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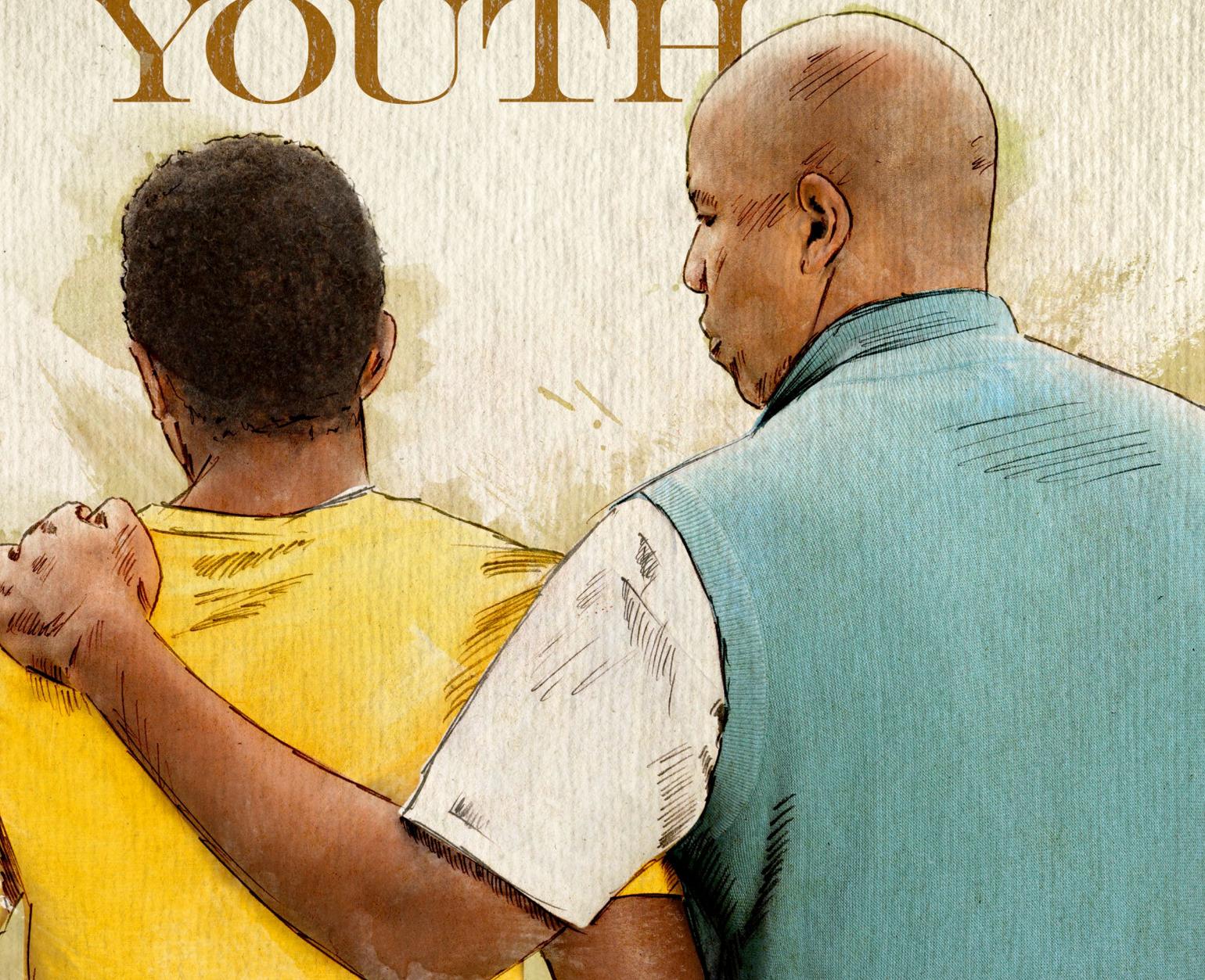
JUNE 2018

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

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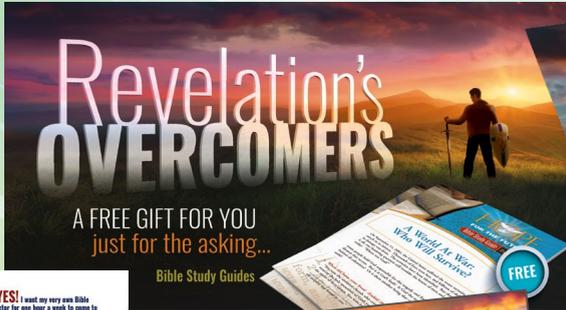


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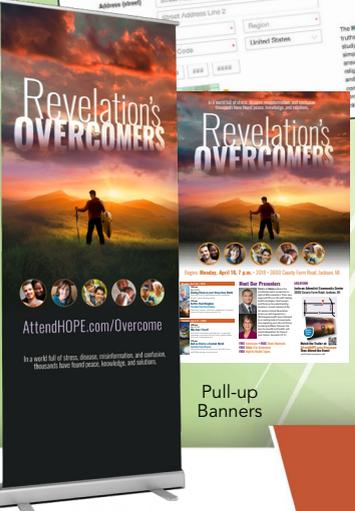
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*Was the community knocking down the doors to see what made us different? Not yet. That will happen if they see us stay committed in the long term to this collaborative effort.*

### Let's support together

Regarding Ella Simmons's fine article ("The Pastor and the Church School: Partnering for Success," June 2017), I would be very interested to know what the correlation was in the survey of pastors between years in formal SDA education and support for Adventist education/schools. Were pastors with more SDA education more or less supportive of SDA schools?

—Tyson Kahler, by email

### Response from the author

The answer to this question is not presented in the research report. We will need to go to the data file to run additional tests to discover this. The report did contain three questions, however, that may have a bearing on this important topic:

"Q9. What is highest academic training you have received?

"Q10. How many years of your total education were obtained in Adventist schools? . . .

"Q22e. Teacher: How would you rank the importance of these other ministries in which pastors often work to the mission of the church?"

These three questions could have correlations with the final question:

"Q24. What contribution do you believe teachers in Adventist schools generally make to the mission of the church, as you defined it above?"

Additional analyses or separate correlations of each of these questions may indeed be a step in the right direction!

—Ella Simmons

### Let's pray together

I appreciated the recent article in your February 2018 issue by David M. Klinedinst titled "Unity and collaboration in urban ministry." My question for Pastor Klinedinst is, "Can you share how this approach to urban ministry in St. Louis has impacted the community?"

The article celebrates that "Conversation happens. Friendships are formed. Experiences are shared. Understanding takes place. God is there." It goes on to say, "This is unity in action. It is a picture not soon forgotten, and it is a picture your city desperately needs to see." I applaud all these attributes and believe they have intrinsic value, however, I wish to know how this unity and collaborative ministry actually impacted the urban community?

Did the churches grow? Did local government soften? Were evangelism efforts successful? Did other Christian

denominations inquire? What tangible results can you cite? What seeds were sown that give promise to future conversions or revivals? Thank you for your time.

—Davy Lounsbury, pastor, Spirit Lake and Spokane Central church, Washington, United States

### Response from the author

Building collaborative relationships between churches and conferences in the urban setting takes time. It may even take two to three years before tangible results can really be seen. It begins first with an inward focus and just getting churches to start spending time together in prayer and fellowship, then slowly but surely moving it to outward focused ministry in the community.

There was an evangelistic meeting done by ministers of different conferences and ethnicities. We took turns preaching, and the subtheme was "The truth—in black and white." I can't say it caused the local churches to grow by leaps and bounds, but it started a process that I believe, if Saint Louis stays committed to, will give even greater tangible results. Seeds have been sown and a foundation of collaboration has been laid that is now ingrained in the fabric of Saint Louis.

Now the churches are working together to host a "Pathways to Health" in Saint Louis with the audacious goal of using the downtown dome to provide much needed free medical care to the community. This will be followed up with a citywide evangelistic meeting with all the churches united. Was the community knocking down the doors to see what made us different? Not yet. That will happen if they see us stay committed in the long term to this collaborative effort.

—David Klinedinst

### Let's stay together

The article by Arthur Stele, December 2017, on unity and mission

Continued on page 23



Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD, is associate editor of *Ministry*.



# It's their time now

Sheldon Vanauken tells of how he gave up faith in Christianity as a teenager: “There were four specific inadequacies in the only Christianity I knew: it was not exciting, not positive, not big enough, and not related to life. . . . Who could believe that here in this stuffiness, with all the beauty and laughter and pain of life held at bay outside the church—who could believe that here were the truths of life and death? I could not, and I doubted whether anyone else did. I turned away from this religion and declared for atheism.”<sup>1</sup> I discovered that the faith our young people choose really is a matter of life and death.

While pastoring in Manchester, England, we pleaded with our young people not to join the Branch Davidians, not to attend a so-called camp meeting in Waco, Texas. They said they had learned new light from Steve Schneider, David Koresh’s associate. They said we pastors were hiding things from them. We read to them, “There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience.”<sup>2</sup> They listened—politely—then they went to Waco—about 10 of them. Then we got the news. More than 80 dead—including our young people. *Could it be that their survival is connected with their willingness to listen us?*

Some new light is evidently not from God. But I asked myself, “How open or closed should I be to God speaking a fresh word to me?” Then I read, “It is a fact that we have the truth, and we must hold with tenacity to the positions that cannot be shaken; but we must not look

with suspicion upon any new light which God may send, and say, Really, we cannot see that we need any more light than the old truth which we have hitherto received, and in which we are settled. While we hold to this position, the testimony of the True Witness applies to our cases its rebuke, ‘And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’”<sup>3</sup> Oh!

There is, then, a time for everything. A time to shun new light and a time to embrace it. A time to be cautious and a time to be courageous. I confess, I was cautious about attending the recent Associated Church Press Conference in Chicago. Smugly, I wondered what fresh word could I really get. I was wrong.

On the opening night, a professor said that while the younger generation must respect the older generation, he asserted that the church is in danger of relinquishing its prophetic voice to hip hop. I sat up. The next day, a pastor declared that the church risks irrelevancy when embracing a code of silence in regard to injustice. He warned that the church risks losing its young and progressive voices. He concluded that contemporary youth must still see the church as a vital part of our society.

