grabbed hold of them

and just literally drove them out with their unnecessary rules.” To remedy this Caslow (1982, 27) indicated that Adventists must keep the Word of God in the spotlight, especially until the individual is grounded in the basic teachings of Scripture. Stevens (2007, 170) also suggests that the spiritual mentor should help shield converts from unnecessary exposure to problems and theological controversies.

Another vital factor for new believers in the area of understanding is that they develop a strong devotional life. Finley (2009, 10) states:

If new converts are going to grow into faith-filled, productive disciples, their relationship with God is paramount. This relationship grows through our private devotional life. . . . When the personal devotional life is weak, with little serious Bible study, the spiritual life withers and dies.

Howard points out that “Jesus didn’t know the Scriptures; He depended on them” (2015, 11). They argue that the most crucial factor in overcoming temptations, feelings, and challenges is by feeding on God’s Word (Howard 2015, 12). Teaching new converts to have a strong devotional life must be a top priority for churches. If they fail to do this those coming into the church will have little power to resist obstacles such as friend and family pressures, job issues, and personality conflicts with other members. Howard (2015, 13) challenges disciples to spend at least thirty minutes per day in prayer and Bible study.

Ministry

Finally, all successful follow-up and retention programs must include involving new members in some type of ministry. Ministry involvement contributes to two key assimilating components. First, it fosters a sense of identity and, second, promotes a feeling of being needed (Warren 2016).

Rainer (2007) observes, “If a church member does not become meaningfully involved in some type of ministry in the church, his or her drop-out chances increase dramatically.” In Thayer’s study (2010a, 9), all the pastors stated how important it was to involve new members as soon as possible: “The pastors in all four focus groups expressed the importance of getting new members involved in some kind of ministry. They need to feel that the local church needs them.” Caslow (1982, 29) agrees, “New members need identity and a sense of belonging!”

Finley (2009, 11) offers helpful suggestions on how to involve them:

It might be something that needs to be done around the church, assisting in setting up tables for the fellowship dinner, working with the audiovisuals, picking up a shut-in to bring to church. The task may be simple but helps them feel needed. The more a convert feels needed, the more they will not want to miss one Sabbath.

Considering this input, the church must find creative ways of involving converts without exposing them to major church problems.

The other major aspect of ministry involvement is to instill in converts a passion for mission. Bullon (2017, 17) stresses the importance of being involved in mission, “It is we who need to participate in the mission in order to grow spiritually and prepare for meeting Jesus Christ when He returns.” White (1940, 142) asserts, “God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work.” Finley (2009, 11) makes a practical application connecting the importance of spiritual life with being involved in outreach. “Soul winning drives people to their knees, and they become dependent on Scripture. Soul winning will dramatically strengthen an individual’s faith. The questions others ask will lead them to study God’s Word more deeply themselves.” Churches will reap great

benefits by inspiring mission in new converts. Converts will be less likely to be shaken, discouraged, or accept false doctrines.

In summary, much has been written about retaining new converts. However, three areas arise as crucial. First, the new believer must feel accepted into the church he or she is joining. A new convert often faces a lack of support from family and friends. Therefore, a church must strive to be a support system. Second, the new convert needs grounding in biblical teachings and encouragement to have a strong devotional life. Crees (1993, 26) claims that churches should review these teachings until converts can “articulate them for themselves.” Both the pastor and lay members can foster this through small groups, sermons, and Sabbath School. The members can also encourage, foster, and model how to have a strong devotional life as well as provide appropriate material for new converts. Finally, new members must be involved in some type of ministry where they feel needed. This will strengthen their relationship with Christ and give them a sense of belonging in the church. People are less likely to leave when they have purpose and feel they are a part of something special. Experienced pastors and evangelists agree that if churches would excel in these areas, fewer people would leave.

Discipleship Essentials

Over the past twenty-five years, much has been written on discipleship. Authors have defined what it means to be a disciple and the discipling process. In this section we will look at various definitions of discipleship and define the discipleship process. We will then review essential components for discipleship programs.

Discipleship Definition

Developing a discipleship model first requires defining what it means to be a disciple. Burrill (1996, 25) argues that one's definition of discipleship is crucial to properly making disciples as Jesus did. Howard (2015, 3) defines discipleship as "the process of becoming like Jesus." Whidden (2016, 57) shares the strategy of the early Methodist movement in making disciples. "Discipleship began with an earnest desire to live for the glory of God and be transformed into the likeness of Christ." Evans (2017, 20) concurs. "A disciple looks and acts like the one he or she follows." Eims (1978, 34) suggests that Jesus attempted to reduplicate Himself in His disciples. He writes that Jesus had two things in mind with His disciples. First, that they would assist Him in His mission. Second, that they would carry on His mission after He left them (Eims 1978, 34). Therefore, the essence of discipleship is becoming like Jesus in thought, action, and deed.

Consequently, a mature disciple of Christ would desire to help people grow in their personal relationship with Christ. Simply put, if Christ made disciples who were committed to Him, then a disciple's goal is to also make disciples committed to Christ. Ogden (2007, 17) agrees as he defines the discipling process as "an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ." The question then becomes how should one "encourage, equip and challenge" others to grow in Christ? This leads us to essentials in discipleship models.

Essentials

Much has been written about what content and instruction constitutes a good discipleship program. Others have offered helpful models to describe the discipleship journey. The focal point of this section is to find the essentials of what should be taught to a disciple.

Puttman and Harrington (2013, 60-71) use the model of life to describe the stages of discipleship and how a disciple can move into the next stage of growth. The stages are dead, infant, child, young adult, and parent. This model is beneficial in many ways. It helps a more mature disciple understand which stage someone is at in their discipleship process and how to move them to the next level. It also helps the one who is discipling to understand the mentality of a disciple who is less mature. For example, the authors contrast the patience required to work with an infant baby who is “messy, loud, and in need of a lot of care” (Puttman and Harrington 2013, 63) with a new convert who can be the same way spiritually speaking. Although this model is informative in many ways, it lacks certain biblical depth compared to Ogden (2007) and McNeal (2011).

Ogden (2007) offers four discipleship essentials: (1) Growing Up in Christ, (2) Understanding the Message of Christ, (3) Becoming Like Christ, (4) Serving Christ. He also provides biblical support for subcategories in a Bible study format to be used in a discipling setting. Ogden does well in supporting his essentials with biblical support. He also shows the importance of understanding the biblical concepts of justification and sanctification and how that process works in the life of a disciple. However, he neglects or minimizes issues such as conflict and culture in the disciple’s life.

Doss (2016) provides a more comprehensive interpretation of discipleship essentials than most when he writes:

A disciple is one who experiences continual transformation toward the fullness of Christ (1) in a biblically faithful way, (2) in a culturally appropriate way, (3) at the deep, worldview level, (4) in personal spirituality, (5) in personal life style, (6) in family relationships, (7) as a member of the body of Christ, and (8) as a witness to others. (149)

Few authors emphasize culture and worldview in the discipleship process. Yet these two concepts affect a large portion of our everyday lives. Doss takes a larger holistic view of discipleship in listing these essentials.

McNeal (2011) also captures several of these essentials with six words, beginning with the letter “C.” He calls them culture, call, community, communion, conflict, and commonplace. McNeal’s “C”s provide a good structure for becoming a mature disciple. He also explores areas which many authors do not emphasize, such as the importance of conflict in the Christian walk. However, he fails to capture certain important components of biblical discipleship such as the importance of knowing God’s love and grace in relation to Christian growth, as well as understanding justification and sanctification in the disciple’s life.

Developing from this conversation on discipleship are several biblical essentials that should be taught. For simplicity, they will be listed as the seven “C”s adapted from McNeal (2011): (a) Conversion, (b) Communion, (c) Comprehension, (d) Call, (e) Community, (f) Conflict, and (g) Culture.

Conversion

Discipleship begins with understanding who God is and God’s love for man (Fortin 2016, 62). The root of discipleship is understanding God’s love for mankind and

loving Him back. McNeal (2011) and Ogden (2007) both neglect this, although Ogden (2007) likens our new relationship with God as adopted children of a loving father (115-117). Putman and Harrington (2013, 47) do not sufficiently emphasize this important aspect, making brief mention of it, “In Jesus’ definition, a disciple is someone who *knows* him (who He is and what He is like) and *follows* him.” Accordingly, the foundation of a successful discipleship program should be God’s love for mankind. Put simply, love is the motivation that sustains the disciple’s walk.

A second aspect of conversion is understanding the process of justification or coming to Christ and having our sins forgiven. Dornbrack (2014, 6) states, “A converted Christian understands the gospel, personally accepts salvation through Jesus Christ, and experiences assurance of salvation.” Writing from an Adventist perspective, he states that he found it important for “newly baptized members [to] have had Bible studies on salvation; it is very helpful for them to go through these lessons in order to gain an in-depth understanding about what conversion is and how it works” (Dornbrack 2014, 9).

Ogden (2007, 63-118) does a reasonably thorough work in accentuating the importance of a disciple’s understanding of justification. He articulates justification and conversion in the form of a Bible study and adds helpful illustrations so that the disciple understands justification and conversion (Ogden 2007, 63-118). Burrill captures this first important step in the discipleship process when he states, “Once people have been brought into a saving relationship with Jesus, they must be disciplined” (Burrill 1996, 93).

Communion

In a discipleship relationship, nothing is more essential than to teach communion with God. One reason communion with God is important is it transforms one into the

likeness of Christ (Howard 2015, 33), which is the goal of discipleship. Eims (1978, 54) writes, “When a person comes to Christ, he needs someone to help him learn how to feed himself.” He further states, “Our first and foremost responsibility as Christians is to maintain a strong, day-by-day abiding fellowship with the Lord Jesus.” Communion with God, according to Ogden (2007, 15, 16), takes place in prayer, Bible study, private, and public worship. Another reason communion with God or devotional habits are vital is this is the primary way God speaks to us. As we study His Word, pray, and meditate on Bible verses we are brought into direct contact with the mind of God. When done correctly, it helps us discern His will for our lives.

The second vital component of communion with God is prayer. “Prayer is an essential element of God’s plan for the spiritual growth of the believer. It is a crucial devotional habit, and not a mere optional practice” (Fortin 2016, 71). Prayer is important because we connect with the mind of God. In faith we learn to take our burdens, trials, and needs to Him. However, prayer also teaches us to be selfless as we pray for the salvation and needs of others. Bullon (2017, 91) captures this point, “The true disciple must be a man or a woman of prayer. You may ask for God’s favor, but you must also pray for others, especially for those you want to bring to the feet of Jesus.” How to pray, principles of prayer, and intercessory prayer should be taught to disciples.

Closely connected with prayer is fasting. Kidder (2019, 140) observes that fasting is definitely biblical when he writes, “Fasting, the spiritual discipline of disconnecting from food, social media, sports, television, and/or other distractions, is mentioned numerous times in both the Old and New Testaments.” Kidder (2019, 140) also notes the distinction between regular prayer and fasting and prayer: “Our prayers connect us with

God intimately, whereas fasting disconnects us from the world and ultimately connects us more deeply with our Creator. . .” Therefore, a serious disciple will recognize the importance of fasting and prayer (Acts 13:3).

Christians often fail to see the importance of attending the various services of the church (Howard 2015, 66). Services such as prayer meeting and Sabbath School are important for discipleship and should be taught to disciples early on. Perhaps the most important service of the church is the weekly divine service or worship service. In a special way God meets with His people when they assemble together (Howard 2015, 69) and disciples should be taught the importance of attending and participating in this service as it relates to growth.

For Seventh-day Adventists, keeping Sabbath holy and worshipping God collectively is important to one’s walk with God. Burrill (1996, 99) makes the connection between Sabbath keeping and Christian growth when he states, “proper keeping of the Sabbath says that a people are allowing God to be in control of their time and that they desire to be restored spiritually to the image of God.” Thus, public worship and Sabbath keeping, which are underemphasized or not emphasized in many discipleship programs, are important elements in communion with God and growth.

Comprehension

All effective discipleship programs teach that a disciple must know how to read and study God’s Word for himself/herself. Study and biblical meditation are important for many reasons. First, “No disciple can grow and be transformed into the likeness of his Master without daily study of God’s Word” (Bullon 2017, 82). By reading God’s word, Christians learn how to live the life Christ intends us to live and “become a strong and

fruitful tree” (Sauder and Schansberg 2017, 153). Second, it transforms one’s mind to a biblical worldview, helping us to resist sin and temptation. (Sauder and Schansberg 2017, 153). “Through its stories and narratives of the lives of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and disciples, the Bible provides invaluable lessons that give God’s people instructions and courage for our lives on earth.” (Fortin 2016, 71). Third, as we learn the principles and doctrines of Scripture, we gain the ability to wrestle with complex issues and the ability to fight false doctrine and philosophy (Sauder and Schansberg 2017, 153). The Word of God is foundational in discipleship content.

A disciple should understand the difference between studying the Bible for knowledge and devotional reading of the Bible. Studying the Bible for knowledge is important (2 Tim. 2:15). However, the devil knows the Bible very well and it has not transformed him into God’s image (Matt. 4:6). Therefore, a disciple must understand that devotional study or biblical meditation is for the purpose of character transformation. Kidder (2019, 86-90) gives twelve practical steps for a transformational reading of God’s Word. Step 9 is for one to be able to paraphrase the passage themselves. In other words, the student has meditated on the verse so much that they now specifically apply it to their own life. This is where the Word of God becomes part of who we are (Ps 40:8).

