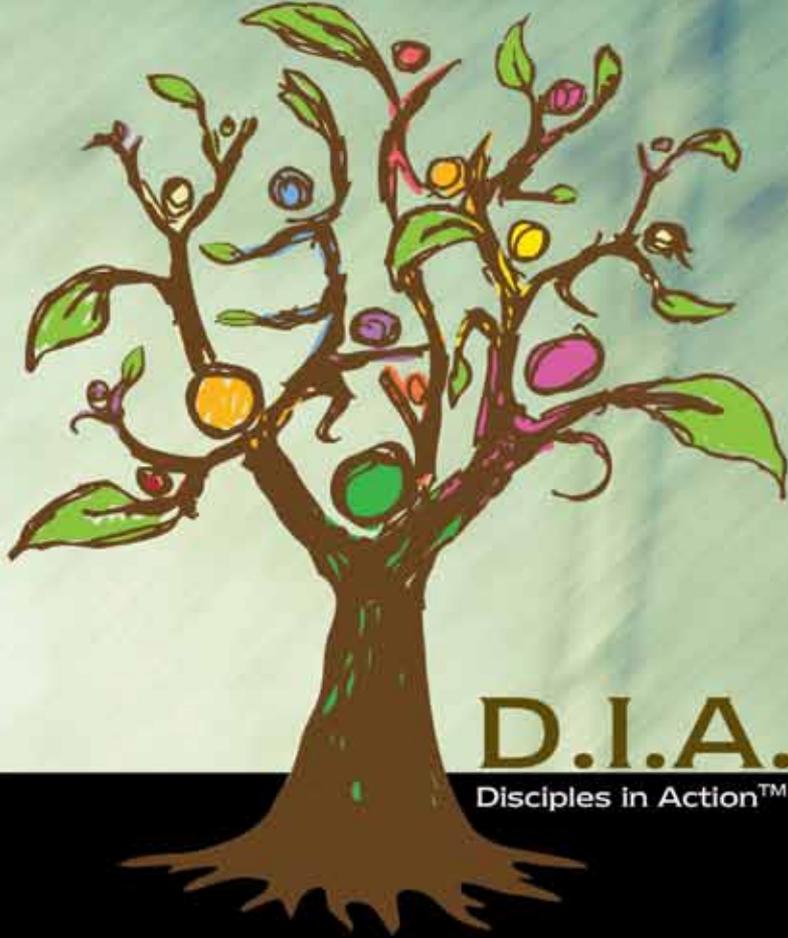


SERIES THREE

relationships

connecting with each other



D.I.A.
Disciples in Action™

GROW REFLECT REVEAL

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST



participant's guide

third in a five series course to help you on your discipleship Journey

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D.I.A.

Disciples in Action™

series 3

a five series course to help you on your discipleship journey

Produced by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® Youth Ministries Department

Disciples in Action™ Participant's Guide. Series Three

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how to use this book

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with some general instructions to meet your individual needs.

The main body is written like a conversation you would have with a friend. It is designed to assist you in your discipleship journey. While it is recommended that you follow the process as set out in the book, please feel free to reorganize the material to respond to and maximize your own circumstances and opportunities.

The *Together Growing Fruitful Disciples* (TGFD) framework, on which this curriculum is based, is the scope of learning. While it does not necessarily describe all the tools considered valuable for you in your spiritual journey, it identifies a core of learning that is essential for everyone. There are many different ways to approach this curriculum, but regardless of the approach, it will represent the beginning point of a discipleship journey! However, the completion of this book should not be viewed as the culmination of the discipleship process, but rather as an essential step in your ongoing discipleship journey. It should answer the questions, “What will life look like after this series?” “What is the expected outcome?”

The suggested length of each session is 90 minutes.

Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI): This suggested pre and post session activity can be found at www.growingfruitfuldisciples.org/gdi. This eighty-four-question inventory is aligned with the TGFD framework to aid in determining areas of growth that have taken place in a disciple’s life and areas in which one needs to grow. The online version includes a graphic representation of the inventory results as well as a Spiritual Growth Action Plan. For those of you who may not have access to the Internet or would like to allow others to experience the inventory without having to go through the entire online version, the “short form” version, available on page 84, is an excellent alternative.



connector

This is the Bible text: the power base of each study. Whether it is one verse or several chapters long, this will provide the link between the mind and the heart. (“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV).



themes

The themes for each session are derived from the indicators that are listed for each commitment.



big idea

This is one statement that sums up the essence of the session. It serves as the intersection between the themes and the topic.