His words haunted me—like my memories of those Manchester young people. Could we have done more? Maybe we hadn’t built trust relationships. “Ministers of the gospel should form a happy acquaintance with the youth of their congregations. . . . When you have obtained the confidence of the youth, they will listen to your words and take your counsel. . . . Why should this labor for the young in our borders not be thought the highest of missionary work?”<sup>4</sup>

*“Why should this labor for the young in our borders not be thought the highest of missionary work?”*

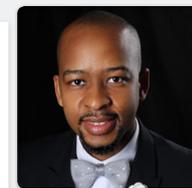
—Ellen G. White

Let’s not just tell our young people; let’s show them that the faith that we love *is* exciting, *is* positive, *is* big enough, and *is* related to life. Thank God, many young people have listened to us; are we prepared to listen to them? Acts 2 tells us it’s their time now. “God will accept the services of young men and young women, if they will consecrate themselves to Him without reserve.”<sup>5</sup>

A fresh, new word—new light—may come from unlikely places: a donkey, a stone, a woman—or young people. *Could it be that our survival is connected with our willingness to listen them?* 🙏

- 1 Sheldon Vanauken, *Encounter With Light*, Will Vaus, accessed May 15, 2018, willvaus.com/encounter\_with\_light.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), 47.
- 3 White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 33.
- 4 Ellen G. White, “God’s Means for Diffusing Light (Concluded),” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 26, 1912, 4.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 74.

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# Winning with young people: *Five things every pastor should ~~know~~ do*

I grew up playing soccer. Every open space—and my budding soccer star friends—beckoned me to play the sport we loved. Even a five-minute break at school saw us kicking the ball. Some of my friends had all the gear needed to play, while others did not. Ironically, those who could afford the right cleats, shin guards, and the leather ball did not possess the skills. In soccer, the only thing that matters at the end of the day is the score—can you put the ball in the goal? A team may have dribbling wizards and skillful players who dominate possession of the ball, but if they do not put the ball in the net, it all counts for nothing.

In soccer, players score in a myriad of ways. Some score by volleying the ball into the net; others head it in; some direct it with the chest; some use the back of their heel; while yet others opt for the spectacular, acrobatic finish that leaves the crowd in disbelief. It really does not matter how the ball reaches the back of the net. All that matters is that it gets there.

## Of youth ministry and soccer

Ministering to youth in today's constantly changing world is a lot like improvising on the soccer field. The

goal is clear: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14, NIV). Ever-morphing sociological trends require those who work with youth and young adults to continually assess and evaluate the strategies used to minister to them. The principles that guide the effort are changeless, but methods can and must be changed and improved. Youth ministry is dynamic. Societal values, culture, and norms acutely impact the pace and manner in which youth ministry can be done in a given area. While each context varies, the local church presents a perfect opportunity for nurturing young people. The local church is the spiritual home of our young people, their membership is there.

Three institutions responsible for nurturing the youth are the family, the Christian school, and the local church. The family forms the primary sphere of spiritual nurture (personal and internal), and the school and church provide a secondary sphere (communal and external). Through these institutions youth learn to follow Jesus, embrace His call to discipleship, and find their place in God's service. While many of our youth make decisions to follow

Christ at or during wider church events, the location where they are mentored to become devoted followers of Jesus and live out their Christian experience is the local church. With regard to local church leadership, I concur with the group "Growing Young Adventists" that our duty is not to just make the youth survive but to make them thrive.<sup>1</sup>

## Focusing on the core

We have all heard the studies chronicling the great hemorrhage of youth from Adventist churches, especially young adults. These young people are not leaving the General Conference, unions, and conferences; they leave the local church. So pastors in the local church, and the teams they lead, play a pivotal role in shaping how the church ministers to youth.

Therefore, in 2016 the General Conference Youth Ministries Advisory took an action that was long overdue: *to make the local church the hub of youth ministry*. "As part of its ongoing re-Visioning of youth ministry, [it] wishes to recognize the Local Church as the primary location and target of its ministry for young people around the world. While it affirms the significance of large corporate events such as summer camps, rallies, camporees and

congresses to foster fellowship with the wider youth community and to provide opportunities for decision-making, it chooses to place ministry to young people in local churches at the center of its priorities and process.”<sup>2</sup>

The decision to focus on youth in the local church context dovetails perfectly with the Total Member Involvement (TMI) wave currently sweeping the globe. TMI has brought

possible when TDI (total department involvement) is in pursuit of TYI. Youth ministry is not a field for lone rangers. Collaboration is vital.

One of the indicators of pastoral success is the retention of youth. We must invest in these young minds. It is time to act! The prophecies tell us that the youth will finish the work. We must believe it and prepare for it to happen in a big way so that we may expedite

though they may not be for you. Being on social media is a good start. The first language of many millennials and Generation Z is not Spanish, French, Portuguese, or Setswana but social media. Youth are found on social media. However, digital presence should never substitute for physical presence. Rather than ignore the reality of social media, it is critically important to harness its potential for mobilizing youth, advertis-



*Pastors are influential, and God requires much from them because of the sacred responsibility they carry. But youth ministry is not about the leaders; it is about the youth.*

energy and synergy to youth ministry. TMI translates to total youth involvement (TYI) when we focus specifically on the contribution that youth can make. Therefore, the pastor, elders, youth sponsors, and youth leaders are not the only ones who are integral to the success of youth ministry. All departments, all adults, all mentors, all supporters are called to engage, equip, and empower young people if we hope to arrest youth attrition. TMI will be

the coming of the Lord. Following are some ways in which pastors and elders can facilitate youth ministry:

1. *Connect with them.* Young minds are interested in knowing that the leadership is normal. They want to see whether you do normal things like laugh, greet, and smile. Do you have other interests outside of your spiritual calling? Are you normal enough to go camping? Hiking? These are critical questions for most young people, even

ing youth programs, and eventually fulfilling the supreme cause of mission. Know the young people by name. A database of the youth will help you to memorize their names. Barna and Kinnaman assert that connecting with young people opens up ineffable prospects for spiritual leadership.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Relate to them.* Relationships are symbiotic. All parties in the relationship are important. In any relationship, there is difference of opinion. This must not

be viewed as a threat but as an opportunity for understanding and growth. When young people question you, it is in part because they are “checking you out” to see whether you are real. Are you genuine? Are you caring? Are you honest? One of the things that irks young people is inconsistency and partiality. Treat everyone the same. It is OK to say “I don’t know” when you have no answer to a particular question. The youth will respect you for your honesty, and they will, in turn, trust you with the personal things of their lives. Maintain confidentiality when they open up to you. Authentic relationships enhance the pastor’s or elder’s ability to help young people identify and develop their spiritual gifts.

3. *Empower them.* The empowerment process starts with teaching. Rivet the youth in the truth. It will help them find their identity in Jesus, and it is why the church exists (Matt. 28:19, 20). Then, mentor them. Moses mentored Joshua. He was patient with Joshua, and Joshua was cooperative. Moses did not wait until he was too old to mentor Joshua. In his quest to be the best he could be for Joshua, he availed himself. It takes great patience to work with young minds.

Time is a precious commodity. Youth who have a mentoring relationship with caring adults are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.<sup>4</sup> Pastors should encourage all the adults to intentionally mentor young people. If everyone got involved in this exercise, the results would be phenomenal. The church exists for mission. Without mission, the church becomes a social club. Leaders who are intentional in modeling evangelism (personal and public) will ensure that the legacy is passed on from generation to generation, thus making evangelism a lifestyle; not an event. Youth are keen observers.

Adults who do what they say have great leverage over youth. Say it, do it, stay in it! Ellen White says, “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen,

and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come.”<sup>5</sup> So, training is the key. Leaders who cheer for the youth bring the best out of them. The small efforts, the achievements and accomplishments of youth, must be celebrated. Young people are seeking honest mentors; not ones who choose to be politically correct. If you think they are not cut out for something, direct them to a vocation or ministry area that you think is more suitable for them. The idea would be for them to find God’s place for them. By so doing, we limit the work of the devil in trying to render them useless and worthless. Be a cheerleader.

4. *Trust them.* Pastors, pass on the baton of leadership to the youth. Contrary to popular belief, those who share power become more powerful and relevant. This is another place where all church departments have a special role. Youth Ministries alone cannot involve the youth in leadership. It is too small. Other departments can embrace the giftedness of young people. Disengagement bears a cold lethargy, and demons insinuate thoughts of quitting in the youth. Jan Paulsen, immediate past president of the General Conference, said of the young people, “We must vote them into substantive roles that bespeak a high level of trust, include them in the decision-making processes.”<sup>6</sup> The world is ready to embrace young people; what about the church? If it does not, the devil will happily employ their creativity, energy, time, and resources. However, we must not toss the baton to persons simply because they are young. The baton must be passed on to young people who show commitment, passion, and spiritual maturity. The youth will never be perfect. No one is perfect! All they need is a chance.

5. *Support them.* Attend programs for young people. It is advantageous for the pastors and elders to know the calendar and events of youth ministries. Show up rocking your Pathfinder uniform during Pathfinder days or young

adult gear on their special days. One of the biggest initiatives of the church is Global Youth Day (GYD). GYD affords the youth an opportunity to serve their communities. Participate in this day. As you support, avoid taking over. Let them run the show. Acquaint yourself with the resources, quinquennial and annual themes, programs, curriculums, and operations of Youth Ministries.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most effective ways to support the youth is to pray for them. Let them know you are praying for them. Attend their sporting outings, their presentations, or other special events in their lives. Support should not be limited to church activities. It should extend to other facets of their life. That’s when you become “real” to them.

Change begins with leaders. Pastors are influential, and God requires much from them because of the sacred responsibility they carry. But youth ministry is not about the leaders; it is about the youth. It is about leading them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and helping them embrace His call to discipleship. How each local church passes the ball, the strategy for scoring, and the skills of the players all remain unique. But we can never lose sight of the goal. What matters most is that the ball gets to the back of the net. 🏆

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- 1 Growing Young Adventists, [growingyoungadventists.com](http://growingyoungadventists.com), accessed April 30, 2018.
  - 2 General Conference Youth Ministries Advisory minutes, February 2016.
  - 3 George Barna and David Kinnaman, eds., *Churchless: Understanding Today’s Unchurched and How to Connect With Them* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).
  - 4 Marilyn Price-Mitchell, “Mentoring Youth Matters: Six Qualities That Make You a Good Mentor for Teens,” *Psychology Today*, Jan. 29, 2013, [psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/201301/mentoring-youth-matters](http://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-moment-youth/201301/mentoring-youth-matters).
  - 5 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 271.
  - 6 Jan Paulsen, “Why Do They Walk Away?,” *Adventist World*, Oct. 2009, [archives.adventistworld.org/2009/october/why-do-they-walk-away.html](http://archives.adventistworld.org/2009/october/why-do-they-walk-away.html).
  - 7 Numerous resources, including *Pastor’s and Elder’s Handbook for Youth Ministry*, are available on the official Seventh-day Adventist Youth Ministries website at [youth.adventist.org](http://youth.adventist.org).

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Omar Miranda, author, lay pastor, and youth counselor, resides in Plainville, Georgia, United States.



# “They don’t know everything!”: Steps in youth leadership development

**Y**ou can’t do that!” came the reply—almost in unison—from the church board. I had just informed them that I was interested in having youth from our youth group not only regularly teach Sabbath School but also act in the capacity of assistant leader. When I asked for their main objection, they—again, almost in union—whined (not as loudly this time): “But . . . they . . . don’t know everything!”