Call

Another significant aspect of discipleship is instilling identity or calling into someone’s life. Evans (2017, 96) shares that when one experience conversion and realize who one is in Christ “you are well on your way to growing as a disciple because your identity is the key to your spiritual development.”

Calling or identity creates a sense of purpose in believers. They understand why they are here and what their mission is. McNeal points out that a disciple (“leader” is the term he uses) can endure opposition and difficulty if he/she is convinced of his/her calling (McNeal 2011, 41). Throughout his book, McNeal illustrates this point using multiple Bible characters. He points out that Moses understood early in his life that his purpose and mission was to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. David knew years before that he would become king of Israel. Paul was also told years prior that he would be the great missionary to the Gentiles. His point is that when God saves us through Christ, He gives us a calling. When one understands this calling, the Christian walk is more meaningful.

As Adventists, we believe that born-again Christians receive spiritual gifts (Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists 2005, 237). When one uses their spiritual gifts, they are truly fulfilling God’s purpose in their lives. These gifts vary from person to person but are for building up God’s kingdom in the context of the three angel’s messages of Revelation 14:6-12 (Burrill 1996, 86). In other words, Adventists believe that their calling and identity is to proclaim this unique message at the end of time. Burrill captures the purpose of Adventist discipleship when he states, “The goal of the Adventist mission is to produce the people described in Revelation 14:1-5.” Hence, even though Adventists share many elements of calling and identity with other Christians, they believe that their disciples should understand the unique message and mission of Revelation 14:6-12. An understanding of this calling will implant a stronger sense of resolve in their Christian walk.

Community

After Paul was blinded, God strategically put him in contact with His church (McNeal 2011, 43). In so doing God showed the crucial role the church community plays in the discipleship process. Santos (2011, 60) captures this by putting it as level two in his four-level model of discipleship. Level two, entitled “Commitment to the Body of Christ and Discipleship,” is the second step for those wanting to become a follower of Christ.

McNeal (2011, 43) proposes multiple reasons for the role the church community plays in the growth of a person. First, he points out that Paul needed assistance in his new life. Angry Jews now sought his life and the church helped saved him. His point is that the church is a refuge for converts against evil. Second, the church provided the fellowship Paul needed. Paul essentially lost all his friends when he became a follower of Christ. Through the church, God provided a friend, encourager, and mentor for Paul, in Barnabas. Third, the church affirmed and nurtured Paul’s spiritual gifts and supported him in his calling. Consequently, the church community plays a critical role in the spiritual development of disciples.

McNeal also describes how the Western world has a problem with an unhealthy independent attitude. He emphasizes that spiritual growth occurs in community, and an independent spirit unwilling to work with others will cripple true growth. Hence, no discipleship program would be complete without explaining the role of church community in the disciple’s life (Ogden 2007, 175-185).

Conflict

Conflict in the disciple’s walk is often overlooked or underemphasized in many discipleship models. The lack of this being taught causes Coleman (1998, 97) to write,

“Many churchmen today seem oblivious to this satanic conspiracy.” Yet conflict is an integral part of the Christian journey. Coleman (1998, 97) shares, “All of the legions of hell were arrayed against the servants of God, and they knew full well that the devil would seek to defeat, or at least nullify, the work of God.” He also implies that if one is living the principles of discipleship then he/she will have conflict with the enemy (Coleman 1998, 97). Evans (2017) suggests that if one claims to be a disciple and is not facing conflict it may be a sign that he is not a disciple (26). Conflict is therefore a natural result of being a disciple of Christ.

McNeal (2011, 157) observes that God warned Moses, David, and Paul of the conflicts they would have in fulfilling the mission He had for them:

Expect conflict. You are no better than your fathers. . . Moses knew it would be no picnic against Pharaoh. . . David suffered no illusions about becoming king without a fight. . . Paul knew he was a marked man before he regained his sight.

Whether it be conflict in the home, church, or workplace, many disciples become discouraged when encountering it. Hence, disciples should be instructed that conflict is a natural result of being a disciple. They should also be taught how to face it. Furthermore, they should also know how to recognize when they bring conflict upon themselves through poor judgment and strategies to minimize it.

Conflict can come from many sources. However, the greatest conflict one faces is the conflict that rages within the human heart (Gal. 5:17). This conflict within will war until Christ comes. The disciple must be taught how to fight the fleshly desires which war against God’s Spirit (Gal. 2:20).

Culture

The culture in which we live plays a critical role in shaping who we are and our worldview. Each culture has a unique way of expressing itself through habits, language, art, entertainment, dress, and human interactions. Even though many cultural practices are innocent, they sometimes conflict with the principles of the kingdom of God.

The disciple of Christ must develop a worldview from the perspective of the kingdom of God (Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists 2005, 311). Roy (2004) captures this when he writes, “Discipleship can be understood only when it is viewed through the window of the kingdom of God” (17). Thus, when conflict between the two arise, the kingdom of God exercises authority over worldly culture. As Evans (2017) puts it, “Discipleship also results in the exercise of His authority through us in the world” (27). Closely related to this is a disciple’s calling. A disciple must understand they are to be an ambassador for God’s kingdom amidst a fallen culture (2 Corinth 5:20).

Only through the Word of God can a disciple distinguish what is inappropriate in their culture. Doss (2015) makes this point when he states, “The starting point in understanding faithful contextualization is to affirm that the Word of God is the absolute, universal, unchanging rule of faith and practice for humans in every time, place, and culture” (6). A discipleship program would, therefore, include biblical principles in which the disciple can understand what is culturally acceptable in habits, language, art, entertainment, dress, and human interactions.

In summary, there are many common threads among pastors, leaders, and scholars regarding essentials in a discipleship program. Seven essentials are standard in much of the literature. A complete discipleship program would include these seven essentials.

Discipleship and the Internet

Little has been written about discipling through the Internet. One reason for this is that discipleship relationships have been rightly viewed through personal interaction. Concerning Christ's method of discipleship, Coleman (1993, 37) writes, "Having called his men, Jesus made a practice of being with them. This was the essence of his training program." Christ is our example and He invested much personal time with His disciples. They saw firsthand His devotional life, the way He interacted with people, and how He did ministry. The most effective discipleship would be done the same way. Coleman (46) observes, "Building men and women is not that easy. It requires constant personal attention, much like a father gives to his children. This is something that no organization or class can ever do." Close personal contact, which the internet lacks, is a must in discipleship.

Despite the fact that authors are united on the importance of personal contact and discipleship, there are, perhaps, elements of discipleship that can be done by proxy. For example, "A 2017 Baylor survey. . . found 45 percent of Americans used the internet to access religious and spiritual content" (Brown 2017). Millions of Americans access sermons, articles, and blogs for spiritual growth. Furthermore, over one billion people visit YouTube every month (Hua 2015). Many of these are seeking to be educated in various areas (Hua 2015), which would include religious education. One YouTube channel, with content largely devoted to the Seventh-day Adventist message, known as "Bible Flock Box," had 348,473 subscribers as of December 13, 2018. Some of these videos have over one million views. Another Adventist orientated YouTube channel titled "Amazing Prophecies" had roughly 140,000 subscribers as of December 13, 2018.

According to (Hua 2015), it is possible that students are not “as afraid to be curious and ask questions” regarding various topics that would include religious topics. People may feel more comfortable exploring religious topics online without the pressure of personal contact. This may answer the question why religious YouTube channels, such as “Bible Flock Box” are so popular.

Pujic (2014) argues that the internet and social media is an important way to evangelize. He points out that 98 percent of 18-to 24-year-olds use social media (Pujic 2014, 24). He also shares that three of four people use social media regularly and it is regarded as one of the most important means of communication in our society (Pujic 2014, 24). He further states, “Social media evangelism is the new frontline of evangelism” (Pujic 2014, 25), and refers to a person who witnesses online as a “digital missionary” (Pujic 2014, 26). He summarizes his article as follows:

Now that you have heard about social media evangelism, the benefits it holds, and the challenges that may arise, I challenge you to develop an online community with the aim of creating a place where people can explore life together, share ideas and stories, discuss favorite topics, and be inspired for holistic growth in their relationship with God. (Pujic 2014, 26)

In conclusion, our society relies on the internet to communicate and transfer information. Although the internet can never fulfill the personal contact required to make true disciples, it can be used as an avenue to communicate discipleship essentials. Some people seem to be more comfortable asking questions and seeking answers online as opposed to personal contact. Pazdan (1987) makes this point when she contrasts the discipleship of the woman at the well with Nicodemus. The woman at the well was more willing to engage in a spiritual conversation in public in the middle of the day. Nicodemus seemed to be more reluctant and came by night. The woman at the well was

converted quickly. Nicodemus' conversation took more time. He seems to have been processing things privately without much personal contact and would represent those potential disciples who would rather search on their own than have personal contact. An online discipleship program could provide this venue for these types of individuals. Failure to explore this venue may result in missed discipleship opportunities or an opportunity to retain converts through online interaction.

Summary

In summary, Adventist churches can improve their retention rates if they become more intentional in three areas. First, converts must feel an environment of acceptance. Second, the church has to continue to foster their spiritual growth with deeper understanding particularly the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist church. Third, new believers need a sense of purpose and belonging. Therefore, as soon as possible one should be given a simple responsibility in the church. Kidder (2011, 118, 119) has summarized these retention principles when he writes that new converts need the four F's. Their faith must be strengthened. Second, they need new church friends. Third, new fellowship must be provided. Fourth, they must find a function in ministry as a part of church life. If the church is serious about retention, they will seek to improve in these areas. It is this author's hope to help churches better understand these discipleship principles and help them adjust so their church can have better retention.

The goal of the Adventist church is to make disciples who are ready when Jesus comes. Therefore, every church should be serious about discipleship and have a program for new converts. All good discipleship programs would include the following discipleship essentials: conversion, communion, comprehension, call, community,

conflict, and culture. By emphasizing these areas, the new believer will become a well-rounded disciple.

Lastly, we live in an age where information is largely exchanged through the Internet. Even though discipleship takes personal contact, we should not overlook the impact the Internet could have on discipleship. Therefore, it is my goal to develop an online discipleship program for new converts who come into the church through my public evangelistic meetings. This program will be based on the 7 “C’s” listed above. My hope is that new converts will have a broader understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ and be better prepared to witness and serve in the Adventist church.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCIPLESHIP PLAN FOR EMMAUS MINISTRIES

This chapter describes a retention/discipleship plan for Emmaus Ministries following public evangelism meetings in the Indiana Conference. First, the history of Emmaus Ministries and some previous results of public evangelism efforts are reviewed. Second, the origin, need, and development of a stronger discipleship plan for Emmaus Ministries are examined. Lastly, the steps to implement the Emmaus discipleship plan following public evangelism are described.

History of Emmaus Ministries

Emmaus Ministries began in 2013 as a discipleship and evangelism training school in the Indiana Conference for lay members. It was developed and named by Alex Rodriguez and myself. After a successful first class, some key teachers moved from the Indiana Conference and the name was retained for use in public evangelistic meetings.

Prior to 2013, I was the speaker for approximately 10 meetings, mostly in my local church. These meetings yielded baptisms and church growth. In 2011, other ministers began to invite me to conduct meetings in their church. I needed a name for my meetings and adopted the Emmaus Ministries title.

Previous Results

In the Fall of 2011, I was asked to hold a meeting outside of my district in Hammond, Indiana. Prior to this I had held meetings in my own district and was able to efficiently transfer them into a follow-up plan. In Hammond, approximately fifteen people decided to join the church. However, most of these people were not ready for baptism. Unfortunately, I had to return to my district and most of the interests did not continue with the church's follow-up plan and others stopped attending over time. Even though some did stay in the church, most did not follow through with their decision or left shortly after.

In 2016, I was assigned to be conference evangelist as well as pastor of a church. I was asked to conduct four or five meetings per year. Some of these meetings were more successful than others and most resulted in baptisms. However, I noticed that when I finished my meetings and moved to my next assignment, many of those who were faithfully attending stopped coming. Also, several of those who were baptized stopped attending shortly thereafter.

I have observed several factors which, I believe, contribute to this loss of interest. However, before I list these factors, I would like to make some observations on why the meetings have not been as successful as they could be.

A challenge many evangelists face is that little to no seed sowing has been done prior to the evangelistic meeting. Public evangelistic meetings were designed to reap people who had already shown interest in the church (Burrill 2007, 9). In other words, those who come to the meetings should have had some exposure to the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or have a trusting relationship with one of the members.

The evangelistic meeting is designed to appeal to their heart, make truth clear, and answer certain objections people may have to the beliefs of the church. Two of the most successful meetings I have had in the last three years (Carmel, 2015 and Fort Wayne, 2016) were in churches where the pastor had sown seeds leading up to the meeting and then invited the interests to attend the series.