journey (60 minutes)

- **Exploration** (30-40 minutes) is the biblical and philosophical exploration of the main ideas on which the session is built. Each session will include interactive learning to help lead the group in the most effective way possible. **Note:** The leader should make sure to make the interactive sessions exciting and natural. Feel free to adjust each exercise to the size of the group. Familiarize yourself with the “interaction” segments before the session and make sure to infuse excitement into each illustration.
- **Reflection** (10-15 minutes) should focus on helping the participant reflect and respond to the truths they have just discovered. Questions are included in this section.
- **Application** (10-15 minutes) shows how the lessons can be applied to everyday life.



dig deep

Dig Deep is optional and may not be found in all lessons. It provides informative sidelights that add insight to a particular passage, word, fact, or Core Belief. These can also provide insights on youth culture, current events, and philosophy throughout each study.



from the pen of Ellen G. White

Where appropriate, relevant quotes from the writings of E. G. White are included throughout each session.



disciples in action

This is where the writer pulls a challenge from the lesson for the participant to act on using what they have learned during this session.



mentors

Before beginning, identify someone you can trust and respect to be your mentor. Information on the mentoring program can be found on page 74, and the application on page 82.



leader's note

This is handy information that will help coach the leader throughout the meeting.



debriefing

This session intends to summarize and invite responses to the previous sessions and tie them all together. By this time you should have already been putting into practice some, if not all, of what was studied and suggested in the previous sessions. Now you can discuss what works and what does not work for you and examine if you are embracing the life changing habits or disciplines that have been presented and discussed.

Plan the Work. Work the Plan!

**Starting over
or just taking
a bold step?**

D.I.A.
Disciples in Action™

**the youth and young adults discipleship curriculum
that will help you on your journey toward an
authentic walk with Jesus.**

introduction

“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1, NKJV).

It’s often believed that being a disciple of Jesus is an “automatic” event. Once you’ve accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, all you have to do is read the Bible and pray and all will be well. Of course, those are imperative to the Christian journey. But *how* do we read the Bible? *How* do we pray? *How* do we best open our hearts and minds so that the Holy Spirit can do His work in us? That’s what *Disciples in Action* (DIA) is all about!

DIA is built on the Together Growing Fruitful Disciples (TGFD) framework. This framework is the foundation of a discipleship model designed to help us think more clearly and deeply about the spiritual growth and maturity of ourselves and others as disciples of Jesus Christ. It identifies four growth processes around which we believe the disciple’s journey occurs:

- **Connecting:** Growing in relationship with God, others, and self
- **Understanding:** Growing in knowledge of Jesus and His teachings
- **Ministering:** Growing in participation of God’s mission of revelation, reconciliation, and restoration
- **Equipping:** Growing in the body of Christ by walking alongside other disciples in order to support, nurture, and strengthen in love

All four processes in this model are centered on and accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Separating these processes may seem artificial, but it does allow us to bring clarity to vital aspects of discipleship that might otherwise be overlooked.

In this model, *commitments* for the growing Christian are articulated for each of the individual processes. Within each process, *commitments* are further divided into key aspects of spiritual growth called *indicators*. These *indicators* represent behaviors through which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ. They also represent a lifetime of following Jesus.

Spiritual Mentors (or Partners, Companions) are crucial in our discipleship journey, as revealed in the *equipping* aspect of this model. Actually, the support, nurture, and strengthening derived from our walking alongside each other in this journey is foundational. Thus, you'll find in this DIA curriculum that each participant is to be assigned a mentor right from the start.

Whether the person is much older or just a little older, the mentor should be someone who the participant can trust and look to as a role model for learning how to live the Christian life. Some qualities of a mentor should include:

- a willingness to share his/her walk with God.
- sincerity and honesty in sharing their faith stories.
- openness in communication.
- a willingness to provide support and encouragement by listening and giving honest feedback without trying to force change. (Spiritual accountability is not about giving up control. It is about allowing another person to help us accomplish spiritual goals that we have set for ourselves.)

Another element of growing is that of assessment. It answers the question, "How am I doing?" Of course, each person's journey is unique; the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be replicated in a lab as we do vitamins and pharmaceuticals! "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8, NKJV). However, it is possible to assess the direction of one's life. Thus, the DIA curriculum directs leaders to utilize the Growing Disciples Inventory (GDI), located at www.growingfruitfuldisciples.org/gdi. This eighty-four-question inventory is aligned with the TGFD framework to aid in determining areas of growth that have taken place in a disciple's life and areas in which one needs to grow. The online version includes a graphic representation of the inventory results as well as a Spiritual Growth Action Plan.