I have observed that this collective attitude encompasses the main obstacle keeping young people from being effectively involved in ministry. Many people feel that young people have to be like “mini-adults” in terms of their biblical knowledge before they can be allowed to teach; that for some reason, they are expected to be fully mature Christians before they can begin leading others. A story in the New Testament book of Acts would beg to differ.

“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue.

When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

“When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah” (Acts 18:24–28, NIV).

This biblical story embodies a progressive framework of five specific principles that will help us more effectively develop youth for leadership:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Recognize God-given gifts.* Aquila and Priscilla recognized God-given gifts, abilities, and talents in Apollos (vv. 24–26a). Luke tells us that Apollos had six qualities that were unique to him:

- Was an educated person
- Had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures
- Had been instructed in the way of the Lord
- Spoke with great fervor
- Taught about Jesus accurately
- Knew only the baptism of John

Although Apollos—though naturally gifted as a powerful preacher and effective Bible teacher—had been initially taught by somebody (maybe his parents or a rabbi), he still had huge gaps in his spiritual knowledge base. I find it interesting that Priscilla and Aquila (a Jewish married couple, v. 2) recognized and confirmed Apollos’s gifts.

2. *Build effective and authentic relationships.* Aquila and Priscilla not only recognized Apollos’ gifts, but they took it a step further—and this is the hard part—they used hospitality and built an authentic relationship with him (v. 26b). Commentator Richard Strauss states, “Aquila and Priscilla may not have been accomplished public speakers, but they were diligent students of the Word, and they loved to share it with others. They were even willing to invest the time necessary to take one young man under their spiritual care and pour into his life the things of Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

It makes me very happy to know that, even back then, this couple understood the power of a couple/family getting involved in youth ministry. We do not know what kind of history or home life Apollos had, but in today’s culture, not only do our youth need to be encouraged and have their gifts of leadership and teaching affirmed,

but they also desperately need to see the example of a godly, loving, healthy Christian marriage and family life.

There is no need to publicly berate young people's morals or privately pry into their home environment and life; just befriend them—with no strings attached. Invite them over to your home for get-togethers. Get to know and love them. If you love them, feed them (physically and emotionally), nurture, and pay attention to them, then just like a flower, they will eventually open up. You will not be able to stop them from talking with you about who they really are, their hopes and dreams, and what their biggest stressors and fears are. Why? Because they know that you care about and love them—simply for who they are.

3. *Lead them into a deeper relationship with Jesus.* Within the scope of that relationship, Priscilla and Aquila taught deeper information about Jesus (v. 26b).

Here is a powerful truth: youth will not care what you know unless they know that you care. There is a simple and organic progression of the relationship that Aquila and Priscilla had with Apollos. First, they recognized his gifts, then they really got to know him, and then—and only then—did they begin to teach and instruct him about the full way of the Lord.

Their relationship with Jesus will be modeled upon your relationship with them. If you try to present a truth without a relationship, there will be no connection. You have to temper and pace the amount of information that you are sharing with a youth based not upon what grade they are in school but upon who they are—both spiritually and emotionally. If you have kids of your own, as a parent, you already know this. You cannot just give somebody something difficult to understand until you are sure that the relationship you have built can withstand the stress of that new piece of information. Youth ministry is about relationships. They come first and foremost. Never forget that!

4. *Allow them to choose their own ministry roles.* As Apollos matured

in his spirituality, relationship with God, and understanding of Scripture, they allowed him to choose where he wanted to get involved (v. 27a). This is an important truth that needs to be understood by youth leaders. You can encourage, educate, equip, and inspire your youth who are interested in leadership, but ultimately the choice as to how they want to get involved has to be theirs and theirs alone. They must own it, or they will not be motivated to do it and do it well.

5. *Encourage and support their ministry roles.* Aquila and Priscilla honored and supported Apollos's choice (v. 27b). Once youth choose how they want to lead and own it, we must support them wholeheartedly. We must do our utmost to make leadership successful and effective for them. We must cheer them on to victory. What does cheering them on look like?

For some, it may mean advocating for them by educating church and/or school boards and families of origin about the realities of youth culture, youth ministry, and the gifts and potential of specific youth. For others, it may mean having a tough conversation with them about what they are doing right—and wrong. Still for others, it may mean acting as a sounding board and allowing them to vent their fears, anxieties, and stressors related to their increasing leadership roles. We must build relationships that can support and encourage them in their spiritual growth.

## Happy endings

If we youth leaders and pastors do our jobs consistently and effectively, our youth will want to take their place at the helm of the work, and they will be successful. You and I want nothing less for our youth. Apollos became a huge spiritual blessing to others and an effective disciple (vv. 27, 28) and his leadership grew to become crucially important in the formation of the early church (1 Cor. 1:11, 12; 3).

If we follow the five principles stated earlier, we will prepare this generation not only to effectively, consistently, and

joyfully lead but also—and more importantly—to lead an effective, consistent, and joyful Christian life.

Christian writer Ellen G. White made two powerful observations about youth involvement. She stated, "We have an army of youth today who can do much if they are properly directed and encouraged. ... We want them to act a part in well-organized plans for helping other youth."<sup>3</sup> She also declared, "Preachers, or laymen advanced in years, cannot have one-half the influence upon the young that the youth, devoted to God, can have upon their associates."<sup>4</sup>

I know that your greatest hopes and dreams for your youth mirror the apostle Paul's for the Colossian Christians when he wrote: "He [Jesus] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me" (Col. 1:28, 29, NIV).

You and I are only in leadership for a season. By following God's five principles for youth leadership development, we will be working smarter—not harder—and making the most of the time (Ps. 90:10; Eph. 5:15, 16), energies, and gifts that God has given us. Strauss concludes: "Some of us will never be powerful preachers, but we can be faithful students of the Word, and our homes can be open to people whose hearts are hungry to hear the Word. We may have the joyous privilege of nurturing a young Apollos who someday will have a wide and powerful ministry for Jesus Christ."<sup>5</sup> 

1 Although the Bible does not tell us how old Apollos was, I consider him to be a "youth" in need of mentorship.

2 Richard L. Strauss, "Side by Side—The story of Aquila and Priscilla," Bible.org, June 28, 2014, bible.org/seriespage/13-side-side-story-aquila-and-priscilla.

3 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), 32.

4 Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1030), 204.

5 Strauss, "Side by Side."

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# Youth and the born-again identity: *An interview with Adam Ramdin*

**Editor's note:** Adam Ramdin serves as executive producer of *Lineage Journey*,<sup>1</sup> director of the PEACE Center of Evangelism, and youth director in the North England Conference, Nottingham, England.

**Jarod Thomas (JT):** In 2017, you spearheaded an ambitious project. Who were you trying to reach with these *Lineage* videos?

**Adam Ramdin (AR):** We wanted a resource that would appeal to younger millennials, both in style, length, and platform. We chose a format that was short, around five minutes long, and the intended audience was on social media. The first 3 to 5 seconds of each video are very fast with catchy music and are intended to grab people's attention as they scroll on Facebook. For this reason, we chose to have the videos freely available on YouTube and Facebook, along with our website. We recognize that more than just young people watch them, but on all three platforms the highest number of viewers are in their teenage years or in their twenties. Contrary to what some people may think, the numbers show that young people do care about their history and want to know where they come from.

**JT:** Can you tell us how *Lineage* came about?

**AR:** One day while we were visiting the British Museum, my friend, Clive Coutet, shared an idea with me. He's a videographer, and he wanted to film videos on church history—to share some of the stories that are found in the book *The Great Controversy*.<sup>2</sup> He had looked extensively on YouTube but could find nothing of decent quality. Initially we spoke about filming just in London and Oxford. But why not Lutterworth, Cambridge, and Edinburgh too? I am not sure when it was, but the idea somehow grew bigger, until we thought about filming the videos on location around Europe rather than just in Britain. Then, as 2017 was being labeled the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, we thought about making the videos into a chronological journey. At first it was just Clive and I working together, but, as the project progressed, other people joined: *all young people, all volunteers, and all very committed*. But clichés aside, it really is God who has blessed this project from top to bottom. It was just a simple idea that started it. That is, it wasn't formed after a strategic planning committee or with a visionary spearhead figure

paving the way. God, and God alone, is due the credit.

**JT:** You mentioned young people. What were your goals in telling stories from history?

**AR:** We wanted to instill in young people a sense of our spiritual identity, which did not form in a vacuum but was built on the legacy of the men and women and various movements that came before us. The more we know about these stories, the more we can understand who we are today. One of the big questions young people ask is, Where do I come from? Even Nicodemus asked, What does it mean to be born again? Through this series we hope to educate and inspire young people in particular with answers to this question and motivate them to live for God today.

**JT:** Is there a specific episode that you resonate with most?

**AR:** I have a few favorite episodes: "William Tyndale," the ones on Martin Luther, "Is the Reformation Over?," and "Constantine: Compromise

and Controversy.” But perhaps the one that inspires me the most is “Marie Durand.” What I like is that she was an ordinary person, just like any of us. She was not a famous theologian, or a leader, but her resolute commitment and refusal to compromise stands as a strong witness to us. In fact, she was an eighteen-year-old teenager! And she was imprisoned unjustly for almost four decades. Having lost her brother, parents, and husband to persecution and death, all she had to do to be released was to recant, yet instead she etched the word *resist* onto a stone slab in her prison cell. A real inspiration for us today.

on a regular basis, and, as a result, they were growing closer to God and to each other. We believe that we also have a fair number of non-Christians who have been watching online. On one of our videos on YouTube we received a comment that said, “I don’t care about religion, but this is interesting to watch.”

**JT:** How have the videos been used at local churches?

**AR:** Many churches have shown them on a weekly basis, either in Sabbath School or at the beginning of the main worship service. Others have used them in the youth Bible study class or during

people on our history and heritage. Having other languages added in time will also broaden the reach. We are open to having the videos translated with subtitles or voice-over dubbing and currently have subtitles in just under twenty languages, with more being added as people contribute.

**JT:** What is next for you, Adam?

**AR:** There is a new series of videos that will be released weekly from June 2018, charting the history of the Adventist Church. These videos follow the same five-minute format, are filmed on location, and will cover the church’s birth,

*We hope to give young people who follow the series an even greater appreciation of our history and a sense of their identity as Seventh-day Adventists*



Adam Ramdin

**JT:** How has this project made a difference in people’s lives?

**AR:** Numerous people have told us how the stories have both given them a deeper sense of their history and an understanding of where they come from. I was recently at a youth conference, and many of the high-school-aged attendees shared that their teachers used the videos in history or Bible class and that they really enjoyed them. Perhaps one story that stands out is the couple who said that, after watching the videos, they began to study the Bible together

Sabbath afternoon youth programs as discussion starters, along with reading through *The Great Controversy*.

**JT:** So, the five-hundred-year commemoration of the Protestant Reformation has come and gone. How do you see this project living on?