A second challenge is that many people who attend evangelistic meetings are not interested in leaving their own church. They seem to be merely interested in information or like to be at religious gatherings. They attend one Christian seminar after another but are not really interested in making a commitment to join a new church. Schmidt (2018) referred to a three-strike rule for interests who will never join the church. He stated that if they have all three strikes, it is nearly impossible to get them to join the Adventist Church. Strike one is if they already attend another church. Strike two is if they are active in that church. Strike three is if they have family in that church. Therefore, regardless of how good the follow-up/discipleship program is, many will not commit to joining a new church.

A third challenge is people who tend to make hasty decisions. These people are often easily discouraged or quick to leave when the excitement of something new wears off. Jesus spoke of this group in Matt 13:20, 21. “But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.” These three factors contribute to losses in many (perhaps the majority of) people who do not become members following a public meeting.

Diagnosis of the Problem

I believe that two changeable factors contribute to people not joining the church at the end of a meeting. The first challenge is the length of the meeting. It is difficult for most people to come to a four- or five-week seminar, with no prior connection to the church, and make the lifestyle changes necessary to become an Adventist. People need more time to process the key teachings and assimilate them into their lives. A biblical example of people needing time to process is the amount of time Jesus spent with His disciples and yet they did not understand His role as Messiah. In Acts 1:6, the disciples still did not understand the resurrected Christ's mission to Israel. At one point Jesus told His disciples that there were many things He wanted to tell them but they were not ready for them (John 16:12). These verses illustrate the time it often takes for people to properly assimilate biblical truth.

Furthermore, most people are not ready for baptism after only a four-week meeting. Walshe (2019) shared that as a leader in the Australian division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church he was surprised how quickly we baptized people in the North American Division after attending a four- to five-week meeting. In writing about ministers who baptize too early, White (1946, 319) states, "They have not gained an experience through personal communion with God, or a true knowledge of what constitutes Christian character; therefore, many are baptized who have no fitness for this sacred ordinance, but who are knit to self and the world." In such a short period of time most do not understand what they are getting into. This contributes to losses in two ways. People need more time to embrace and process the information they have learned. Also,

those baptized who have had no prior connection to the church are more likely to stop attending shortly thereafter.

The second changeable factor is that a strong bond is developed between the attendee and the speaker. Often as the meetings close there are twenty-five to thirty-five guests attending faithfully who stop attending as soon as the meetings close. Many of the attendees see the speaker as a spiritual mentor. My assessment is they have not developed a sufficiently strong bond with the local pastor or a church member to continue the follow-up meetings. White (1946, 321) notes: “How much better it would have been if the first messenger of truth had faithfully and thoroughly educated these converts in regard to all essential matters, even if fewer had been added to the church under his labors.” Therefore, if they do not bond with someone quickly after I leave, it is easier for them to stop attending. Table one below illustrates this pattern.

Table 1. Patterns of Attendance

Church	Date	Concluding Attendance	Baptisms
La Porte, IN	Fall 2009	35	9
Hammond, IN	Fall 2011	20-25	4
Shelbyville, IN	Fall 2012	20-25	4
Jeffersonville, IN	Fall 2014	15	1
La Porte, IN	Spring 2015	25-30	12
Fort Collins, CO	Fall 2016	25-30	7
Irvington, IN	Fall 2016	20-25	3
Carmel, IN	Spring 2016	30	9
Carmel, IN	Fall 2017	20	2
Anderson, IN	Fall 2017	20	2
Spencer, IN	Spring 2018	20	0

Note: Most of these baptisms came to the church from flyers received in the mail.

Development of a Stronger Discipleship Plan

In the Fall of 2018, I conducted two meetings in Hammond and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Both pastors of these churches took calls in the middle of the meetings, leaving a vacancy in pastoral follow-up. I decided that I would return to these churches once per week after the meetings ended and continue studying using the Daniel Seminar from Seminars Unlimited. The results were positive. First, I noticed a difference in the number of people attending the follow-up. The percentages were higher than most of my previous meetings. Second, as the interests attended for a longer period of time, the members had the opportunity to get to know them better. As the weeks went on, I noticed the guests staying longer to talk with members who were developing friendships with them. After about a month of me teaching, I would alternate with a local elder. We did not lose many, even after the elder filled in every other lesson. My observation was that they had bonded with people in the church and I could now stop coming as much.

Emmaus Discipleship Plan

The underlining principle of the Emmaus discipleship plan is for me to continue a discipleship relationship with the interests after the meetings conclude. This was to be done in three ways. First, developing a strategy with the local pastor and elders in a follow-up series using the Daniel Seminar by Seminars Unlimited. Second, encouraging the interests to go through an online discipleship course developed by Emmaus Ministries. Third, training church members to create an environment for relationships to develop.

Daniel Seminar

The Daniel Seminar consists of thirty-two lessons which cover the major teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the book of Daniel. The Daniel Seminar is beneficial for the following reasons. It provides the opportunity to review the doctrines in a different format. White (1907) notes the importance of continued study of the major doctrines, “The new converts will need to be instructed by faithful teachers of God’s Word, that they may increase in a knowledge and love of the truth and may grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. They must now be surrounded by the influences most favorable to spiritual growth.” Working through the major doctrines also provides the opportunity to delve into the subject and answer several objections one may have of that doctrine. Therefore, this series is vital for integrating the interests in Adventist beliefs.

The second benefit of the Daniel series is that the interests must look up verses in the Bible. This helps them to become familiar with the Bible, which many are not. The interest receives the lesson prior to the meeting so that he/she can look up the Scriptures and answer the questions by filling in the blanks. With a completed lesson, they come to a group study and go over the information. The discussion is more helpful for them because they have already looked up the verses and have a good understanding of what will be discussed. Furthermore, this seminar is more informal than the evangelistic meetings, which creates an environment for the interests to have the freedom to ask questions and make comments.

A third benefit of this series is that God teaches discipleship through narrative stories in the Bible. The discipleship principles in the Daniel narrative are important for

those coming into the church for a variety of reasons. White (1999, 175) captures this, “Study the history of Daniel and his fellows. Though living where they were, met on every side by the temptation to indulge self, they honored and glorified God in the daily life. They determined to avoid all evil. They refused to place themselves in the enemy’s path. And with rich blessings God rewarded their steadfast loyalty. Most of the opening lessons go through the narrative stories in Daniel and extract practical discipleship such as prayer, Bible study, godly living, and conflict.

A fourth benefit is that certain interests, particular the elderly, do not like to do much on the internet. They prefer to read a study guide and look up the Scriptures. Therefore, the online discipleship program is not the best option for them.

A fifth benefit is that we cover topics we do not cover in the evangelistic meeting. This includes the sanctuary message and the 2300-year prophecy. It also includes deeper studies into topics such as how to keep the Sabbath, the change of the Sabbath, and spiritual Babylon. Not only are these topics interesting to new interests, they also further explain the key teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A last benefit is that the length of the Daniel Seminar allows time for deeper relationships to develop. White (1946, 42) seems to refer to this when she states, “Paul labored long in his fields, continuing his work for one year in one place and one year and a half in another place. The haste to close up an effort has frequently resulted in great loss.” Hence when the public evangelistic meeting concludes, I plan on attending that church during the weekday once a week for two to three months to lead out in the Daniel Seminar, which lasts approximately thirty weeks. Therefore, as the pastor and members attend alongside the interests, it gives opportunity to build relationships. Approximately

three weeks into the seminar, the pastor and myself will begin alternating in leading, with myself doing most of the lessons. By this time, there should be a better bond between him and the interests and they will be more likely to continue. After approximately three months, I was to turn it completely over to the pastor and elders. The belief is that by this time the interests will feel more comfortable to come because they have good relationships developed with the pastor and members. Also, by this time, they should be enjoying the studies which was to compel them to keep attending because they want to finish the series of lessons.

Internet Discipleship Program

The internet discipleship program was to be based on the 7 C's of discipleship found in the literature review and theological reflection. Each "C" was to have its own curriculum, as well as discipleship videos I have produced. They were also have selected readings from the Bible and other books, such as the writings of Ellen White. I was also to have links to online lectures conducted by myself and other Seventh-day Adventist ministers to help them better understand subjects, such as "how to keep the Sabbath." Toward the end of the evangelistic meeting, I was to encourage the attendees to try the free online discipleship course. Once they sign up for the program, I was to give them instructions on how to go through it. The complete program was to be found on a website which I was to develop through Emmaus Ministries. The following is the content of the online discipleship program.

The first "C" was to emphasize conversion to Christ. In this portion we were to focus on several points. We were first look at the character of God. Discipleship begins with understanding that the God of the Bible is a loving God we can trust. Therefore, we

can trust His Word and His commandments. We were to also look at the kingdom of God as it relates to the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. With the Great Controversy understanding, we will explore what it means to be a kingdom disciple. This section was to also cover justification and sanctification and how these concepts work in the disciple's life. The interest was to also be encouraged to read the book *Steps to Christ* by Ellen White.

The second "C" was to be communion with God. This section was to highlight devotional habits. Communion with God was to be split into two parts. First, we were to look at prayer, including why prayer is important, how intercessory prayer works, and general principles of prayer. Second, we were to look at the importance of reading and understanding the Bible. We were to explore different ways to study the Bible, such as exegetically, topically, or a general reading of Scripture. We were to also look at hermeneutical principles using du Preez (2006). We were also to show how to use Bible tools such as concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries in this section.

The third "C" was to be comprehension of the Scriptures. This section was to focus on key teachings of Scripture such as salvation, law and Sabbath, state of the dead, sanctuary, Second Coming, Spirit of Prophecy, and key prophetic teachings. We were not only to show how these teachings are biblical, but why they are important for the believer. As we examine these important doctrines we were to also cover the main objections other churches use to disregard our beliefs. Throughout the comprehension portion we were to also look at the subject historically through the past 2,000 years of church history.

The fourth “C” was to emphasize call. Understanding one’s calling is important in discipleship. This portion was to focus on having an identity in Christ in the last days, particularly the people described in Revelation 14. Burrill (1996, 87) proposes that the goal of the Adventist disciple is to make people like those found in Revelation 14. As Seventh-day Adventists, we want our interests to understand our prophetic identity and mission found in Rev 14:6-12. We were to also cover spiritual gifts in this section and how one can understand their gifts and use them to build up God’s kingdom. This section was to also cover the basics of witnessing and how people are won to Christ. We were to also teach principles of how to give a Bible study.

The fifth “C” is community. This section was to largely concentrate on the role of the church in the disciple’s life. First, we were to explain what the purpose and mission of the church is. Next, we were to cover the structure of the New Testament church and how the Seventh-day Adventist Church has tried to model this. We were to also highlight tithe and offerings and the church’s use of them. Church authority and accountability were also to be explored in this portion. This section was to also seek to explain the importance and benefit of community in the disciple’s life.

The sixth “C” is conflict. In John 16:33, Jesus clearly stated that His followers would have conflict. Conflict can often bring discouragement and disappointment. Conflict can also elicit unhealthy emotions which can be challenging for new disciples to deal with. This section will help the disciple understand conflict on a spiritual level. We were also to show how to face conflict in a biblical way. The disciple was to also understand that there would be conflict within the church and how to deal with

contentious church members. Although conflict cannot always be avoided, it can be minimized with godly wisdom. This was all to be covered in this portion.

The last “C” was to be culture. Jesus prayed that His followers would be in this world, but not of the world (John 17:16). The main emphasis of this section is how to live according to the culture of the kingdom of God. God has rules and principles which the disciple is to live by. These principles often conflict with the culture of this world. Within each culture there are issues such as dress, adornment, entertainment, association, and music. These topics were to be discussed using the guidance of biblical principles.

The online program was to take around three months to complete, depending on how fast the interest works through it. When they complete one section, it would unlock the next. I was to be notified of their progress via email. I was also to correspond with them via phone, text, and email, encouraging them and checking if they have any questions.

Preparing the Church for A Relational Environment

In the past, I have spent one Sabbath with church members going over how the program was to operate in their local church. First, we cover preparation prior to the meeting, such as the cycle of evangelism, how to sow seeds, and organizing for prayer. Second, we cover how the meeting will function, including job responsibilities. Lastly, we go over the follow-up. Unfortunately, these meetings have not been attended well by church members, even when held on Sabbath afternoon.

My church preparation was to be similar to past meetings; however, I was to add some of the retention principles to the follow-up portion that I have learned from my literature review and theological reflection. The first addition was to be explaining the

importance of creating an environment of acceptance for new converts. To foster this, we were to talk about spiritual guardians and creating a budget for members who may want to invite the guests to a restaurant. Also, we were to stress appropriate conduct and inappropriate conduct with the interests.

Next, we were to discuss the importance of the interests understanding what our church believes. I was to explain to them the Daniel seminar which follows the seminar, and how to organize their sermons and Sabbath Schools to be friendlier to new converts. For smaller churches in which the pastor is not there as much, I was to encourage the elders or speakers to conduct the ShareHim program for their Sabbath morning sermons for approximately six months.

The last point we were to cover was the importance of involving the interest in ministry. The emphasis was to be on how the interests can do something small in the church that would help make them feel they belong and have a purpose. I was to encourage them to be creative in this and help them with ideas such as greeter, usher, help in the kitchen, or some other small task.