**AR:** The videos and supporting articles that were released in 2017 also cover much more than that event. I believe that they will be a resource that can continue to be used by local churches, youth groups, and teachers to educate

rise in America, and then its expansion around the world. We hope to give young people who follow the series an even greater appreciation of our history and a sense of their identity as Seventh-day Adventists. 📺

- 1 “*Lineage* is a multi-faceted educational tool designed to help you understand your spiritual heritage and explore the links between the past, present, and future.” For more information about this tool and to watch the many episodes available, visit the *Lineage* website at [www.lineagejourney.com](http://www.lineagejourney.com). You can also find *Lineage Journey* episodes on YouTube and Vimeo.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911).

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# Damascus road or Emmaus road?

## *Conversion, nurture, or both?*

We have all heard them. Dramatic stories of conversion. They are appealing. And they are biblical. “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? . . . I am Jesus. . . .’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ ” (Acts 9:3–6, NKJV). Exciting! Damascus road testimonies are often riveting; Emmaus road ones, less so.

Emmaus road experiences, on the other hand, are when God moves on your heart in a gradual, incremental, almost imperceptible way, and looking back you declare, “ ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’ ” (Luke 24:32, NKJV). We know which testimonies get the most attention—but which ones are more valid? Ellen White states, “A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted.”<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament implies that even those nurtured in faith must be born from above (John 3:3, 8),

suggesting some kind of conversion experience. However, although the New Testament describes conversion in the lives of first-generation Christians, it does not describe how those who have been nurtured in the Christian faith experience conversion. As a result, most evangelical Protestant denominations have tended to adopt one of two approaches to children’s faith formation: either the (sometimes dramatic) conversion approach or the (always gradual) nurture approach.<sup>2</sup>

Although these two approaches can be considered “on a continuum with conversion on one end and nurture on the other,”<sup>3</sup> their extremes tend to adopt the following positions:

Conversion	Nurture
Evangelism	Education
Point in time	Process
Personal sin	Original sin
Non-sacramental	Sacramental
Believer’s baptism	Infant baptism
Supernatural	Natural
Crisis/experience	Developmental
Decision/choice	Learned behavior <sup>4</sup>

Adventist praxis has tended to emphasize nurture; however, as evidenced above, an Adventist understanding of children’s faith formation does not fit neatly into the nurture perspective. What should we be aiming for—the Damascus road or the Emmaus road?

### Conversion and youth: The Damascus road

In the Old Testament, the concept of conversion is portrayed primarily through the Hebrew verb *shubh*, which means, “to turn,” “return,” or “repent” and which is often used to describe “turning away from evil” and “return[ing] to God,” particularly in the sense of returning to an “ ‘original relationship’ ” with God.<sup>5</sup> This turning is the outcome of divine initiative, for it is God who calls human beings to “turn” or “return” to their covenantal relationship with Him.<sup>6</sup> Scholars suggest that the New Testament word *metanoia* can be “understood as the equivalent for the Hebrew *shuv* [*shubh*],”<sup>7</sup> as it implies “look[ing] at the past, at that from which [one] has turned,”<sup>8</sup> and describes a turning “from the direction in which [one was] going to its opposite.”<sup>9</sup> From the various New Testament narratives of conversion, it

is evident that conversion brings about “multifaceted” or wholistic change in the life of the believer.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, both the Old and New Testaments portray conversion as a turning away from sin and turning or returning to a relationship with God and a righteous life, in response to divine initiative. Ellen White asserts that this is a supernatural process brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. While it requires a freely chosen human response, even this choice is enabled by the power of God.

a supernatural transformation, “a new life altogether,” brought about by the power of God.<sup>16</sup>

This does not, however, mean that human beings play no role in their conversion. Although White asserted that “human effort avails nothing without divine power,” she also declared that “divine effort” is “of no avail” without “human endeavor.”<sup>17</sup> However, because God gives human beings free will, He never forces them to choose Him against their will.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the human component of conversion is the choice

was a human turning to God in response to divine initiative.<sup>24</sup>

## Nurture and youth: The Emmaus road

The Old Testament is filled with the theme of adult responsibility to guide and nurture children in the way of the Lord (Exod. 12:26, 27; 13:8; Lev. 23:43; Deut. 6:1, 2; Josh. 4:22, 23; Prov. 22:6; Isa. 38:19). Central to an Old Testament understanding of spiritual nurture is the divine command given in the Shema (Deut. 6:4–9), which asserts that the

*Adventist praxis has tended to emphasize nurture; however, as evidenced above, an Adventist understanding of children’s faith formation does not fit neatly into the nurture perspective.*

Ellen White’s thoughts on conversion developed within the context of her understanding of justification by grace through faith, central to which was her understanding of human sin. On their own, human beings are helpless to overcome the effects of sin. “Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort . . . are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart.”<sup>11</sup> Without the initiative of God’s grace, “all human effort is unavailing”<sup>12</sup> and human beings are forever doomed.<sup>13</sup> It is the Holy Spirit that “makes effectual” what Christ did for humanity on the cross,<sup>14</sup> and it is by the “transforming agency” of the Holy Spirit that human beings can experience conversion, becoming “new creature[s].”<sup>15</sup> Thus, conversion is not a natural process, “a modification or improvement of the old”; rather, it is

to “come to Christ,” central to which is repentance, defined as “sorrow for sin and a turning away from it.”<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the question of *how* individuals experience conversion, “the Spirit of God operates differently with different individuals”;<sup>20</sup> thus, “conversions are not all alike,”<sup>21</sup> sometimes being “imperceptible,”<sup>22</sup> particularly in the lives of those nurtured in faith. Thus, “in working for the conversion of our children, we should not look for violent emotion as the essential evidence of conviction of sin. Nor is it necessary to know the exact time when they are converted.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout her writings, White used the term *conversion* to describe a variety of spiritual experiences, ranging from radical transformation to the daily turning to God that is ideally the experience of every Christian. However, the common element in each of these experiences

foundation of faith is knowledge of the nature of God, which adults are to diligently share with their children through the ordinary tasks of everyday life for the purpose of encouraging children to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. This theme is repeated in the “the first and greatest commandment” of the New Testament (Matt. 22:37, 38, NIV). Furthermore, the admonitions of the Old Testament to guide and nurture children in the way of the Lord are also repeated when fathers are instructed to “bring [their children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4, NIV).

Therefore, the Scriptures are clear that adults are to be diligent in nurturing the faith of children, teaching them to love God with their whole being. This theme of wholistic faith development is echoed in the writings of Ellen White, who viewed adult responsibility

as cooperation with God in the task of nurturing children's love for Him, as well as their ability to choose to follow Him. Central to Ellen G. White's understanding of the spiritual nurture of children was her understanding of the classic theological questions of human sin and divine redemption.

Ellen White did not espouse a purely Augustinian understanding of original sin; however, she believed that while human beings had originally been created in God's image, "through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated,"<sup>25</sup> resulting in a nature with "a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, [they] cannot resist."<sup>26</sup> In His grace, however, God had not left humanity "without hope" and had devised "the plan of salvation."<sup>27</sup> Thus, God's *justifying* grace, "the free gift of God in Christ," was available to all who chose to accept it.<sup>28</sup>

Ellen White, however, also believed in God's *sanctifying* grace, the grace that works in our lives "to change and mold us into [God's] image."<sup>29</sup> Through the power of *sanctifying* grace, "the soul,

paralyzed by sin, the darkened mind, the perverted will" can be "invigorate[d]" and "restore[d]."<sup>30</sup> While White considered *justifying* grace to be free, a gift from God, she believed that *sanctifying* grace required human "co-operation" with the power of Christ.<sup>31</sup> It was in this process of cooperation between "divine grace" and "human effort"<sup>32</sup> that Ellen White saw a role for spiritual nurture or "all educational effort,"<sup>33</sup> for it was through this process that the "image of [the] Maker" could be restored in humankind.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, for Ellen White, "true education" was wholistic; that is, it had "to do with the whole being," resulting in "the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers."<sup>35</sup>

In the early years of a child's life, Ellen White believed that children were like "young trees" that needed to be "tenderly trained."<sup>36</sup> Too often, she warned, young children were "left to *come up* instead of being *trained up*."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, White recognized that children's faith was influenced by more than propositional teaching; that through the

ordinary interactions of daily life parents "connect their children with God";<sup>38</sup> that "the looks, the tone of the voice, the actions,—all have their influence" upon children.<sup>39</sup> Ideally, White believed that these daily interactions between children and parents would "bind the hearts of the little ones to them by silken cords of love," thus beginning to teach them about the love of God.<sup>40</sup>

Consistent with her understanding of the human need to voluntarily choose God, however, White did not assert that diligent spiritual nurture would always result in godly children. Rather, she emphasized the need for parents to mold the child's will, for "in the battle of life," children would need strength of will.<sup>41</sup> Authoritarian parenting might produce outwardly obedient children, much like "well-drilled soldiers"; however, White believed that children trained in this way would ultimately "lack strength and steadfastness" once "the control ceases."<sup>42</sup> Thus, children were to be encouraged to make choices, based on "reason and principle," so that, with

## BRING the children: *Principles of effective children's ministry\**

### Bless them

Christian ministry is Jesus' love in action. Christ's love is the motive, the method, and the hoped-for result. Children's ministry seeks to show Jesus' love to children so that they can know Him and come to love Him too.

### Relate to them

God has created children to develop in a particular way: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. For us to be effective in ministering to children, we need to reach out to them in ways that are appropriate to their stages of development.

### Involve them

Inside the church, we share the life of the congregation with them, involving them fully in the church's worship, fellowship, and outreach. Outside the church we involve them in our recreation, our jobs, and our hobbies—we let them see us living life as Christ's followers. In this way, they learn from us as an apprentice learns from a master craftsman.

### Nurture them

Children's ministry is not merely programs, it is about positive, supportive, and encouraging relationships

in the love of Christ. This is Christian disciple-making. It involves modeling and instruction—and it takes lots of time and focused attention.

### Grow them

Children's ministry is ministry to, with, and through children. Effective children's ministries equip children to minister to others—to peers and even to those who are older. Therefore, give ministry opportunities to children. By involving children actively in the ministries of the congregation, children develop a sense of ownership, a sense of responsibility to the congregation and to its disciple-making mission.

\* Adapted from Ted Johnston, "Principles of Effective Children's Ministry: BRING the Children," Grace Communion International, accessed May 15, 2018, [gci.org/children/5](http://gci.org/children/5).

increasing maturity, they would have the confidence to “think and act for themselves.”<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, the goal of parental guidance and nurture during these earliest years is to develop the child’s “capabilities and powers,” in order that they might become the “human agencies through whom the divine influences can co-operate” later in life.<sup>44</sup> In this task, however, parents were not alone; rather, they were “labourer[s] together with God.”<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the goal of spiritual nurture is to encourage an environment that facilitates optimal spiritual development. In summary, therefore, conversion can be experienced in a variety of ways, and, in the lives of those nurtured in faith, it can occur gradually and almost imperceptibly. The outcome of conversion is wholistic transformation.

This, however, raises an important question: does spiritual nurture leading to the formation of faith mean that a new birth conversion experience is no longer necessary?

### Toward a Seventh-day Adventist theology of children’s faith formation

As outlined previously, the Scriptures appear to portray a tension between, on the one hand, the need for adults to nurture the faith of children and, on the other hand, the need for the new birth of conversion. Thus, while adults are encouraged to create an environment that facilitates optimal spiritual development, the Scriptures do not suggest that optimal spiritual nurture negates the need for conversion. However, while the Scriptures provide counsel on the *how* of spiritual nurture, they do not address the subject of *how* those who are nurtured in faith experience conversion. Thus, Adventist understandings of children’s faith formation have tended to be influenced by Ellen White, who emphasized the importance of spiritual nurture. She also provided practical counsel while asserting that it was not “necessary to know the exact time when [children] are converted.”<sup>46</sup>

### Child faith formation

As a result, Adventist praxis has tended toward a more nurturist emphasis. However, as evidenced above, while the Adventist denomination has never clearly articulated a theology of children’s faith formation, Adventist theology has seemed to be cognizant of the Scriptural tension between nurture and conversion, and thus Adventist praxis does not fit neatly into either the nurture or the conversion approaches adopted by most evangelical Protestant denominations. For example, extreme nurturist approaches tend to adopt an Augustinian understanding of original sin, and thus a sacramental understanding of baptism, resulting in the baptism of infants. In contrast, Adventists believe that humans are born with a tendency to sin, but without the guilt of Adam’s original sin, and thus practice non-sacramental infant dedication and believer’s baptism.

Furthermore, while an extreme nurturist approach views faith formation

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as a natural outcome of careful nurture; rather than as a supernatural process, the Adventist understanding of spiritual nurture, influenced by the writings of Ellen White, has always recognized that faith formation is the work of the Holy Spirit and that adults are not alone in this task; rather, they are “labourer[s] together with God.”<sup>47</sup> And finally, while an extreme nurturist position suggests that faith is the natural outcome of optimal learning and development, Adventist theology has always recognized that Scripture teaches the need for new birth through conversion. Thus, while Adventist praxis has always emphasized the need for wholistic spiritual nurture, Adventist theology has also underscored the importance of recognizing one’s “state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ,”<sup>48</sup> as well as the need for supernatural transformation, a wholistic “change in the heart” that results in “new thoughts, new feelings, new purposes.”<sup>49</sup>

## The bottom line: Discipleship

Thus, as evidenced above, Adventist theology and praxis of children’s faith formation appears to be a synthesis of the nurture and conversion approaches, or what Kevin Lawson has termed a “combined approach.”<sup>50</sup> Lawson suggests that both the conversion and nurture approaches have strengths that can be utilized and weaknesses that need to be addressed. According to Lawson, the conversion approach tends to pressure children to respond to emotional invitations, often resulting in responses based on a desire to please adults rather than the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast, the nurture approach may assume that children come to an understanding of their need for grace through participating in the life of the church and the Christian family, when, in fact, they may just be going through the motions out of a desire to please the adults in their lives, rather than a

genuine understanding of personal sin and their need of forgiveness. The combined approach, suggests Lawson, appears to address the weaknesses while utilizing the strengths of both the Damascus road and the Emmaus road. The combined approach begins with nurture that encourages children to love and serve God and then, as children grow older, provides opportunities for them to recognize their personal sin and need for grace. While not always cognizant of the theology that has informed praxis, the Adventist denomination has always practiced this approach.

Jesus commissioned His followers to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). This commission includes children. A clearer understanding of the theology of children’s faith formation, particularly of the tension between nurture and conversion, can encourage Adventist parents, teachers, and ministers to be more intentional in their approach to discipling children. ☞

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892), 57.
- 2 Scottie May, “Conversion or Nurture of Children: A Survey and Analysis of Post-Bushnell, Popular Literature and Current Curriculum” (unpublished document, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1990).
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# PK for life!

## *This time it's personal*

*This is my story as a preacher's kid growing up in a diversity of cultures and a variety of churches. I realize many preacher's kids may have different and even opposite experiences. My testimony may appear a little negative—but don't give up on me. This is a personal plea to fellow PKs—from one passionate pastor's daughter. So keep reading. "Indeed we count them blessed who endure" (James 5:11, NKJV).*

**T**he challenge with being a preacher's kid (PK) is that you cannot be a normal Christian. To you, Christianity is more than a religion, a spiritual path, or a choice: it is Daddy or Mommy's job—and the church is both a company and a family business.

You were born into this Christian-owned company that just happened to hire your parent, one that consumes much of your family's living room, telephone line, holidays, and weekends. Since you are part of the family, you help.

Because my father is a preacher, he was rarely at home. Not because he did not love me—but because it appeared to me that the church did not love him enough to allow him to care for me the way I know he always wanted to—more than anything. Although he was everyone's minister, that did not matter to me. He was, and is, my superhero—my daddy.

I watched church members latch on to him tightly and the church demand so much of him that by the time Daddy got around to me, he was burned out. While I understood it, at the same time I hated it. Who do church members

think they are? Was my understanding of the problem wrong? Was I a bad girl? I just wanted Daddy. Was that so selfish? When he was home, he was the best playmate and funniest person ever. I could never get enough of him! I loved my daddy so much that I always wanted to be around him and could not understand why all these people had no respect for our relationship.

Well, PKs quickly put that out of their minds and learn, firsthand, how to cope to the best of their ability in order to be around pastor-parent at the same time. You participate. You lead services and activities that others don't want to bother with. You welcome people into your home—no matter what. You get to the church early and leave late, and you learn to be secretive about any and all of your family's faults—especially your own.

You try to avoid getting involved in any mischief no matter how innocent it is—because the adults in the congregation are watching you. In their minds, your perfect behavior is the measure of your preacher-parent's suitability for ministry. Truly, though, you amaze yourself at your ability to play the part of the absolutely perfect Christian, even

before you have even had the opportunity to consider whether you believe it or not. There are just too many faces of desperation, loss, tragedy, and grief at your door—so many crying and hurting people asking, "Why, why, why?"

You love the church members—but you begin to resent them at the same time because they literally drain all of the good stuff out of your pastor-parent. And by the time he or she gets home at the end of a day, you think to yourself, *Compared to the tragedies of a whole community, my problems look so insignificant, and I don't want to be selfish knowing that other people's lives were being fixed all day long.*

Then you watch so many of them come to Christ—eager and excited. But you, as a preacher's kid, do not know how to do that. You have seen too much; know too much. Born with a backstage pass, you met Christianity at its worst. You never got to discover it, fall in love with it, and choose it on your own. While you got the meat and potatoes, they experienced the magic.

As the years pass you grow up and leave home and the shadow of the family business—and suddenly going to church becomes an identity crisis.

Now you have no idea what to do. While you know so much, it feels like so little.

Eventually, you get tired and depressed. Suddenly you think to yourself, *Wait! I don't have to do this!* But then another thought strikes you: *I don't even have to go to church! Or even be a Christian—if I don't want to!* But you have no idea what the alternative might be. Another religion? Abandoning faith altogether? You have no clue what to do. Even worse, you have constantly been told that leaving Christianity would result in hell—something very real to PKs. So, you stay and feel trapped and lost—and fake? But no, not fake, because

sacrifice—but as a PK, I want to cry out: What about Isaac? I understand that my pastor-parent was/is called by God, but don't I matter? Am I expected to just crawl up on the altar and get my throat slit—seriously?

You realize that you are a part of a social minority: one that can never tell its secrets. For if you did, you would cause total despair in the church worldwide. And when you think of the enormity of the world's suffering and how they need this hope so badly . . . suddenly your own needs seem so insignificant. So selfish.

You wonder whether perhaps your

God knows the plans He has for us. God chose me to personally witness the healing of my father from cancer.

God chose me to watch my father maintain his Christian footing and continue to preach the word of God through the civil rights movement.

God chose me to watch the Holy Spirit use my father so that thousands of souls would be saved.

God chose me to have God-fearing parents who raised me the best they knew how, while introducing me to Christ.

God chose me to have the opportunity to experience the fellowship and

*He selected us, because He knew that we would one day take the torch of the gospel and run with it all the way to the kingdom.*

you know that you believe—and always have—very deeply in *something*.

Desperately, you search for support, but you have no one to share it with because your life is a secret. Perhaps you may even seek counseling, only to discover that they are ill-equipped to work with you. After all, we PKs are labeled as being bad with so many issues: angry with God; rebellious; on the edge of atheism, drug addiction, promiscuity; and worse. But the majority of PKs do not match this stereotype. As a matter of fact, we are scared to death of some of the kids of the congregation.

Perhaps you turn to the Bible, which barely mentions the children of divinely called leaders. Of those few stories, the one that stirs me the most is that of Abraham and Isaac. Everyone praises Abraham for his faith and his sacrifice—and everyone praises God for the grace and mercy of stopping the

calling is to be lost . . . so that they can be found.

The problem with being a preacher's kid is just that—a problem. Is it possible for me to work out what it was meant to be—something that will ultimately allow me to acknowledge my journey as a blessing in order to bless others and thus to boldly accept the burning torch from my pastor-parent to make sure the light of God never goes out?

Consider this: God chose me—us—out of millions of kids to assign us the parents we have—preachers—because God knew our parents could not make it without us. We are the select few who can handle the craziness of church life. He selected us, because He knew that we would one day take the torch of the gospel and run with it all the way to the kingdom. Our experiences have made us strong, tough, accepting, nonjudgmental, and, most of all, very loving.

the amazing food shared by so many loving brothers and sisters (minus the mystery casseroles, of course).

God chose me to have the love of my mother, an unforgettable woman of faith, strength, courage, and love.

God chose me—God chose us!

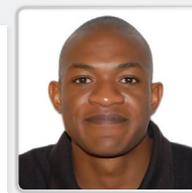
And, you know what? If I had the choice for my life to be different—I wouldn't change a thing. I still want to be like my superhero pastor daddy. I want to preach like him, wear a robe like him, and shout in the pulpit like him. And, most importantly, to love and obey the Lord like him.

Yes, being a PK means going toe-to-toe with the devil. He knows the warriors he's facing—and nobody fights a spiritual battle like a PK.