Summary

Emmaus Ministries has experienced several guests still attending its meetings as the seminar concludes. Many of these individuals do not continue with the follow-up program. Also, some of those who do decide to join the church after the seminar fall away shortly after their baptism. Although there may be several factors for these losses, it is my conclusion that the numbers would increase if those attending could continue their relationship/interaction with me when the seminar ends. Therefore, the follow-up plan will be a Daniel seminar where I would attend once per week for a few months and

review many of the key teachings again. Also, following the seminar, it is vital that the pastor and members be intentional about befriending and creating an environment for trust and acceptance for these interests. The premeeting with church members was to cover how to be more intentional in these areas.

Another way to continue my interaction with those coming to the seminars is an online discipleship program. This website was to be designed to cover the 7 C's of discipleship. Participants of the meetings were to be encouraged to sign up for this online program. The website was to be filled with content presented primarily by myself, to ground the participant in core Adventist discipleship principles.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMMAUS ONLINE DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

This chapter describes the implementation process for the Emmaus Discipleship Program. The research and development for the program took several phases to complete. The following is a narrative of the different phases of how the program was implemented followed by an outline of each video from the seven sections of the program. Lastly, a look at the demographics of those who participated in the program, as well as their survey results are undertaken.

Phase One: Development of a Website

The goal of the discipleship program was to create a comprehensive online discipleship plan for those new to the Adventist Church. The particular focus was on those who had come to an evangelistic series I conducted and with whom I had built a relationship. Those who came to my meetings would be more likely to engage in an online program that featured me as a speaker. Those who were not acquainted with me would possibly not be as anxious to go through the program due to the impersonal, virtual nature of the program.

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the content of this discipleship program largely came from research connected with the theological reflection and literature review of this dissertation. This content was to be conveyed in as professional a manner

as possible. The information also had to be easy to use and sensitive to people's time. The budget was limited, so I did much of the technical details myself, including video filming and editing. I am a novice in these areas but feel the product turned out well, especially for the first attempt. The program also had to be done in a way that would provide consistent results for effective evaluation. Later in this chapter is an outline of the content covered in each section.

I hired a professional website developer to design a website that would be attractive and easy to use. After trying different domain names, we settled on www.emmausroaddisciple.com. The website is easy to navigate and the discipleship program is clear to see on the home page. Furthermore, the discipleship program is designed in a way to be self-navigated with little assistance from the creator of the program. Therefore, participants can work at their own pace and the content is available at the user's convenience.

Phase Two: Conduit to Convey the Information

With the popularity of TED talks and their emphasis on sharing information in short talks, I decided to record myself on a video discussing the essentials of discipleship. Furthermore, YouTube videos are vastly becoming a primary avenue for people to search for and receive information. With this in mind, I decided to use mostly short talks where the viewer could watch clips throughout the day as they had time. I also preached four sermons at my church on discipleship related to the 7 C's and had these recorded. I then inserted these sermons in their order on the website. Most of the lectures were approximately ten minutes long, however, the sermons recorded were about thirty minutes long.

I recorded most of the talks during the COVID-19 shutdown in the spring of 2020. Although COVID-19 caused terrible loss for many people, I used the shutdown as an opportunity to record the lectures for the program. The shutdown freed me from many responsibilities including visitation, evangelistic meetings, and travel so I could focus on the program content. I also felt 2020 would be a good time for people to engage in a discipleship program with much of the country shut down.

Phase Three: IRB Approval

To proceed with the project dissertation, it was necessary to receive the approval of the Andrews University Institutional Research Board (IRB). There were several items that had to be completed to submit the project to the IRB.

The first item was for me to receive an online certificate in ethical research which indicates that I had received instruction on the proper way to conduct research. It also required submitting the wording I would use to recruit people to participate in the online program (See Appendix A). I had initially planned on announcing the discipleship program at my seminars and had to submit a verbatim statement of what I was going to say. However, I never had the chance to announce the program at a seminar because COVID-19 cancelled all my seminars. I also submitted surveys and questionnaires that would be used.

Participants were asked to fill out a pre-assessment survey. Upon completing each section, they were asked again to fill out a survey, while the material was fresh on their minds. I also asked participants to indicate whether I had their permission to use their data for my project research. All the participants agreed. Lastly, upon completion, I asked

participants to write a few sentences to describe what the program meant to them spiritually, as well as how the program could be improved.

I submitted these surveys for IRB approval. This phase of the process took approximately two months. After making certain adjustments, approval was eventually granted from the IRB (See Appendix A for IRB Approval).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a challenge I faced was how to formulate the survey questions to accurately gauge the benefit of each section. I sought the help of both advisors and fellow classmates. I realized it was difficult to measure spiritual growth in the areas of discipleship, particularly over a short period. Therefore, I sought the best questions I could to measure participant growth as a result of each section.

Phase Four: Search for Participants

The next phase of the project was to find willing participants to participate in the discipleship program, as well as answer the evaluation questions. My advisor encouraged me to seek those who have been in the Seventh-day Adventist Church less than a year. He also thought that fifteen to twenty participants would be an adequate number of people to determine the effectiveness of the program.

I sought the help of the Indiana Conference evangelism coordinator, conference president, and conference ministerial director. I asked them to email the Indiana Conference pastors to see if they had any new members who would be willing to participate in the program. I also contacted those who had come into the church through my evangelistic efforts the previous year. I had hoped to obtain a variety of age groups to go through the program. However, there were few under forty years who completed the program.

The task of finding people to participate was more difficult than I thought. I faced four obstacles. Several showed no interest in participating in the program. Some signed up, but made little progress. A third group had computer and technical challenges and therefore gave up easily. Fourth, my assumption was correct that it was difficult to get those who did not know me to go through the program. In fact, only those who had a prior relationship with me signed up for the program.

Therefore, I extended the program to those who had been in the Adventist Church longer than a year. Although most people who went through the program had been in the Adventist church for approximately one year, I did include some who had been in the church a little longer. I do, however, feel the participants accurately represent those new to the Adventist Church.

Even though I was able to get fifteen relatively new converts to go through the program, I also opened the program up to members who had been in the Adventist church longer than five years. They completed the same surveys and I decided to include their data in the project.

Phase Five: Encouraging Participants

Once the participants signed up for the program, I received an automated email. As they journeyed through the program, I could monitor their progress. I would often send them encouraging communication as they completed each section. Almost all the participants who completed the program finished within a month. Upon completion I mailed them a free T-shirt with the Emmaus logo on the front with the wording “I am an Emmaus Road Disciple.” On the back of the shirt was Luke 24:32 which states, “And

they said to one another, “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?”

Phase Six: Evaluating the Data

With fifteen to twenty new Adventists completing the program, I then began to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 6 describes the method used for gathering and evaluating the data. After the data was completed and observations made, I adjusted the discipleship program accordingly to better equip participants for service and mission.

Outline of the Content

Although I tried to keep the program as concise as possible, it turned out to be seven sections, with a total of thirty-one video talks on discipleship. Since the substance of the online program is vital to this project, below is an outline of the content for each video. Please note that each video contained numerous Bible passages, illustrations, and authors such as Ellen White. For the sake of time, the main ideas are listed.

Section 1—Character of God

As stated in Chapter 4, the first section was the “Character of God,” which had two videos. The first video was titled, “What is a Disciple?” and was ten minutes long. The second video in the section was titled, “Is God Worth It?” and ran for thirty-eight minutes. The main purpose of this section was to show that God is worthy to be followed and it is an honor to sacrifice for Him.

What is a Disciple?

The first video answered two questions. First, what is a disciple of Christ? Second, what is the goal of being a follower of Christ? It focused on the following points:

(1) the difference between being a follower of Christ and someone who claims to believe in Christ; (2) a look at the biblical phrase “walk with God” and its meaning; (3) it takes trust, commitment, and love to walk with God and be His disciple because the journey can be challenging; (4) the goal of discipleship is becoming like Christ in character and purpose; (5) the Holy Spirit is the power that transforms the disciple’s character into a Christ-like character; (6) as disciples, we have the privilege of being Christ’s ambassadors here on earth; (7). a look at the difference between the true disciple and the false disciple of Christ.

Is God Worth It?

This video focused on the follow key points: (1) the beginning of discipleship is to trust the one you are following; (2) God calls us to be devoted followers and asks us to sacrifice to be in harmony with Him; (3) whether God is the type of Person we want to spend eternity with; (4) a biblical look at the lovely character attributes of God to prove that God is worth following; (5) my appeal was to not waste your time trying to find something better than having a relationship with God.

Section 2—Communion with God

This section had four videos which focused on the importance of the disciple connecting with God in practical ways. The first video was titled, “Communion with God” and was fourteen minutes in length. The second video was titled, “The Importance of Communion with God” and was twenty-four minutes in length. The third video was titled, “Tips for Enhancing Devotionals” and was twelve minutes long. The last video was titled, “Five Reasons to Pray” and was nine minutes long.

Communion with God

The first video in this section focused on the following points: (1) the most important thing one can do as a disciple of Christ is to have a strong devotional life; (2) the most important thing one can do for temporal happiness is to have a strong devotional life; (3) Scripture appeals to us to grow in grace and strong devotional habits are the best remedy for this; (4) the key issue of Scripture is to know God on a deep intimate level. A main purpose of your devotions is to become familiar with the mind of Christ. You can only get to know someone by spending time with them; (5) we receive tremendous power from the Holy Spirit when we spend time with God; and, (6) the video explored the devotional habits of Jesus.

The Importance of Communion with God

This video focused on the following points: (1) a review of the previous video; (2) wrong motivations for devotions. One does not have devotions to check some goodie list. One has devotions to connect with the awesome mind of God and because they love His presence; (3) another wrong motivation is to accumulate Bible facts to boast about or to debate with people; and, (4) right motivations for spending time with God. This section went more in-depth into the purpose of spending time with God, such as to be more Christ-like, to glorify God through the in-dwelling Christ, and because we love spending time with Him. The following quote by White (1915) was shared and summarizes the purpose of this video:

Guard jealously your hours for prayer, Bible study, and self-examination. Set aside a portion of each day for a study of the Scriptures and communion with God. Thus you will obtain spiritual strength, and will grow in favor with God. He alone can give you noble aspirations; He alone can fashion the character after the divine similitude. Draw near to Him in earnest prayer and He will fill your hearts with high and holy purposes and with deep, earnest longings for purity and clearness of thought. (p. 100)

Tips for Enhancing the Devotional Life

The focus of this video was to introduce various ways in which one can have meaningful devotions such as reading through a one-year devotion, following a study like the Sabbath School quarterly, or reading through the Bible in a year. My favorite method for devotional readings is going slowly through one book in the Bible and using commentaries. I then explain the inductive method of Bible study. The following quote from White (1940) was used in support of this method of devotional reading. “We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own and we know ‘what saith the Lord’” (p. 390). Lastly, the video suggests reading through the Bible with the Conflict of the Ages series by Ellen White.

Five Reasons to Pray

The content of this video was the following: (1) prayer is one of the most important aspects of the devotional life; (2) an introduction to the book *Steps to Christ* and the chapter entitled *The Privilege of Prayer*; (3) an introduction and link to a series of lectures on prayer by Pavel Goia; (4) the first reason to pray is because God wants to hear from us; (5) reason two is because God is the greatest Counselor and Therapist; (6) reason three is because prayer gives the disciple spiritual power; (7) reason four is because you will receive a blessing you would not have otherwise received; (8) reason five is because you will develop Christ-like attributes in your character.

Section 3—Comprehension of His Word

This section contained six videos dedicated to understanding the Word of God. The first video was titled “Comprehension Intro” and was five minutes in length. The second video was titled “Messiah’s Method-Intro” and was two minutes in length. The third video was titled “Messiah’s Method of Study” and was nine minutes in length. The fourth video was titled “Messiah’s Method Example (1): Sons of God” and was eight minutes in length. The fifth video was titled “Messiah’s Method Example (2): What Happens When You Die?” and was eleven minutes long. The last video in this section was titled “Tools to Enhance Bible Study” and was seven minutes in length.

Comprehension Introduction

The focus of this video was as follows: (1) 2 Timothy 2:15 and other passages call us to be diligent students of the Bible; (2) a warning against false teachers and twisting the Bible; (3) the Bereans’ devotion to studying biblical truth; (4) the importance of Bible doctrine and how it serves as a lens to better understand God’s character; (5) the Bible speaks to every major area of life and it is our job to search these subjects with the aid of God’s Spirit; and, (6) the stern warnings in Scripture to doctrinal deception in the last days.

Messiah’s Method—Introduction

The purpose of this video was to introduce a condensed version of the Messiah’s Method of Bible study developed by du Preez (2006). The following points were made: (1) the biblical basis for this method of study is found in Luke 24:13-32; (2) the Emmaus disciples were Christ-dependent because Jesus drew near to them to explain the Scriptures (Luke 24:15); (3) Jesus began with Moses when studying the Bible (Luke

24:27); (4) Jesus used all of Scripture when He gave them a Bible study (Luke 24:27); and, (5) this method of study is right out of the Bible and the method Jesus used.

Messiah's Method of Study

The focus of this video was on the following points: (1) as we study the Bible we need to pray for God's Spirit to guide us and give us understanding; (2) when we are committed to knowing God's will as revealed in His Word, He will aid us in our understanding; (3) when studying the Bible, we should do so chronologically. Some of the most important verses are in Genesis. A student of God's Word could start there before exploring the rest of Scripture; (4) when studying a Bible subject, we should do a comprehensive study and look at all of what the Bible says on that topic. A concordance is a helpful tool for this.