So, join me. Let's shock the world by taking over heaven—because you know many in our congregations don't expect to see us there—bless their hearts. 🙏

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# Keeping future faith: *Helping youth stay in the church*

## Introduction

Sophia grew up as a pastor's kid in an Adventist family, going through the motions of daily and weekly religious routine. The church in her community did not provide any engaging and relevant activities for the youth, and this made her less than enthusiastic about church and her personal faith. However, with the help of her parents and some concerned adult ministry leaders, she was given the opportunity to organize Sabbath afternoon programs with her sisters that engaged the youth in honest conversation about the Adventist faith-life. Through her involvement in these weekly group meetings, the Bible became relevant for her life. She began to take her faith seriously and grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The church, like any other organization or religion, has concerns about future growth and relevance. What will be the future of the faith we hold so dear? Will there be prepared visionary successors receive the torch of faith when the time comes to leave the stage of church leadership? The answer lies in the priority church pastors and leaders give to the youth in their faith community.

## Defining and understanding youth

Youth can simply be defined as the age between childhood and adulthood.

While there are various age ranges given for this period of human growth, the United Nations describes youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24.<sup>2</sup> A wider scope of the youth considered in this article includes teenagers, adolescents, and young adults. A look at these categories of youth reveals that this is an age of transition and critical changes.<sup>3</sup>

In order to effectively minister to youth, there must be the understanding that every growth stage involves struggle. There is pain because a new birth is taking place. This time, however, it is not a child that is coming; it is an adult who is forming. A new physical appearance facially and bodily, increasing mental capacity, and a wide range of emerging emotions are some examples of the changes of this life phase.<sup>4</sup> While the results of these changes include brilliant minds filled with ideas and potential; seemingly untiring activity, vigor, and zeal; and a growing social network of friends, youth seek answers to the key question, Who am I?

The struggle to define themselves and to find their identity is a significant part of life at this stage.<sup>5</sup> In relation to defining their identity, young people contend with the consequences of their daily life choices, both in the short and long term. Though, in most cases, youth appear confident and sure of what to do, they are in dire need of direction to navigate the confusing options and

conflicting worlds in which they live. It has been observed that youth struggle with the rational and emotional—what they know is right from the Bible and what they feel and see the world do.<sup>6</sup>

Surrounded by a world of different standards and values,<sup>7</sup> Christian youth need a stable and authoritative guide to live out a life of faith in the real world. It is therefore important for pastors and other leaders of the church to recognize this fact as they minister to the youth. They must understand that they are dealing with individuals on a changing and challenging journey of defining their identity and fulfilling their destiny.

## Future concerns

The future is a common concern for every individual, family, and organization. Each considers how to weather the storms and seasons of change in order to survive, remain relevant, and make a sustainable societal difference in years to come. It has been observed that “youth is often viewed as the emerging market the world over . . . , and winning the loyalty of youth is key to any business.”<sup>8</sup> This is also true for the Christian church.

If the preceding observation is taken seriously by pastors and other church leaders alike, it would result in an intentional engagement and involvement of the youth in the church's mission of ministry to the world. This

will prepare them to lead the church today and guarantee that the faith of our fathers will not become extinct tomorrow.

## Why youth leave the church

A recent study on how youth relate to church states, “The ages eighteen to twenty-nine are the black hole of church attendance; this age segment is ‘missing in action’ from most congregations.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to sustain the future of the Christian church and to mature leaders for the church of today, there

pastors and other church leaders can provide meaningful measures to curb this significant phenomenon. The solutions to the first two reasons are simply active involvement and relevance. Interestingly, these two factors work together and feed into each other. When youth are allowed to create, plan, and implement program ideas and activities, it provides meaning and relevance for their faith as they interact with their peers and spiritual leaders in an attempt to impact their community.

Becky remembers how her church actively involved her and her friends after their baptisms working as Sabbath

stay in the church when they experience love, support, and warm acceptance from the adults in their church.<sup>14</sup>

This is most probably the heart of effective youth ministry and the central solution to the problem of youth leaving the church. The major challenge of youth ministry in many church communities is the negative, critical attitude of adults toward youth. This is manifested in the adults’ attitudes of holding high standards of behavior above valuing and loving the person. As youth struggle with making life choices, they make mistakes and suffer consequences. Others try alternatives not in line with

*Intolerance and negative criticism by adult church members is the third major reason why youth leave the church.*

is a need to know why youth leave the faith—and then deal with those causes. Some studies reveal that negative youth perceptions of and experiences with the church are directly related to the lack of desire to be a part of it.<sup>10</sup> Three key reasons include (1) alienation (youth do not feel needed or wanted); (2) irrelevance (the church does not give needed meaning to personal life); and (3) intolerance (members judge others who do not follow the rules).<sup>11</sup>

Pastors and other church leaders need to be aware of these causes and intentionally tackle them. As youth struggle with life changes and choices, looking for answers, they look to the church to provide meaning and direction amid confusion. The absence of needed spiritual leadership that addresses these concerns will lead to the loss of future faith.

## Helping them stay

In light of the previously stated causes for youth leaving the church,

School secretary, Cradle Roll teachers, junior deacons, and members of the social committee when they were in the sixth grade. From those experiences of encouragement from her pastor and other church leaders, she recognized that youth need to be given something to do for the Lord and to feel needed and trusted to get the job done.<sup>12</sup>

By involving and delegating youth in church ministry and mission,<sup>13</sup> pastors and other church leaders provide opportunities for the young people to see that they are important to the church’s mission. When they experience the joy that comes from serving and realize that they are needed by God and His church for mission, then they will stay in the faith.

## Love keeps them

Intolerance and negative criticism by adult church members is the third major reason why youth leave the church. The solution to that is genuine love and acceptance. Studies show that youth

biblical Christianity. In such situations, the youth need to be welcomed, accepted, listened to, loved, forgiven, and then mentored. Unfortunately, in many cases, the scathing remarks and rebukes they receive from some adults leave them disappointed and hurt even more.<sup>15</sup>

After some years of waywardness and straying away from the church, Barry recalls entering the sanctuary dressed in a leather jacket, with hair and hands streaked with grease. Not appropriately attired, and having made a noisy entrance in the parking lot with his motorbike, he expected a negative outburst from the deacons. However, at the end of the service, he was warmly welcomed back by one of the deacons and embraced with tears by a man who had been praying for his return to church. That church experience, along with the unconditional love of his parents, made him remain in the faith and dedicate his life to help other young people come back home to God.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, this atmosphere of love created by the church leaders provides opportunities for youth to address life issues and challenges. Platforms for sharing their questions, comments, and opinions and opportunities to discuss the stories of their faith journey in the real world help young people to be authentic as they express their struggles in the context of genuine love, care, and non-judgmental acceptance. Intergenerational relationships,<sup>17</sup> especially through mentoring,<sup>18</sup> provide avenues for the youth to experience real fellowship,

empowering them to make life choices that are pleasing to God in the present world and shaping them for eternity. Indeed, experiencing the love of genuine fellowship in the church is a unique factor that can help youth remain in the faith.

### Keep hope alive

By (1) helping youth define their identity and make godly life choices, (2) involving them in the mission of the church, and (3) being godly mentors and models of real Christianity, pastors and other church leaders can make

a difference in the lives of the young people they lead and ensure a promising future for the church.

In a world where postmodernism, secularism, and pluralism, with a wide variety of religions and a potpourri of belief systems, are significantly affecting young minds, will authentic biblical faith among the youth become extinct under your watch? Let us pray and work to keep church youth from leaving by helping them to live out their faith in the real world. By so doing, there is hope for future faith. ☞

## A daily petition to God

Last August, a young man at the British Columbia camp meeting, where I was preaching, gave me a book. I had never seen the book before, nor had I heard of the author—but the man told me there were more than 600,000 copies of the book circulating the world in 29 languages. Little did I know this short book would end up dramatically changing my life—the way I pray, the way I preach, the way I relate to others—it has changed my ministry.

In all my years of schooling, of preaching and teaching, nobody ever told me or taught me that the Bible and Ellen White teach us to *daily* petition God for a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. How could I have gone this far through pastoring and preaching and have never learned so compelling a truth?

But that is what Helmut Haubeil's book *Steps to Personal Revival—Being Filled With the Holy Spirit* has taught me. By the time I returned home from that camp meeting, I had read the book—in fact I have now read it four times. My life is changed—you can ask my wife and the people I pastor.

For years I have preached on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—a series of sermons on this vital theme. But now I have discovered a way to meet with

Jesus every morning and do just as He did every morning with the Father—ask for a fresh baptism of His Spirit.

Humbly I testify that God has raised the bar on my prayer life. I used to spend much time in the Word and a comparatively short time in actual prayer. Now my practice is reversed—I spend much time on my knees in my early morning prayer closet in communion with God and then turn to His Word for His communication with me.

My preaching is experiencing a new freedom and intensity. My leadership with my team and people has been raised to another level. Suddenly coincidences (what one writer calls synchronicity) are multiplying—it is as if someone is orchestrating my days and nights, my “chance” meetings, emails, and conversations. It is as if the Holy Spirit is personally directing my waking hours (and even my sleeping ones). In fact, I have come to know Him as a very personal and truly dear Friend.

Why am I telling you this? I have nothing to gain from this testimony—but I am deeply convicted that you do. Jesus is coming soon. We still have a world, an entire generation, to reach with the everlasting gospel. We simply cannot accomplish that mission on our

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own. Our only hope is to learn what Jesus knew, to practice what Paul and the first disciples lived. We must have the *daily* baptism of the Holy Spirit upon our lives and ministries. The only way we will have it is if we humbly, daily, ask for it.

I do not know who you are, but I am praying for you as I write this. The promised gift is yours and mine for the asking. After all, did Jesus not promise us: “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who [Greek—daily, continually] ask Him!” (Luke 11:13, NIV)?