Messiah's Method of Study Examples 1 and 2

The program had two videos demonstrating how the Messiah's method of study can be effective in coming to correct conclusions when studying a subject, particularly a controversial one. There were two videos demonstrating this. However, I will highlight the content of both here as they are similar. In the first video, the question was raised as to who are the "sons of God" listed in Genesis 6:4. The video introduces the two main Christian views and uses the Messiah's method to determine which is biblical.

The second video is similar in that it uses the Messiah's method to determine what happens when a person dies. The two main views in Christendom are mentioned and the Messiah's method is used to determine which is more biblical. These two videos were designed to demonstrate how one can use this method when studying the Bible.

Tools to Enhance Bible Study

The last video in this section introduced tools to better equip the disciple in biblical research. The following is a summary of its content: (1) the first tool mentioned and discussed was the benefits of a study Bible; (2) the second tool mentioned was translations of the Bible. This portion discussed various Bible translations such as word for word, thought translations, and paraphrase Bibles; (3) the third tool discussed was a Bible concordance and how to use it; (4) the fourth tool introduced was a lexicon and its use in Bible study; (5) the fifth tool highlighted was a Bible dictionary; (6) the last tool mentioned was the benefits of using a Bible commentary to understand a passage.

Section Four—Calling

The fourth section was titled “Calling” and had five videos. The first video was titled “Calling Intro” and was six minutes in length. The second video was titled “Calling and Discipleship” and was five minutes in length. The third video was titled “The Big Picture of Your Calling” and was thirteen minutes in length. The fourth video was titled “Your Spiritual Gift” and was eleven minutes long. The last video in this section was titled “How to Give a Bible Study” and was eight minutes in length.

Calling Intro

The first video in this section was an introduction to one’s calling as a disciple. The focus of this section was as follows: (1) the importance of understanding one’s identity; (2) we are children of God which makes us precious; (3) in the Old Testament, God tried to instill a sense of identity in Israel. They were set apart from the other nations; (4) a look at Daniel’s calling. Daniel’s purpose was to stand for God in the midst

of a pagan Babylonian culture; (5) Babylon tried to change Daniel's identity as a child of God.

Calling and Discipleship

The second video in this section was titled "Calling and Discipleship." The following is an outline of its content: (1) a look at discipleship in the first century; (2) a disciple in the first century was committed to the person who was discipling them and promised to represent them; (3) Jesus was looking for humble and teachable people to disciple; (4) a disciple of Christ must listen to His Spirit and follow His leading; (5) Jesus calls for absolute surrender when our will and His will conflict. A disciple believes God knows what's best; (6) all relationships must be secondary to our relationship with God; (7) the Holy Spirit gives us power to walk the path of discipleship.

The Big Picture of Your Calling

The third video was titled "The Big Picture of Your Calling." The purpose of this video was to help the disciples understand that their calling as a disciple is to participate in the larger call to win souls for Christ. The following is a brief look at its content: (1) God has a mission to save as many people as possible and your calling is to support this larger mission; (2) a look at biblical illustrations of how God used people's gifts for the purpose of accomplishing a larger mission; (3) one reason why David was such an outstanding king is that he understood God's purpose for Israel; (4) Daniel understood that Israel had failed to represent God and that's why Israel was taken captive by Babylon; (5) when a disciple understands the larger picture of God's purpose in the world, they can better endure trials as Daniel did; (6) each member in the New Testament church had the larger calling of proclaiming the resurrected Christ; (7) we as disciples

living at the end of time have a larger message found in Rev 14:6-12. Each of our gifts is to support this larger calling.

Your Spiritual Gift

The fourth video in the “Calling” section was titled “Your Spiritual Gift.” The following is a brief outline of its content: (1) Paul did not want the Corinthians to be ignorant of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1); (2) the purpose of spiritual gifts is to strengthen other people in their walk with God (Rom 1:11); (3) other purposes of spiritual gifts found in Ephesians 4; (4) the lack of benefit of most spiritual gift assessments; (5) God will guide you in the understanding of your spiritual gifts if you truly want to serve Him; (6) God most often uses the church to recognize your spiritual gifts; (7) God often uses our natural likes and talents to benefit the church; (8) a look at the parable of the talents in Matt 25. It is important for disciples to know and use their spiritual gifts.

How to Give a Bible Study

The last video in this section was “How to Give a Bible Study.” The following is a look at its content: (1) the first thing to do when giving a Bible study is to pray with the person; (2) keep the study to about an hour; (3) different study guides one can use to study with someone; (4) how to put together your own study; (5) helps for Bible study; (6) prepare your studies in the form of a question instead of lecturing; (7) be sure to keep your study Christ-centered and how to accomplish that; and, (8) how to answer objections.

Section Five—Community

The fifth section was titled “Community” and had four videos. The first video was titled “The Purpose of Community” and was ten minutes long. The second video was titled “The Importance of the Church in the Disciple’s Walk” and was eleven minutes long. The third video was titled “The Remnant Movement and the Disciple” and was eighteen minutes long. The last video was the only video not done by me. The title was “A Man Without a Church” and was twenty-two minutes in length and was done by Bryan Jefferson, an elder at the New Albany Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Purpose of Community

This first video highlights the following points: (1) the church is not a man-made idea; (2) God wants His people to experience community; (3) Jesus built a church in the New Testament that is precious in His sight; (4) it is our privilege to be a part of His church despite its challenges; (5) God’s church is the appointed agency for the proclamation of the Gospel; (6) God’s church is a refuge from the world; (7) it is also a training ground for the disciple; (8) the church is a place where sweet fellowship takes place.

The Importance of the Church in the Disciple’s Walk

The second video was titled “The Importance of the Church in the Disciple’s Walk” and highlights the following points: (1) studies show that people who attend church are likely to live two to three years longer than the general population; (2) the church provides a source of encouragement and support. Daniel and his three Hebrew

friends needed each other in Babylon; (3) the church provides nurturing and training for the disciple; (4) in a hostile world, a disciple needs brothers and sisters in the church.

The Remnant Movement and the Disciple

The fourth video in this section was titled “The Remnant Movement and the Disciple.” The following is a summary of its content: (1) there is a remnant at the end of time (Rev 12:17); (2) throughout Bible history Satan tried to have total control on earth, but God always had a loyal remnant; (3) a biblical overview of the remnant concept in the Bible; (4) characteristics of the remnant throughout Scripture; (5) there will be great apostasy at the end of time in the Christian world; (6) identifying marks of the end-time remnant, including the prophetic gift; (7) God is calling all to be a part of this movement.

A Man Without a Church

The final video in this section was titled “A Man Without a Church.” The video focuses on excuses people use for not attending and participating in church. The following is an overview of the main points: (1) some say church is boring, but with all the excitement in the world we need a time to pause; (2) some complain of hypocrites in the church but it is still a hospital for sinners; (3) the church is a family. Sometimes family members hurt one another; (4) one may feel uncomfortable at times, but the pathway of conversion is paved by the bricks of conviction; (5) some say “All I need is Jesus.” Where is Jesus? Jesus is where two or three are gathered (Matt 18:20).

Section Six—Conflict

Section six, which was titled “Conflict,” has three videos. The first video is titled “Conflict from Outside of the Church” and is twelve minutes long. The second video is

titled “Conflict from Within the Church” and is twelve minutes long. The last video is titled “How to Restore a Broken Relationship” and is eight minutes long.

Conflict from Without the Church

The first video in this section was “Conflict from Without the Church” and the following outlines the main points: (1) conflict resolution skills are vital in a world full of conflict; (2) Jesus calls His followers to be peacemakers (Matt 5:9); (3) we should do our best to live peaceably with all men; (4) though we do our best to avoid conflict, a disciple will face it; (5) Daniel faced conflict in Babylon; (6) Jesus faced a lot of conflict in His life; (7) how Jesus reacted to conflict; (8) often God uses conflict to draw us closer to Him; (9) God brought Jesus and Daniel through the conflict shining brighter than ever.

Conflict from Within the Church

The second video in this section was titled “Conflict from Within the Church.” The following are its main points: (1) conflict from within the church can be painful and emotionally draining; (2) a look at some biblical examples of conflict such as Paul and Barnabas; (3) Peter and Paul had conflict; (4) conflict can cause people to walk away from the church, but we are called to work through it; (5) people make mistakes. Both Paul and Peter were in the wrong at times and created issues; (6) sometimes the church attracts people who have poor social skills and these people can be hurtful; (7) avoid controversial subjects unless it is inevitable; (8) not all personalities mesh together; (9) wait until the tension dies down to reconcile the relationship. Also, we are called to be forgiving; (10) focus on the truths that unite us and, most importantly, Jesus.

How to Restore a Broken Relationship

The last video in this section was titled “How to Restore a Broken Relationship.” The following is an outline of its content: (1) there are some people who are narcissistic and difficult to work with. This video discusses normal people, not people always looking to fight; (2) the devil is the author of conflict; (3) a look at the tension that developed between Jesus and John the Baptist and how Jesus reacted; (4) broken relationships affect our relationship with God and ourselves. Therefore, we should go the extra mile to restore these relationships; (5) ask God to give you love for that person. Remember, we are all God’s children; (6) make the first move to restore (Matt 5:23, 24); (7) when you work to restore the relationship, be a good listener; (8) after listening, then speak your side tactfully and in humility; (9) most broken relationships can be restored if we follow these steps; (10) a reminder that God’s children are called peacemakers (Matt 5:9).

Section Seven—Culture

The final section was called “Culture” and contains five videos. The first video is an introduction to culture and is ten minutes long. The second video is “Daniel and Culture” and is thirty-two minutes in length. The third video is “Entertainment and the Disciple” and is ten minutes in length. The fourth video is titled “The Disciple and Appearance” and is thirty-nine minutes in length. The last video in this section is titled “Christian Adornment and the Disciple” and is seventeen minutes long.

Culture Intro

The first video was an introduction to culture and the disciple. The following are its main points: (1) culture shapes who we are and our worldview; (2) culture expresses

itself through a variety of ways, but a disciple of Christ rejects aspects of culture that conflict with God's Word; (3) Jesus often used the phrase "the kingdom of heaven." As disciples, our primary allegiance is to His kingdom. Sometimes this world (culture) and God's kingdom clash; (4) God's people in the Old Testament were called to live differently than the corrupt cultures around them; (5) God told His people to be careful not to get too close to people who practice gross unbiblical practices; (6) areas of life God called His people to be distinct in; (7) God's Word does not address every cultural issue directly. However, it does address every issue in principle; (8) Daniel is a great example of someone who stood against unbiblical cultural practices. Dare to be a Daniel.

Daniel and Culture

The second video in this section was titled "Daniel and Neuroplasticity." The major focus of this segment was popular culture that affects the brain in a negative way. The springboard story was Daniel Chapter 1 and the issue of diet. The following are the main points of this video: (1) the brain can change in a negative or positive way; (2) the frontal lobe is the seat of spirituality and morality and can be affected by what we put into our bodies; (3) a look at beverages that negatively affect our brain, such as alcohol and coffee; (4) a look at the benefit of a healthy diet on our brain; (5) the frontal lobe is frequently mentioned in the Bible in texts referring to the forehead. God wants to write His character there. By putting good things into our bodies and rejecting the bad, we strengthen our ability to comprehend spiritual and moral issues.

Entertainment and the Disciple

The third video in this series was "Entertainment and the Disciple." This video looked at biblical principles of how to assess which entertainment is good for the

disciple. The following is an outline of its content: (1) a good gauge to determine whether or not certain entertainment is harmful is to honestly ask yourself the question, “Does this strengthen or weaken my love for sacred things;” (2) this is a growing process and one has to be in tune with the Holy Spirit; (3) studies show that music related to rock, rap, jazz, or blues can affect the brain in a negative way and weaken one’s love for sacred things; (4) a biblical view of contrasting worship styles in the Bible. Pagan worship styles were often accompanied with music that resembled our modern rock and roll genre; (5) television and movies can negatively affect our love for sacred things. Philippians 4:8 is a good Bible verse to use as a filter of what is appropriate to watch; (6) the video also cites several studies done on music and television from Neil Nedley’s book *Depression the Way Out* (2005).

The Disciple and Appearance

The fourth video in this section was titled “The Disciple and Appearance.” The video looked at the subject of dress, which can be a sensitive subject to present. This discipleship video was designed to explain the Adventist biblical position on the topic. The following are the main points: (1) John the Baptist’s lifestyle was simple, and we are the John the Baptist generation; (2) Ellen White highlights the simplicity of John’s dress and the statement made by it; (3) the way we dress gives testimony to the message we bear as Adventists. Dress is the most powerful non-verbal communicator; (4) we should be careful in how we approach the subject of dress in that it is a fruit of discipleship and not the root. Much harm has been done by overzealous Christians trying to reform others; (5) dress should not be sloppy or provocative. Men should dress like men and women like women; (6) a biblical look of men’s struggle with women who dress provocatively; (7)

John the Baptist stated in John 3:30 that Jesus “must increase but I must decrease.” It is a privilege to represent the Lord in all we do, including our dress.

Christian Adornment and the Disciple

The final video of this section looked at the controversial subject of Christian adornment. I do not cover this subject in my evangelistic meetings because of the sensitivity and embarrassment it may cause someone who may be wearing jewelry. Therefore, the discipleship program is a good venue to discuss this delicate topic. The question is asked in the video, “How should the disciple of Christ relate to wearing jewelry?” I began by sharing that Christian dress and adornment is largely a growth issue. The participants were encouraged to seek God’s will on this issue through His Word. The following is an outline of the content: (1) jewelry in the Old Testament; (2) jewelry in the New Testament; (3) jewelry and the early church fathers; (4) jewelry and the reformers; (5) answers to objections; (6) encouragement to follow Christ who sought to please God in all things and bring no attention to Himself.

The disciple program ended with a final video which thanked participants for going through the program. It reviewed the main principles from each section and encouraged them to keep walking with Christ. It also asked them to fill out the post-assessment survey.

Demographics

My hope for this project was to have a wide variety of demographics from the participants. This would help verify if the program’s biblical principles transcend age, culture, and religious backgrounds. I did my best to recruit a wide range of participants.

The following is a demographic breakdown for those who participated in the Emmaus discipleship program. First, the section summarizes the percentages of people who completed, partially completed, or just registered without completing the program. Next, it looks at the demographics of those who registered for the program, completed, or partially completed the program. Lastly, it looks at the demographics of those who completed the program. The demographics highlighted include age, gender, racial background, religious background, how they originally became connected with the Adventist church, as well as how long they have attended the Adventist church.

Forty-seven people created a login and password which was required to start the program. However, nineteen of the forty-seven did not go any further than creating a login and password. This means they had some intention of participating in the program but did not officially begin by taking the pre-assessment survey. Twenty-eight of the forty-seven participants did some portion of the program. Of the twenty-eight people who started the program, eighteen finished. The eighteen participants completed the entire program, which means they went through all seven sections and filled out all the post-assessment surveys (see table 2). Tables 3–6 show various demographics, as indicated in the caption, for those who started the program.

Table 2. Participation overview (n=47)

Participants	Number	% of total
Registered for program	47	100%
Completed a portion of program but did not finish	28	60%
Finished the program	18	38%

Table 3. Age range of participants who started the program (n=28)

Age range	Number	% of total
65 and over	7	25%
51–65	15	54%
41–50	2	7%
31–40	2	7%
18–30	2	7%
18 and under	0	0%

Table 4. Gender (n=28)

Gender	Number	% of total
Male	7	25%
Female	21	75%

Table 5. Length of time those who started the program attended Adventist church (n = 28)

Years	Number	% of total
More than 10	4	14%
5–10	6	21%
0–3	18	64%

Table 6. Racial background (n = 28)

Racial background	Number	% of total
Black	4	14%
Asian	1	3%
White	20	71%
Hispanic or Latino	3	11%
Refused to answer	0	0%

Those who completed the program are included in the previous section and demographics because, obviously, they started the program. However, most of the data evaluated in Chapter 6 comes from those who both started and completed all sections of the program. Tables 7–10 show various demographics, as indicated in each caption, for this group.

Table 7. Age demographics of those who completed the program (n=18)

Age range	Number	% of total
65 and over	6	33%
51–65	10	56%
41–50	1	6%
31–40	1	6%
18–30	0	0%
18 and under	0	0%

Table 8 Gender demographics of those who completed the program (n=18)

Gender	Number	% of total
Male	4	22%
Female	14	78%

Table 9. Length of time those who completed program attended Adventist church (n=18)

Years	Number	% of total
More than 10	2	11%
5–10	2	11%
0–3	14	78%

Table 10. Racial background (n=18)

Racial background	Number	% of total
Black	4	22%
Asian	0	0%
White	13	72%
Hispanic or Latino	1	6%
Refused to answer	0	0%

The participants were asked how they first became acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Most of the participants encountered the Seventh-day Adventist church through Emmaus ministries. Table 11 provides a breakdown.

Table 11. How participants connected with Adventist church (n=17)

Way connected	Number	% of total
Bible prophecy seminar	11	61%
Friend or family	5	28%
Parents were SDA	1	6%

Table 12 shows the religious background of those who participated in the program prior to becoming Seventh-day Adventist. Most of them came from a Protestant background, including Pentecostal. All the participants attend a church in the Indiana Conference.

Table 12. Religious background prior to becoming Adventist (n=18)

Religious background	Number	% of total
Protestant	14	78%
Catholic	3	17%
Adventist	1	6%

Implementation Narrative—Summary

The following are observations made regarding the project implementation. First, recruitment for the participants was more difficult than I had hoped. Several factors could have contributed to this. Perhaps the biggest disappointment to me was the lack of participation from those forty and under. Nevertheless, I was pleased with the racial diversity of those who participated in the program. Based on the percentage, I feel it is a good representation of those who attend the evangelistic meetings.

Second, I tried to keep the videos as concise as possible. However, it took thirty-one videos to do the topics justice. The number of videos may have been a deterring factor for some. Most of the people who completed the program were older and may have had more time. Nonetheless, eighteen people completed the program, most of whom are new to the Adventist church. Their data will be the focus of Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

PROJECT AND EVALUATION OUTCOMES

Introduction

This chapter has five sections. The first section evaluates the data collected from the www.emmausroaddisciple.com website. The second section measures the effectiveness of the Emmaus Ministries discipleship program in the seven focal areas. The third section recommends modifications which would enhance the program for future participants. The fourth section summarizes the project dissertation. Finally, the fifth section make recommendations for further research and study.

Evaluations

Both the qualitative and quantitative research method were used in this project. Data was gathered from three sources. First, a survey was administered before participants began the program (see Appendix B). The second survey was given after they completed each section. (see Appendix C-I). The surveys were designed to measure the participant's growth in the seven areas of discipleship. Lastly, the participants were asked to write a summary of how the program impacted them, as well as to offer constructive criticism on how it could be improved (see Appendix J and K).

Preassessment Outcome

Character of God

Participants were asked three questions related to their understanding of the character of God (see Appendix B). The questions and participant answers are listed below (see Table 13).

Table 13. Preassessment: Character of God

	I feel I can trust God in all areas of my life.	I feel I could explain why there is a war between Christ and Satan.	I feel I could explain why there is suffering on this planet.
Yes	18	15	14
No	0	3	4
Somewhat	0	0	0
Percent Yes	100%	83%	78%

Communion with God

Participants were asked two questions about their devotional habits (see Appendix B). The question and participant answers are listed below (see Tables 14 and 15). The first question asked participants to gauge the importance of practicing devotional habits on a scale between one and ten (for a definition of the scale, see Appendix B). All the numbers were added together and then divided by eighteen to obtain the average. A maximum score was ten and a minimum score was one. The second question asked how often the participants had devotions (see Table 15).

Table 14. Preassessment: Importance of daily devotions (average scale 1-10. One being not important and 10 being very important)

How important are daily devotions in your walk with God?	
Average (on scale 1-10)	9.1

Table 15. Preassessment: Devotion's frequency (n = 18)

How often do you have devotions?		Percentage
Every day	14	78%
A few times per week	2	11%
Once in a while	2	11%

Comprehension of His Word

Participants were asked three questions in connection to comprehension of God's Word (see Appendix B). The questions were all yes or no questions (see Table 16). The percentages of those who answered "yes" is on the bottom column (see Table 16).

Table 16. Preassessment: Comprehension of His Word

	I have a good understanding of the basic teachings of Scripture.	I feel I have the knowledge/tools to dig deeper into the Bible.	I feel comfortable in my ability to study most Biblical subjects.
Yes	18	15	16
No	0	3	2
Percent Yes	100%	83%	89%

Calling

Participants were asked three questions in connection to the understanding of their calling (see Appendix B). The first question asked them to gauge how well they understood their spiritual gift on a scale of 1-10 (see Table 17; for a definition of the scale, see Appendix B). The average results of all participants are listed below (see Table 17). The second and third questions were yes or no questions (see Table 18).

Table 17. Spiritual Gifts (average scale 1-10. One being no understanding and 10 being understand well)

How well do you understand your spiritual gifts?	
Average (on scale 1-10)	4.6

Table 18. Preassessment: Calling

	I look for daily opportunities to share Jesus	Have you ever played an active role in church outreach?
Yes	9	7
Somewhat	9	Not applicable
Percent Yes	50%	39%

Community

Two questions were asked regarding discipleship and community (see Appendix B). The first question asked how often they attend church. All participants checked that they usually attended church every week (See Table 19). The second question asked how important church was to their walk with God. There were three options to choose from: (1) Not Important; (2) Important; (3) Extremely Important. All the participants answered, “Extremely Important” (See Table 20).

Table 19. Preassessment: Community (n=18)

	How often do you attend church?
Usually, every week	18
Percentage	100%

Table 20. Preassessment: Community (n=18)

How important is church in your walk with God?	
Extremely important	18
Percentage	100%

Conflict

The participants were asked one question regarding how comfortable they were in conflict and with their conflict resolution skills (see Appendix B). The question asked them to rate their skills from 1-10 (for a definition of the scale, see Appendix B). The following is the average of the eighteen participants (see Table 21).

Table 21. Conflicts (average scale 1-10. One being not comfortable and 10 being very comfortable)

How comfortable are you with conflict and your conflict resolution skills?	
Average (on scale 1-10)	5.9

Culture

The participants were asked two questions related to culture and discipleship (see Appendix B). The first question asked them to gauge their level of understanding as to what it means to be a disciple of Christ's kingdom (see Table 22).

The second question asked, "When culture and biblical principles conflict, is the disciple to conform to culture or stand for Bible principles?" The following options were

given to choose from: (a) Always stand for biblical principles; (b) God understands that culture is often more important than biblical principles; (c) All culture comes from God and therefore we should seek to fit into our culture and avoid sticking out. All the participants chose “Always stand for biblical principles” (see Table 23).

Table 22. Preassessment Culture (average scale 1-10. One being not confident and 10 being very confident)

How confident is your understanding of what it means to be a kingdom disciple?	
Average (on scale 1-10)	7.2

Table 23. Preassessment: Culture

When culture and biblical principles conflict?	
Always stand for biblical principles	18
Percentage	100%

Post Assessment Outcome

Character of God

Participants were asked five questions related to how the character of God section impacted their spiritual lives (see Appendix C). The first four were yes or no questions with one question asking for a comment. Below are the first four questions, along with the participant results (see Table 24). The final question asked them to gauge how the

character of God section impacted their desire to trust God more on a scale from 1-10 (see Table 25; for a description of the scale, see Appendix C).

Table 24. Post assessment: Character of God

	It helped me understand the character of God better	It helped me understand the battle between Christ and Satan better	I feel I could explain better why there is suffering on this planet	This section helped me understand the importance of knowing God’s character and how it affects me as a disciple
Yes	18	18	18	18
No	0	0	0	0
Percent Yes	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent Improvement over preassessment	Not applicable	Up 17%	Up 22%	Not applicable

Table 25. Post assessment: Impact on trusting God (average scale 1-10. One being not important and 10 being very important)

Rate the impact this section had on your willingness to trust God.	
Average (on scale 1-10)	9.3

The following are the comments from participants when asked to explain how this section impacted their lives.

“Encompassing all of God's wonderful, beautiful character qualities makes me want to have Him as Lord and my best friend and makes me realize, yes I want to follow Him, he is definitely worth it!”

“His character versus mine reveals changes I need to make. Plus, I learned that God's character was revealed through Hebrew boys; I saw the story in a different light.”
 “To be a disciple and follower of Christ one must know and reflect His character and how beautiful His character is.”
 “I can’t trust and obey God if I don’t know Him. I can’t really accomplish anything good without Him. God wants nothing but the best for me.”
 “To follow God with all my heart I must definitely KNOW Him! This section opened my eyes to what a beautiful person He is.”
 “It is impossible to know how to be a disciple without knowing about God's character.”
 “It helps to know what kind of character God has in order to fully trust Him.”
 “As His disciple, I want to be more like Him in forgiving others.”

Communion with God

Participants were asked three questions regarding “Communion with God” in the post assessment (see Appendix D). The first question dealt with the importance of daily devotions to the disciple on a scale from 1-10 (see Table 26; for a description of the scale, see Appendix D).

Table 26. Post assessment: Daily Devotions (average scale 1-10. One being not important and 10 being very important)

On scale 1-10	Importance of daily devotions for the disciple
Average	9.7
Preassessment average	9.1

The second “Communion with God” question asked participants how often they planned on having devotions. The following table shows their answers, along with the percentage improvement from the preassessment (see Table 27). All participants who

were not having daily devotions moved up into a higher category after completing this section.

Table 27. Post assessment: Devotions Frequency (n=18)

	How often will you have daily devotions?	Percent	Percent change from preassessment
Every day	16	89%	Up 11%
A few times per week	2	11%	Remained the same
Occasionally	0	11%	Down 11%

The final question asked participants what impact this section had on their understanding of the importance of communion with God on a scale of 1-10 (see Table 28; for a description of the scale, see Appendix D).

Table 28. Post assessment: Impact on devotions (average scale 1-10. One being not important and 10 being very important)

Impact on your understanding of importance of devotions?	
Average (on scale 1-10)	9.8

The following are comments from participants when asked to explain how this program impacted their lives.