Won't you join me in that daily asking? You may download a free PDF of this book right now at the *Steps to Personal Revival* website, [www.steps-to-personal-revival.info](http://www.steps-to-personal-revival.info). ☞

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- 1 The brief story is a summary of Sophia's written testimony sent to me by email. Since that experience in East Africa, Sophia remains a committed Seventh-day Adventist and lives with her parents and siblings in the Caribbean island of Jamaica.
- 2 "United Nations Youth: Definition of Youth," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Fact Sheet, 1, accessed May 16, 2018, [un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf](http://un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf).
- 3 Theresa Plemmons Reiter, *Nelson's Youth Minister's Manual* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 17.
- 4 "Understanding Pathfinders," in *The Pathfinder Basic Staff Training Course* (n.p.: Youth Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2004), 19–37; Michael O. Akpa, *The African Youth Today: A Practical Approach to Working Effectively With the Contemporary African Young People* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Agbo Areo Publishers, 2001), 1–3.
- 5 Reiter, *Youth Minister's Manual*, 18.
- 6 "It appears that the reason teens have real trouble making consistently sound judgments is that the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for control, is still developing, making them more likely to be driven by emotional response rather than reason. This may explain why they will mentally assent to abstinence from a certain 'at-risk' behavior, such as

- drinking alcohol, but will simultaneously take a drink when a friend offers it to them at a party." Barry Gane, *Loving Them Back, Leading Them Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009), 39.
- 7 As youth grow, they face the challenge of living in conflicting cultures simultaneously. The standards and values of the home, indigenous culture/tradition, and religion many times conflict with those affirmed by their peers living in contemporary culture. In many cases, behaviors and practices disapproved by home, traditional culture, and religion are approved by youth culture. Consequently, youth end up confused and, most times, live a double life to please every side. Akpa, *African Youth Today*, 3–15.
  - 8 Sam George, "Emerging Youth Cultures in the Era of Globalization: TechnoCulture and TerrorCulture," in *One World or Many: The Impact of Globalisation on Mission*, ed. Richard Tiplady (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2003), 43.
  - 9 David Kinnaman with Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 22.
  - 10 Some examples of these studies can be found in the following sources: Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights From Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 69; Roger Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a*

- 10-Year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 61–65; Gane, *Loving Them Back*, 15–20.
- 11 Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave*, 61–65.
  - 12 Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave*, 209–212.
  - 13 Ikechukwu Michael Oluikpe, "The Need for Spiritual Youth Leadership in the 21st Century" *Youth Ministry Accent*, 3rd quarter 2010, 52.
  - 14 Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave*, 194, 196, 198, 199; A. Allan Martin, "Embracing Those Who Reject Religion: An Interview With Roger Dudley," *Ministry*, January 2009, 19; Clint Jenkin and A. Allan Martin, "Engaging Adventist Millennials: A Church That Embraces Relationships," *Ministry*, May 2014, 7–9; Kumar Dixit, Kyle Steimsma, and Rajinnee Sigamoney Dixit, "Why Young People Are Sticking With Church," *Ministry*, March 2016, 13, 14.
  - 15 Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave*, 67; Jenkin and Martin, "Engaging Adventist Millennials," 8, 9.
  - 16 Dr. Barry Gane shares this personal life story in his book *Loving Them Back, Leading Them Home*, 7–12.
  - 17 Jenkin and Martin, "Engaging Adventist Millennials," 7, 8.
  - 18 See the following articles about the importance and effect of godly mentoring: S. Joseph Kidder, "The Blessing of Spiritual Mentoring," *Ministry*, April 2017: 21–25; Kathleen Beagles, "Growing Disciples in Community," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 151.

## LETTERS *continued*



interested me ("Unity Aids Mission and Mission Serves Unity"). I was particularly interested in his remarks on *echad*, the Hebrew word for the numeral 1. Some feel that this word in Deuteronomy 6:4 really means three and not one.

While it is true that in Hebrew, as well as in English, this word representing the numeral 1 is sometimes used to represent more than one, however, in its over five hundred usages in the Old Testament, it is by far used more often as a numeric equivalent rather than representing a "compound oneness." Because the word can mean either one or a unity of persons, how do we determine whether it means three or one?

A Jewish rabbi would immediately tell us that it represents one person. And, who would know better than a Jewish scholar? However, we cannot interpret the Bible by what even a scholar of our times would say it means, for the Bible must be interpreted by itself.

When the scribe came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus immediately quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 by saying, "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." Jesus used here the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew [*echad*] for the numeral 1, and then proceeded to summarize the two tables of the law showing the scribe the importance of loving God supremely and his neighbor as himself.

In this summary, the scribe agreed, saying, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is no other but he" (Mark 12:32). And Jesus, seeing he answered discreetly, said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The pronoun "he" used by the scribe is singular, and Jesus was pleased with his answer and in no way tried to correct it. This same idea of the Father's headship in the Godhead is expressed in 1 Corinthians 8:6. "But to us there is one God, the Father, of

whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him."

The real question to be asked is, does *echad* represent more than one person in this verse?

—Jerry Prouty, *Newman Lake, Washington, United States*

### **Response from the author**

Moses chose to use the word *echad*. The Hebrew language has other options that Moses could have used that never refer to a compound unity. However, Moses used *echad*, which he had also used in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Adam and Eve became *echad*! So, one's understanding of God—the picture of God that one has—really predetermines the understanding of *echad* in Deuteronomy 6:4.

—Arthur Steele

COMING SUMMER 2018

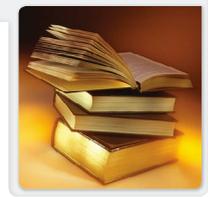
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## ***Preaching With Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons***

by Matthew D. Kim, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

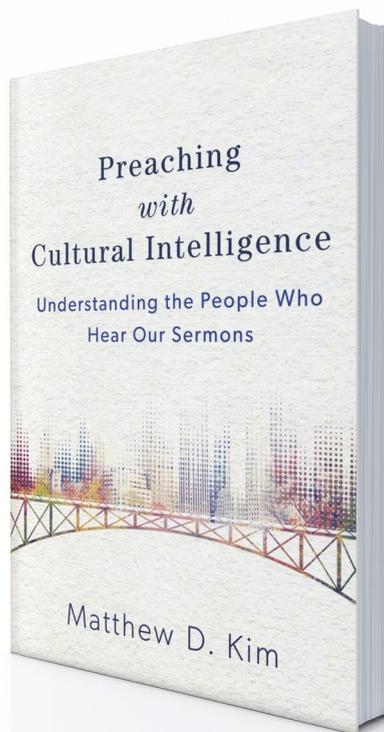
With more congregations becoming increasingly diverse, homiletics are required to preach with cultural intelligence. *Preaching With Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons*, by Matthew D. Kim (associate professor of preaching and ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), provides a practical framework for preachers who have a vested interest in augmenting their “competence to preach with greater cultural understanding and sensitivity” (4).

The book is divided into two parts. In part 1, “Cultural Intelligence in Theory,” Kim provides a succinct overview of seminal research done on cultural intelligence (CQ), applying David Livermore’s four stages of cultural intelligence (CQ drive, CQ knowledge, CQ strategy, and CQ action) to the field of homiletics. In part 2, “Cultural Intelligence in Practice,” he transitions into illustrating how to apply the homiletical template he developed to the five different cultural contexts of denominations, ethnicities, genders, locations, and religions.

The homiletical template is an 18-step model, which is divided into three stages, represented by the acronyms HABIT, BRIDGE, and DIALECT. Stage 1 lays the foundation that “preaching with cultural intelligence begins with hermeneutics, and not with the values of a particular cultural context” (34). In stage 2, Kim discusses the steps involved in conducting a cultural exegesis of one’s audience, with the sole objective of building a bridge to connect with them. Stage 3 explores seven mechanics of preaching, which assist the preacher in delivering

messages that are intentional and culturally relevant.

So as to avoid any misunderstanding that may arise in the mind of the reader, the author spends quality time distinguishing the nuances that exist between ethnicity, race, and culture. Kim quotes *race* as “‘inherited physical traits;’” while *ethnicity* refers to a



“‘people group,’” and *culture* speaks to “*the way of living, way of thinking, and way of behaving*” (96; emphasis in original). Culturally intelligent preachers are therefore cognizant of the fact that, although their hearers may all belong to the same race, they do not all belong to the same ethnic group or all live, act, or think alike. Consequently,

all these factors must be considered during the sermon preparation and delivery process.

Preaching with cultural intelligence is not an easy feat to accomplish. Kim reminds his readers that this process requires “varying degrees of self-sacrifice and the commitment to stretch ourselves beyond our limits of comfort and . . . even to make cultural faux pas on account of our ignorance” (216). Lest his readers are tempted to think that developing cultural intelligence in preaching is a daunting task not to be attempted, Kim provides a number of personal experiences illustrating his own journey. These snippets from the author’s world, scattered throughout the book, create a picture of transparency and authenticity. Though the growth process in cultural intelligence demands a protracted amount of time and may result in altering habits of life, readers readily deduce that they are not alone on this journey.

Although the book primarily targets homiletics, it will prove beneficial to anyone who has a heartfelt desire to be more culturally aware of how they interact with others.

In summary, Kim does a masterful job at demonstrating how, through a careful exegesis of Scripture, culture, and one’s self, the preacher will deliver more effective sermons that will reach the hearts of both the giraffes (the insiders) and the elephants (the others) within the congregation. Preaching with cultural intelligence is worth it! 📖

—Reviewed by Rodney Anthony Palmer, DMin, assistant professor of religion (preaching and ministry), Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

## ► Young Adventists in action for a day

**Worldwide**—“Simply fantastic!” This is the reaction of many that assisted with Global Youth Day (GYD2018), a special day coordinated by **Pako Mokgwane**, an associate youth director of the General Conference, where about eight million youth worldwide participated in the fifth edition under the motto “Be the sermon.” And they were.

This year, the main theme was “Food & Water Drive.” From Fiji to Zimbabwe, youth animated a long series of programs, distributing water and food along the way, in schools, nursing homes, and everywhere they went.

From the faces of the people receiving, it was easy to see their wonder at such generosity. From the faces of the young people participating, it was



Photo: Corrado Cozzi

clear that distributing the food and water was much more than a generous gesture. It was a gesture in response to Jesus’ call when He said that He was hungry and thirsty, and we gave Him food and drink.

The youth were very original in their ideas of different ways to distribute food and water, especially water. Some of the projects provided a bottle of water to the people that they encountered. Some focused on the necessity of providing fresh water in homes and supported the construction of a pipe system. Some projects provided water for agriculture in dry-climate countries.

Some chose to use the water to clean homes.

The most original project was in Hong Kong, where young people organized a dog-cleaning service.

Some projects replicated last year’s topic, donating blood. Others focused on a health assessment (blood pressure, blood sugar levels) for many of the communities’ elderly folks.

Some youth sang for homeless people at a shelter where they could come together and get a warm meal.

“One in four children go to bed hungry every night”

(in some parts of the world), explained one of the youth leaders working with his youth in community service. “We packed ten thousand meals today. Each package feeds a family of six. That’s sixty thousand people to be fed.” A good



Photo: Corrado Cozzi

number of children went to bed well-fed that night.

It is worthwhile to also identify a group of deaf youth in Spain that animated a simple but effective program: “hugs for free.” And as in the previous events, the hosts of GYD2018 were the awesome **Kerhys Sterling** and **Sam Gungaloo**. They accompanied the youth along the journey with their invaluable sympathy.

**Sam Neves**, Communication associate director at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, stated, “These young Adventists are fully determined to be the sermon as they reach out to their friends. They gave themselves to their community. It could be something that impacts an entire community or something as small as a smile. There are many ways to be the sermon.”

The new General Conference youth director, **Gary Blanchard**, was excited to participate for the first time in this special marathon. “Just remember, guys,” he concluded, “the Young Adventist’s Day is not just one day, but rather every day. Continue to *be* the sermon.” [Corrado Cozzi, CD-EUDNews]

## ► Digital world, digital church, digital God

**Binfield, United Kingdom**—Do you read the Bible on your phone? Do you connect with other church members on Facebook? Do you watch church online? Is it possible that, in a networked world, God will somehow look different? **Tim Hutchings**, research fellow in Digital Discipleship at St.