“I studied this program at a time when I was very down spiritually and personally and it has revived me in so many ways, especially spiritually. I feel a deeper connection

with God because I have learned how to better communicate with Him and study His Word.”

“I am learning that we need a relationship with God -- which is much more than saying a short prayer before bed. I know now how important it is to have a strong devotional life. God is definitely worth the extra time we should give Him to accomplish this.”

“I feel closer to the Lord when I learn different ways that I can improve my prayer life and put that into my daily routine.”

“I am going to start the daily devotionals. . .”

“I feel that you laid out great information as to what it means to do your devotions for the right reasons, and it was a change that I personally am trying to improve on in my life.”

Comprehension of His Word

The participants were asked if this section helped them understand how to study the Bible (see Appendix E). All eighteen participants indicated that this section helped them know how to better study the Bible. The second question asked participants to gauge (on a scale from 1-10) the level of confidence they now have in studying the Bible (see Table 29; for a description of the scale, see Appendix E).

Table 29. Post assessment: Studying God's Word (average scale 1-10. One being not confident and 10 being very confident)

Confidence in studying God’s Word after the program	
Average (on scale 1-10)	9.7

The following are some selected comments related to this section of the program.

“My devotional time has become much more meaningful. I’m not just reading the Bible, I’m actually studying using the methods that I have learned on this website.”

“I understand more fully how important Bible study really is and how important it is to know true Bible doctrine. This is something I have to spend more time on, but your program was a big help with this.”

Calling

The participants were asked three questions after they completed the section titled “Calling” (see Appendix F). The first question asked them on a scale from 1-10 whether they now have a better understanding of their spiritual gift (see Table 30; for a description of the scale, see Appendix F).

Table 30. Post assessment: Spiritual gifts (average scale 1-10. One being not confident and 10 being very confident)

On scale 1-10	Confidence in knowing your spiritual gift.
Average	8.6
Preassessment average	4.6

Participants were asked if they would now seek more daily opportunities to share Jesus with people they come in contact with (see Table 31). Two participants confused the question with the current COVID-19 restrictions, so it likely altered the results.

Table 31. Post assessment: Seek Opportunities (n=18)

I look for daily opportunities to share Jesus	
Yes	15
Post assessment percent Yes	83%
Preassessment percent Yes	50%

The final question asked participants if they were inspired to play a more active role in the church. Participants were also asked to briefly explain their answer. Fifteen of the eighteen indicated “yes.” Three participants indicated “no.”

The following are some selected comments related to this section of the program:

“You gave me good tips on how to recognize my spiritual gift, which I am also working on. You also gave great tips on how to give a Bible study; although I do not feel I am at that stage yet...but hopefully one day....”

“I find myself sharing with others what I learned! By the way, my older son and his wife are watching your videos on Revelation! They are in awe of them! They found the presentations easy to understand.”

“The seven C’s that were discussed in this program have helped renew my excitement about spreading the gospel and being prepared to share it.”

“It makes you feel like you are involved in God’s mission in a very personal way.”

Community

Participants were asked three questions following the section on “Community” (see Appendix G). Two of those questions and their results will be shared because one question was similar to a question asked in the “Calling” post assessment survey. The first question asked participants if this section helped their understanding of the role the

church plays in discipleship. Seventeen of the eighteen participants said “yes” while one said “somewhat.”

The second question asked participants to measure on a scale between 1-10 the impact the section had on their understanding of the importance of the church and discipleship (see Table 32). For a description of the scale (see Appendix G).

Table 32. Post assessment: Impact of community section (average scale 1-10. One being not important and 10 being very important)

Importance of this section on your understanding of the church and discipleship	
Average (on scale 1-10)	9.3

The following are some selected comments related to this section of the program.

“This program showed us what it takes to be fully devoted disciples, but it also showed us where we are coming up short in our quest to be better disciples for the church.”

“I know now how important it is to belong to a church and fellowship with others at church. I have learned so much from going to church every Sabbath and to our Bible studies on Thursday. . . I love the church, the people, and the "family" feeling I get there. You made me realize how important this is in our walk with God.”

Conflict

Two follow-up questions were asked after participants completed this section (see Appendix H). The first asked them to measure on a scale between 1-10 the effectiveness of this section on how comfortable they now are with conflict. The following are the results (see Table 33; for a description of the scale, see Appendix H). The second

question asked if the section helped their understanding of the role conflict plays in discipleship. All eighteen participants said “yes.”

Table 33. Post assessment: Comfort with conflict (average scale 1-10. One being not comfortable and 10 being very comfortable)

On scale 1-10	After completing this section, how comfortable are you with conflict?
Average	8.7
Preassessment average	5.9

Culture

Three questions were asked after participants completed this section (see Appendix I). The first question asked what the disciple should do if culture and biblical principles conflict. All participants checked that the disciple should “always stand for biblical principles.”

The second question asked them to measure on a scale of 1-10 the impact the section had on their understanding of what the phrase “kingdom of heaven” means for the disciple (for a description of the scale, see Appendix I). The following are the results (see Table 34):

Table 34. Post assessment: Kingdom of Heaven (average scale 1-10. One being not confident and 10 being very confident)

On Scale 1-10	Confidence in your understanding of what “kingdom of heaven” phrase means for discipleship
Post assessment average	9.2
Preassessment average	7.2

The final question asked participants if the section helped them understand the role culture plays in discipleship. All participants said “yes” it did help.

The following are some selected comments related to this section of the program:

“I really learned a lot from this segment. I did not realize how important the frontal lobe of the brain is and how food, drinks, etc. can affect the frontal lobe! Very informative how you set it all out. The segment on entertainment, adornment, appearance -- wow! I did not fully understand the importance of these doctrines, but you explained it very well. These are things I definitely have to work on (and have been trying to work on) and have been praying for the Holy Spirit to guide me and help me with these issues. But seeing and hearing first-hand from your videos, wow -- it was a wake-up call! It made me realize I have far to go on my spiritual journey, but of course, God is worth it!!!”

“I loved it! It was simple and to the point. You threw me when you shared about the frontal lobe! I never knew about what you shared!”

“I have removed my earrings. Last bit of jewelry.”

“I also learned some things that stung, but it will challenge me to grow. . . It answered a lot of questions that I didn't even think I needed the answer to. I finally understood why Adventists do the things they do.”

“The program reminded me of our core values and gave me a desire to stay closer to them. Living in the Adventist lifestyle for over twenty years caused some routines to set in that I didn't notice. The program revived me.”

Interpretation of Data

The data established that a structural approach to discipleship based on these seven core areas of discipleship is beneficial and necessary. Participants experienced

levels of growth in every area of this program. The following is an interpretation of the data from each section.

Character of God

The data confirmed that the literature review was correct in that understanding the character of God is a key element in discipleship. Even though participants stated in the preassessment that they felt they could trust God in every area of their life, it was evident that they learned how important God's character is to discipleship in their post-assessment survey. The average score of the participants regarding the benefit this section had on their walk with God was 9.3 (maximum 10). As indicated by the data, understanding the character of God shapes one's worldview. It also shapes their understanding of the battle between good and evil and their role in it.

Communion with God

This section was difficult to gauge regarding improvements in the participants' lives because most of the participants already had daily devotional habits. Also, with a maximum score of 10, the average score of those who thought daily devotions were important to the disciple was a 9.1. This showed that most participants were already convinced of the importance of strong devotional habits. Nevertheless, at the end of the program the average score improved to 9.7 indicating an overall improvement.

Four of the participants stated they did not have daily devotions. Two said they had devotions once in a while and two said a few times per week. At the end of the program, the students who stated they had devotions once in a while now stated they would have devotions a few times per week. The two that originally stated they had devotions a few times per week afterwards stated they planned on having daily devotions.

With a maximum of 10, the average score of those who said they benefited from this section of the program was 9.8. This likely means that the participants grew in their understanding of the importance of having daily devotions as indicated by the testimonials.

Comprehension of His Word

All eighteen participants stated that they grew in their understanding of how to study the Bible. The average score of those who stated that this section gave them confidence in how to study the Bible better was 9.7 (maximum 10). This average score was pleasantly surprising, particularly because 89% stated in the preassessment that they had confidence in their ability to study the Bible. Therefore, the content in this section seemed valuable to the participants.

Calling

This section saw some of the highest levels of improvement. Not that the other sections did not benefit the participants, but it seems that spiritual gifts are not stressed as much as needed in churches. An increase of 33% of participants stated that they would look for daily opportunities to share Jesus with people. Also, the average of people understanding their spiritual gift or understanding the process of figuring out their spiritual gift went from 4.6 to 8.7 out of a maximum score of 10. These numbers were also pleasing to see.

In addition, 83% of participants planned to play an active role in church outreach. In the preassessment survey only 39% had played an active role in church outreach. Therefore, this section seemed to inspire the participants to use their spiritual gifts in church ministry.

Community

Seventeen of the eighteen participants felt this section benefited their understanding of the role the church community plays in discipleship. The only participant who did not check “yes” indicated that the section helped them somewhat. Lastly, participants averaged a score of 9.3 as to how much this section advanced their understanding of the church, community, and fellowship as it relates to discipleship.

Conflict

All eighteen participants stated that this section helped them understand the role conflict plays in discipleship. The average score of being comfortable with conflict and one’s conflict resolution skills went from a 5.9 prior to the program to an 8.7 after the program. These numbers demonstrate the need to explain the role of conflict, as well as to equip disciples on how to deal with it.

Culture

All eighteen participants stated that this section helped them understand how culture plays a role in discipleship. The data also revealed that this section helped the participants understand what it means to be a disciple in Christ’s kingdom. Prior to the program the average score was 7.2 (maximum of 10) regarding their understanding of what the phrase “kingdom of heaven” means and what it means to be a disciple in that kingdom. After completing the section, the score rose to 9.2. These numbers demonstrate this section’s effectiveness in relating biblical principles to culture and worldview.

Overarching Conclusions

Four overarching conclusions can be made from this project. First, there is a need for wholistic biblical discipleship programs, particularly for those new to the Adventist Church. As the data from this project demonstrates, participants went into the program having high views of their level of understanding in various areas. However, after going through the program, they seemed to realize their lack of understanding in certain areas of discipleship. Not only did the numbers demonstrate this, but the testimonials did as well. Furthermore, multiple participants asked whether I could conduct another series similar to this one to help them advance to the next level in their discipleship journey (see Appendix J). Therefore, there is a definite need for more discipleship programs.

The second conclusion is the lack of clarity in the area of spiritual gifts. There also seems to be a lack of understanding in how to figure out one's spiritual gifts. Church leaders need to be more intentional in helping members understand their spiritual gifts and their importance. This could be done through sermons, seminars, and personal effort.

The third overarching conclusion came in the area of conflict. As the data suggested, participants did not understand the role conflict plays in discipleship or in conflict resolution skills to deal with it. There is a need for training in these areas which could be done through sermons or seminars.

The fourth conclusion is that the church does a fair job teaching the importance of knowing the character of God, having communion with God, comprehending His Word, and community. The data suggests that members know these are important. However, they do not seem to understand exactly why they are important to the disciple. Therefore,

it would be good for church leaders to periodically remind members why these areas are important.

Recommendations

This section discusses recommendations I have for this project, future project dissertations, and the Emmaus discipleship program. These recommendations are based on participant feedback as well as personal reflection.

After completing the project, I have five recommendations. First, I would seek to find better questions to gauge the level of understanding in both the pre- and post-assessments. By asking better questions, I would likely have obtained more interesting data to evaluate. I would have read more project dissertations on discipleship programs, particularly their evaluation tools.

The second recommendation is to further explore conflict as it relates to discipleship. There seems to be a great need in the church for this. Seminars on issues like handling one's emotions and dealing with dysfunctional personalities seem needed. I plan to strengthen the Emmaus discipleship program in these areas. However, I think more study could be done in this area, such as a project dissertation.

A third recommendation for the Emmaus discipleship program is to expand the area of "Calling," particularly in the area of spiritual gifts. I did not realize the lack of clarity in this area. Many participants seemed to have little understanding of their spiritual gifts or why they are important. I stated in the program that I was hesitant to use spiritual gift assessments, but after receiving feedback, I feel this is needed. I plan to search for a biblically solid assessment and add it to the program. In addition, I feel I

should have read more project dissertations related to spiritual gifts in order for the program to be stronger in this area.

I received little negative feedback from the participants as to how the program could be improved. However, two participants did state that the video quality could be better. I used my iPhone to record the videos with a plain wall behind me. In the future, it would be nice to record this program in a studio with professional cameras and a green screen.

A fourth recommendation would be that pastors be better equipped to disciple church members. It is my observation that much of the training on discipleship is unclear. I would recommend a more systematic approach to discipleship. Many people seem to resonate with a structured program that clearly defines steps and goals. A structured approach, backed by solid Bible principles allows pastors to adapt the program to their personality and ministry context.

Lastly, there was a lack of community amongst those who did the discipleship program. Within the website, I should have created a forum for people to communicate with others involved in the program. Also, I should have contacted a local leader where the participants attended and explained and developed a way for the local leader to be involved with the participant as they went through the program. This would have built a better sense of belonging which is a principle of discipleship.

Final Thoughts

Engaging in this project dissertation and developing the discipleship website has been one of the most rewarding and enriching things I have done in ministry. When conducting the literature review and theological reflection, it seemed God revealed and

inspired me with this discipleship program. The testimonies of how this program equipped people brought much satisfaction to my soul.

Furthermore, I feel my evangelistic meetings are going to be enhanced now that I can refer attendees to the discipleship website after the meetings conclude. Going through an evangelistic series is life changing in many ways, particularly in changing one's worldview. However, it can be difficult to weave practical godliness into the seminar for fear of overloading the attendees. This discipleship website will be invaluable to help ground new members in the essentials of discipleship. I believe it will also help people make decisions to be a part of the church, explain sensitive subjects in the area of Adventist lifestyle, and increase the retention rate of new converts.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



APPENDIX B

PREASSESSMENT SURVEY

Emmaus Ministries Discipleship Survey Pre-Project Assessment

Thank you for taking your time to answer all the questions below. Please answer the following questions honestly in light of your current walk with the Lord.

1. Gender:

- Female
- Male

2. Age Group:

- 18 -30
- 31 – 40
- 41 – 50
- 51 – 65
- 65 – over

3. Which denomination/church are you a member of?

Denomination/Church:

4. How often do you attend church?

- Usually every week
- Around twice per month
- Occasionally
- A few times per year

5. How long have you consistently attended church?

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

6. If new to attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church, please check the box that best describes your previous religious background?

- Protestant (including non-denominational)
- Catholic
- Non-Christian

- b. I feel I have the knowledge/tools to dig deeper into the Bible? YES
NO
- c. I feel comfortable in my ability to study most Biblical subjects? YES
NO
14. Please answer the following questions in regard to the character of God:
- d. I feel I can trust God and His Word with every area of my life? YES
NO
- e. I feel I could explain why there is a war between Christ and Satan? YES
NO
- f. I feel I could explain why there is suffering on this planet? YES
NO
15. How important is the church and church attendance in your walk with God?
- Extremely important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not important
16. On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you with conflict/your conflict resolution skills? One to three being not comfortable/I avoid conflict at all cost; four to six I am somewhat comfortable with conflict; seven to ten being extremely comfortable.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
17. Jesus used the statement “the kingdom of God” or a similar phrase multiple times. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident is your understanding of what it means to be a disciple of this kingdom? One to three being I don’t understand what it means at all; four to six I have somewhat an understanding of what it means; seven to ten being very confident of what it means.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
18. Culture is an important part of our everyday life. Culture is often defined by art, entertainment, fashion, language and politics. When culture and Biblical principles contrast, is the disciple to conform to culture or stand for Bible principles?
- Always stand for Biblical principles
 - God understands that culture is often more important than Biblical principles
 - All culture comes from God and therefore we should seek to fit into our culture and avoid sticking out

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey. With your permission this survey will be used as part of my doctoral work in Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality. Your name will NOT be used in this research.

Please initial if I have permission to use your survey as part of my research. _____

APPENDIX C

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: CHARACTER OF GOD

Character of God Survey

1. The character of God section helped me better understand the importance of knowing God's character and how it affects me as a disciple?
 Yes
 No
 Somewhat
Please Explain: _____

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, after completing the section on the character of God, did it help you understand the importance of a disciple knowing the character of God and trusting Him as He leads? One to three being not at all; four to six being somewhat; seven to ten being it helped a lot in this area.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Please answer the following questions in regard to the discipleship website:
 - A. It helped me understand the character of God better? YES
NO
 - B. It helped me understand the battle between Christ and Satan better? YES
NO
 - C. I feel I could explain better why there is suffering on this planet? YES
NO

APPENDIX D

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: COMMUNION WITH GOD

Communion with God Survey

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important are daily devotions in relationship to discipleship/your walk with God. One to three being not necessary; four to six being somewhat necessary; and seven to ten being vital.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how helpful was the section on explaining why communion with God is important in your discipleship journey. One to three being not helpful; four to six being somewhat helpful; and seven to ten being extremely helpful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. After going through the discipleship website, I now am going to spend devotional time?

- Every day
- A few times per week
- Once in a while
- Hardly ever

APPENDIX E

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: COMPREHENSION

Comprehension Survey

1. The discipleship website helped me understand how to study the Bible better?
 Yes
 No
 Somewhat

2. I feel more confident now to study out certain subjects in the Bible after going through the section on comprehension? One to three being not at all; four to six being somewhat more confident; and seven to ten being very confident.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX F

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: CALLING

Calling Survey

1. After completing the calling section, do you have a better understand of your calling/spiritual gift(s) or how to discover them? One to three being I have no idea what my gifts are; four to six I have somewhat of an understanding of what my gift is and how to discover it; seven to ten being I know clearly what my gift is or how to discover my gift.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. After going through the calling section, do you feel more committed to look for daily opportunities to share Jesus and Scripture with acquaintances?

- Yes
 No
 Somewhat

3. After going through the calling section, do you feel more inspired to play an active role in any outreach ministry of the church? Briefly explain.

- Yes
 No

Please explain:

APPENDIX G

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: COMMUNITY

Community Survey

1. The website helped me better understand the importance of the role the church plays in the disciple's life?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

2. After going through the section on community, do you better understand the role the church plays in the discipleship process. One to three being not at all; four to six being somewhat; and seven to ten being you have a good understanding.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. After going through the section on community, I am now more committed to becoming strong church member because that's what I feel God wants from me.

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

APPENDIX H

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: CONFLICT

Conflict Survey

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, are you more comfortable with conflict/your conflict resolution skills after going through the section on conflict? One to three being not comfortable/I still will avoid conflict at all cost; four to six being I am now somewhat comfortable; seven to ten being extremely comfortable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. The conflict section helped me understand the role of conflict in the disciple's journey?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

APPENDIX I

POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY: CULTURE

Culture Survey

1. Culture is an important part of our everyday life. Culture is often defined by art, entertainment, fashion, language and politics. When culture and Biblical principles contrast, is the disciple to conform to culture or stand for Bible principles?
 - Always stand for Biblical principles
 - God understands that culture is often more important than Biblical principles
 - All culture comes from God and therefore we should seek to fit into our culture and avoid sticking out

2. Did the section on culture help you understand Jesus' statement to be in the world but not of the world?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Somewhat

3. On a scale between 1-10, did the section on culture help you understand how some things that may seem normal to some in society, actually can cause spiritual damage to the disciple? One to three not at all; four to six somewhat; and seven to ten the section really helped me understand how some negative cultural practices affects me as a disciple?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX J

TESTIMONIALS

Participant 1:

“Hi Pastor, I really enjoyed your discipleship program. I learned quite a lot. I took notes on all your 7 fundamentals of discipleship videos and am so happy you asked me to participate in your program. I know you said a "few sentences" but....here you go.....
God's character: We should all know and love God's character and strive to be like Him. Very hard to do, but well worth it. When my character starts to get "out of balance", I am going to say to myself: "would Jesus say or do this?" Yes, God is awesome!

Communion with God: I am learning that we need a relationship with God -- which is much more than saying a short prayer before bed. I know now how important it is to have a strong devotional life. God is worth the extra time we should give him to accomplish this.

Comprehension of his Word: I understand more fully how important bible study really is and how important it is to know true bible doctrine. This is something I have to spend more time on, but your program was a big help with this.

Calling to Discipleship: I understand now how important it is to deny self and give absolute surrender to God. This again is something I need to work on, but your program helped me immensely with this too. My relationship with Jesus is to come first before all else. I know I fail in this area at times, but you are showing me how important it is. The Holy Spirit has convicted me of some areas in my life, but there are a few I still need help

with. Also, you gave me good tips on how to recognize my spiritual gift, which I am also working on. You also gave great tips on how to give a bible study; although I do not feel I am at that stage yet...but hopefully one day.

Community: I know now how important it is to belong to a church and fellowship with others at church. I have learned so much from going to church every Sabbath and to our bible studies on Thursday. I am so glad God led me to the Hammond Seventh Day Adventist Church when you gave your seminar there in 2018. I love the church, the people and the "family" feeling I get there. You made me realize how important this is in our walk with God.

Conflict: You gave great advice on how to handle conflict(s) in church and outside of church. I also learned that when bad things/conflicts happen to us, God may allow them to happen for our character development, and when persecution or challenges come, we should be a person/people of prayer.

Culture: I really learned a lot from this segment. Did not realize how important the frontal lobe of the brain is and how foods, drinks, etc. can affect the frontal lobe! Very informative how you set it all out. And the segment on entertainment, adornment, appearance -- wow! I did not fully understand the importance of these doctrines, but you explained it very well. These are things I definitely have to work on (and have been trying to work on) and have been praying for the Holy Spirit to guide me and help me with these issues. But seeing and hearing first-hand from your videos, wow -- it was like a "wake-up call"! It made me realize I have far to go on my spiritual journey, but of course, God is worth it!!!

I hope this helps. Again, I really enjoyed it! I know all the praise and glory go to God, but you are such a wonderful Evangelist/teacher/speaker. I could listen to you all day!!!! Good luck with everything and please keep in touch.”

Participant 2:

“I, myself I loved it! It was simple and to the point. You threw me when you shared about the frontal lobe! I never knew what you share! I find myself sharing with others what I learned! Oh, I wanted to tell you that my older son and his wife are watching your videos on Revelations! They are in awe of them! They found you simple in the way you shared it that they understood! Just wanted to let you know and I am so grateful to God for you! I was truly enlightened by what I learned it changed me. Thank you so much for giving me this wonderful opportunity.”

Participant 3:

“Going through the Emmaus Discipleship program helped me spiritually by reinforcing what I have previously learned as well as teaching me some new information to help me with my walk with Jesus. I feel closer to the Lord when I learn different ways that I can improve my prayer life and put that into my daily routine. The Emmaus Discipleship program was truly a blessing to me by giving me the resources and spiritual guidance that I need. I am sharing this program with anyone that I think would be interested in a closer walk with Jesus.”

Participant 3 & 4:

“This program showed us what it takes to be fully devoted disciples, but it also showed us where we are coming up short in our quest to be better disciples for the church.”

Participant 5:

“Very good program. Opened my eyes to some things and reminded me of other things. At first, I did the program to be helpful. However, the program made a big difference in my life. The culture section was particularly helpful. I have removed my earrings. Last bit of jewelry.”

Participant 6:

“I truly enjoyed and gained a more balanced perspective about discipleship when I went through the Emmaus discipleship program website!

My devotional time has become much more meaningful. I’m not just reading the Bible, I’m actually studying by using the methods that I have learned on this website. The seven C’s that were discussed in this program, have helped to renew my excitement about spreading the gospel and being prepared to share it.

I studied this program at a time when I was very down spiritually and personally and it has revived me in so many ways but mainly spiritually. I feel a deeper connection with God because I have learned how to better communicate with Him and study his word.”

Participant 7:

“I loved it! Glad I had the opportunity. I think your program makes you want to stay with it. Each section leaves you curious for the next. I felt more informed connected and confident right away. I recognized things that I have done wrong and it gave me answers and solutions to make adjustments. Makes you feel like you are involved in God’s mission in a very personal way. Thank you Pastor.”

Participant 8:

“Pastor Freking,

The 7 C's of Discipleship was very informative. As I continue my walk with God, I will learn more. I already know to pray every day and the importance of attending church every Sabbath. I am going to start the daily devotionals (Tammy has some she is going to bring me also). Tammy and I are currently doing Bible studies. Thank you so much for offering me the chance to learn more about the 7 C's of Discipleship."

Participant 9:

"I loved the program! Being new to the faith it brought out things I didn't know about. Things like why we do what we do. I also learned some things that stung but it will challenge me to grow. Thanks! I'm going to go through it again!"

It answered a lot of questions that I didn't even think I needed the answer to. It was like "oh yeah" like the "why" we did the things that Adventist do.

Spiritually it brought me closer because it explained a lot about the different steps. Once I got through the program I was 99% ready to be baptized. I was sold! Because it just answered all the "whys?" And I just kept wanting more and more, it was very good and kept me interested. I want to pass it along to my friend Diane because it explains Adventism. I loved it!"

Participant 10:

"The program reminded me of our core values and gave me a desire to stay closer to them. Living in the Adventist lifestyle for over 20 years caused some routines to set in that I didn't notice. The program revived me."

Participant 11:

"Thank you for sharing your DP with me. I feel that some information was a recap of information I already was aware of, there were many parts I was blessed with. I feel that

you laid out great information as to what it means to do your devotions for the right reasons for instance and it was a change that I personally am trying to improve on in my life.

change. I really liked the site, I liked how it flowed and it was very easy to use. So, that is another great thing. When you ask people to do a favor, if it is clunky or hard to use, it makes it hard. This was easy for me.”

APPENDIX K

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROGRAM

Participant 1:

“It was just really good to me. The right length. I loved the surveys at the end to make sure I was understanding all the information. I don't think it needs to be improved.”

Participant 2:

“If he had a part 2 maybe. I wanted more. But I'm not sure what more he can do to add to it because it is so thorough.”

Participant 3:

“The only thing I can think of is the video quality on a couple of the off-line sermons could be better. No complaints, just a good program.”

Participant 4:

“Things I may change. I mentioned to you before that the one guest speaker, though he may have had a good message, because it comes across in such a way that is not your own, I would redo his sermon or at least similar points coming from you. That would be the only thing I would change.”

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