John’s College of Durham University, looked at these and questions like them in Newbold’s March Diversity lecture. His lecture offered important reflections for believers using technology on their journey of faith.

He began by looking at the concerns that people had when technology first

began to impact the life of the church. Is it possible, people asked 20 years ago, that God in a networked age will look, somehow, different? Would “mediatization” take place; that is, the reshaping of ideas to fit the logic of the media? Alternatively, would religious communities reinvent and reimagine technology



Photo: Victor Hulbert



according to their own core values and beliefs? Would our ideas change, or would we change the technology to protect the shape of our ideas?

Some people thought that the internet was going to compete with religion—that churchgoing would vanish as people watched church online from the comfort of their armchairs. Religious leaders were very worried about the effects on their authority of the more democratic social media. On the internet, the church would be unable to impose its rules on the community.

People who saw in the internet potential for the creation of community were more optimistic. They believed, rightly as it turned out, that the internet would create new voices, rituals, and communities. Small experimental online communities, like *The Church of Fools*, were developed, said its creators, to follow the example of John Wesley in “taking church to where people are in the twenty-first century—on the net.”

“What is really happening,” Dr. Hutchings said, “is that the internet is now just part of everyday life. Online church is part of religious life, not an alternative. Online church services attract people who were going to church anyway or who wanted to but

were prevented by sickness, disability, or other limitations. Online religion has just become part of the mix. Some groups are adapting and thriving, and some people, like the pope on Instagram, have discovered a way of using the media that works for them.”

What about electronic versions of the Bible, such as YouVersion, to which a lot of resources have been devoted? As the Bible ceases to be a heavy paper book and can be easily accessed on one’s phone, new practices are emerging. The Topverses website, which lists those texts read most frequently on the internet, suggests that people are most

likely to access verses that give them hope and encouragement. Technical and theoretical parts of Scripture that have very little everyday application to twenty-first century life tend to be sidelined. Electronic reading of the Bible may be enabling the development of a less traditional canon.

Dr. Hutchings completed his lecture with a case study of the Scripture Union’s Bible adventure app *Guardians of Ancora*, developed in the hope that it would be a safe place for children, families, and church groups to explore their own faith and reflect on the impact of the Bible stories outside the game. He pointed out that if it is to be handled with integrity and if the game is to have any credibility, the Bible story it tells cannot be changed. He suggested that the game might offer factual biblical knowledge; he seemed less certain that the game would contribute to the development of personal faith in children.

As usual, the Q&A ranged far and wide. Questions about the limitations of faith mediated through technology, the place of emotions online as opposed to emotion in personal faith, the nature of “liquid Scripture,” and the successful use of Twitter by religious leaders. There were lots of ideas meriting further thought by those in the room and, of course, those watching on the Newbold livestream. [Helen Pearson, *tedNEWS*]



Photo: Victor Hulbert

## ► Reaching millennial generations event includes open invitation to be proactive

**Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States**—For years, we have been saying we have a problem with young people and the church,” said **Allan Martin** during the opening plenary session of the Reaching Millennial Generations event at Andrews University (AU) April 10, 2018. “Well, we have a problem if we keep repeating that phrase but do nothing about it.” Martin, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and researcher, was among the score of presenters and hundreds of people who gathered to network, discuss, and get acquainted with new and proven methods of reaching younger generations for Christ.

“We are talking about the largest generation of young adults in human history,” said Martin. “In many senses, it’s a generation like no other.” For youth leaders, working with millennials can present wonderful opportunities, presenters noted.

“I’m privileged to work with millennials every day of my life, and I know



Photo: Andrews University

they don’t want business as usual,” said Andrews University president **Andrea Luxton** in greeting the audience. “We need their creativity, their perspective, their ideas.”

At the same time, relating to millennials can present a unique set of challenges. “How do we reach people

who take little pieces of this and that?” wondered Adventist Church Global Mission Centers director **Homer Trecartin**. “How do you relate to people who think nothing is an absolute in their lives?”

Experts agree that current developments in technology and society, in general, have presented challenges never anticipated. “Post-Christian and secular—no doubt, we are living in a very complicated world,” acknowledged AU Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary dean **Jiří Moskala**. “Young people are bombarded from every corner. But there is a silver lining as current challenges have triggered essential discussions. It has led us to reflect on the topic, which is very good,” he said.

Martin’s presentation did not try to sugarcoat current challenges to millennials’ engagement in church. He said, “Millennials are asking, ‘Does church really matter?’ These are young adults who consider themselves fans of Jesus



Photo: Andrews University



but not of the church. Many feel they cannot ask the more pressing questions at church. And technology gives them answers which seem to make sense but [are] not necessarily the truth.”

Martin shared three hands-on suggestions that he thinks can jumpstart greater engagement and interactions with millennials.

“First,” he said, “we need real dialogue—we need to stop ignoring white elephants in the room. We must foster intergenerational relationships with millennials by being willing to discuss science, sexuality, and other hot topics in a nonthreatening environment,” he said. In accomplishing this, the impact of older church members can be essential. “For millennials, a youth pastor is a paid friend, so it often doesn’t count,” he explained. “They need older meaningful people in their lives who

get interested in their activities. And a small, simple act can go a long way to reach out to them,” Martin said.

Another element in relating to millennials is showing forgiveness and acceptance. Martin said he is thankful that in many places, it is already happening. “Millennials are developmentally in process,” he said. “We must have patience—patience to build relationships before judging them.” Drawing a parallel with Jesus’ parable of the lost son in Luke 15, he said older members should be willing to go the extra mile to reclaim young people who have distanced themselves from the church. “It is the host of the party who chases the eldest son and invites him to come back,” he said.

Finally, Martin suggested that older members create spaces for sharing stories. “Starting all your interacting

with ‘When I was your age’ is a turnoff,” he said. “A turn-up, on the contrary, is simply replying, ‘Tell me more,’ and being open to listen.” Talking, however, is not the only thing you can do with millennials. “Taking part in intergenerational mission trips, for instance, is a proven method of creating spaces for meaningful interactions,” Martin said.

“Above all, and despite what statistics say, it is essential we remember millennials are not numbers—they are actual people,” said Martin. He invited everyone to think and write down the names of three millennials in their home churches and to pray specifically for each one of them. “It is crucial we know young people so well that we can pray for their needs and dreams,” Martin concluded. “Prayer will work wonders.” [Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*] 25

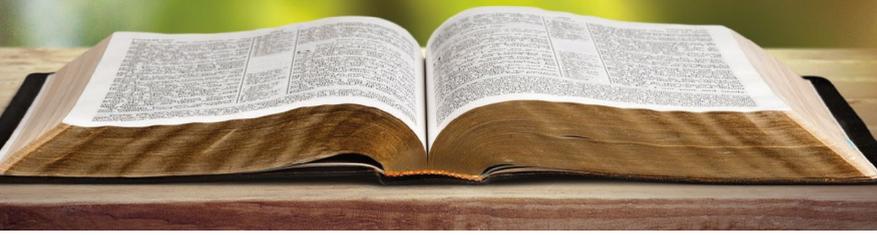
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David Fournier, serves as vice president, chief client care officer at Adventist Risk Management, Inc., Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



# What about the children? Building a safety culture in your church

Christian churches should reflect our values of caring for people's well-being and safety—especially the children. I remember visiting a church some years ago where the carpet was buckled and peeling back in sections, the lights were dim, and it did not seem as though paint had visited the walls in some time. The entire property appeared poorly maintained and created a negative impression. Perhaps less consciously, I sensed that this was not a secure location, and I was never at ease there.

The idea of the church as a light-house has more than a metaphorical or strictly spiritual sense. A location that is attractive to its members and community includes a physically cared for building with members who provide excellent hospitality. It should be a place where attendees are ensured they have a place to park, will not trip and fall, and can fellowship and worship in a clean and serviceable environment.

The priorities of a church are often based on the areas that the pastor values and understands. This is not unusual, as many organizations reflect the personality of their leader. If our churches are going to be more effective in risk management, we must raise our awareness and knowledge in the practical aspects of preventing injury and loss.

What can a pastor do to enhance or influence a culture of safety in their congregation? What are some practical steps you can take to empower volunteers to take up the tasks that will ensure that your facility is not perceived as weak, neglected, and vulnerable?

The first step would be to acknowledge that safety, security, and maintenance should be a priority of the leadership team. Discuss these

ideas with the leadership, and engage the team in the process of promoting safety as a priority and implementing next steps.

The second step is to empower a point person who can work with ministry leaders to effect change and spearhead projects that improve risk management in collaboration with leadership and participants at your church. We recommend to many churches that they have a safety committee. Include leadership on the committee, as well as individuals who serve in key ministry functions. The group should address issues and ensure that critical processes are moving forward. This also helps to engage more people in leading the culture change.

The following four issues should be addressed:

- *Child protection.* Ensure that an effective child protection plan is in place and that it has been communicated to all parties.<sup>1</sup>
- *Self-inspection.* Review your physical plant for safety issues through a periodic self-inspection of your facility. We recommend doing this at least once a year as a starting place. More frequent inspections are better. Online tools are available to assist you in conducting the self-inspection of the building. Adventist Risk Management, Inc., provides a free form on their website that can assist you in organizing the inspection. It lists the items that you should inspect, such as fire extinguishers, exit signs, the baptistry, mothers' rooms, kitchen, fellowship halls, and more.<sup>2</sup>
- *Preventative maintenance.* Be sure that maintenance is scheduled and done regularly and that the

property is prepared in advance for seasonal changes if you live in an area that has hot or cold seasons or potentially serious weather patterns. Keep records of maintenance and upkeep.

- *Emergency planning.* Emergency planning is an ongoing process that should address the types of emergencies your congregation may face. Be sure that the plan is in place, effective, practiced, and adjusted as needed.

As you address issues at your church, be mindful of your church organization's structure. Who should set or create policies? What part of the organization is responsible for signing contracts? How are insurance policies structured? Work with your denominational leadership to navigate these issues adequately and efficiently.

I have seen churches that take actions, make policies, and sign contracts without proper authority or understanding of the more significant implications of such actions. When a loss happens, the validity of the contract, for example, is questioned and becomes an issue because they had no authority to enter the agreement in the first place.

It is up to you, as the leader of your church, to take the first step in raising these issues during an upcoming staff or board meeting. Set a date for your next meeting, and include "Safety and Risk Management" on your meeting agenda. ☞

<sup>1</sup> [https://adventistrisk.org/adventist\\_risk/media/arm/safety%20sabbath/pdfs/english/guide\\_ssactiveshooterteacherbooklet\\_nadeng.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://adventistrisk.org/adventist_risk/media/arm/safety%20sabbath/pdfs/english/guide_ssactiveshooterteacherbooklet_nadeng.pdf?ext=.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> For this and other church safety resources, visit the Adventist Risk Management Church Safety web page at [adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/church](http://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/church).

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