The inventory is also available on page 84 as a "short form" that contains only twenty questions. For those of you who may not have access to the Internet or would like to allow others to experience the inventory without having them go through the entire online version, the short form is an excellent alternative.

Scripture encourages us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12b, 13, NKJV). While it is God's work in us through His Holy Spirit, the DIA curriculum is an excellent tool to help young people experience God's work in their lives and to assist them in trusting Him to that work.

SESSIONS ELEVEN-A/B

by *Ronald Flowers*

developing Christ-centered family relationships



Dr. Ron Flowers is a retired director of the Family Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He holds a Ph.d in ministry with an emphasis in marriage and family counseling from Denver Seminary, and he is the author or co-author with his wife, Karen, of more than thirty major books including a curriculum on sexuality entitled *Human Sexuality: Sharing the Wonder of God's Good Gift with Your Children* (Family Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2003), which has been translated to ten languages. He and his wife have presented family life seminars on marriage, parenting, and family living in some 85 countries.



theme

To develop Christ-centered family relationships,
I am:

- recognizing that my commitment to Christ defines every human relationship.
- contributing, supporting, and extending unconditional love to those within my family circle.
- holding as sacred my family commitments and responsibilities to parents, siblings, and extended family.
- practicing hospitality, welcoming into my family or home those whom God brings to my attention.



big idea

God made us social beings and placed us in families. He has provided through Christ the divine resources to help us live in unity and harmony.



connector

Look: Gen. 1:26; 2:22-25; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 127:1; Eph. 2:14-22; 5:21-6:4; 1 John 2:9-11; 4:8, 16

Memorize: “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’” (Gen. 1:26).



THE JOURNEY exploration

A rabbi once asked his students, “How can we determine the hour of dawn, when the night ends and the day begins?”

One student suggested, “Is it when you can distinguish between a dog and a sheep in the distance?”

“No,” the rabbi answered.

“Is it when you can distinguish between a fig tree and a grapevine?” asked a second student.

“No,” said the rabbi.

“Please tell us the answer then,” urged the students.

Said the wise teacher, “It is when you have enough light to look human beings in the face and recognize them as your brothers and sisters. Until then the darkness is still with us” (Adapted from Henri Nouwen, “Adam’s Peace,” *Signs of the Times*, May, 1989).

The rabbi was giving his students important lessons about human relationships—that ultimately we as human beings are

all one family and how we relate to one another is profoundly significant. We cannot tell if the rabbi had ever read the letter of 1 John, but his teaching illustrates very well the truth found there (cf. 1 John 2:9-11).

designed for relationships

We have been created in the image of a relational God who is revealed in Scripture as three persons in close communion with each other—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 3:16, 17). Human beings bear within them the need and capacity for social connection, for intimate relationships. The first human being, fresh from the creative fingers of God, with a Creator to worship, a beautiful world to behold, and countless creatures to enjoy nevertheless sought for special human companionship. His aloneness was “not good” (Gen. 2:18), so God created a woman and brought her to the man in marriage with the intention that they would be close companions and partners, united as “one flesh” (Gen. 2:22-25). With marriage as its centerpiece, the family is the Creator’s primary provision for the intimate relationships for which the human heart yearns.

let the Lord build the house

Sin with its selfishness disrupted the harmonious family relationships that God had created. Adam and Eve’s sin toward God and conflict with each other was followed by the ripping apart of their family by envy, jealousy, and the murder of one son by the other (Gen. 3, 4). All families inherit their legacy: “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Nevertheless, unity, harmony, and peace are still God’s design for human relationships, especially in the close confines of home and family (cf. Psalm 133:1; Eph. 4:3; 5:21-6:4). We are called to declare the glory of God, to express in our daily lives the image of our Maker, the triune God who is One (Deut. 6:4) and who is Love (1 John 4:8, 16).

Scripture contends that it is vain to attempt to build a house without engaging the Lord as the builder (Ps. 127:1). God must be included in our home and family relationships so that we can have His blessings of love, unity, harmony, and peace among us. Scripture guides us in knowing how to fashion relationships according to the divine blueprint.

application

1. How is Christ the key to unity in the family and church?
2. What does Christ's making "one" out of "two" (Eph. 2:14) mean to families?

building on Christ as the foundation

Christ is God's answer to sin and the disruption to family life that sin causes. Through His death on the cross, Christ reconnects the divine-human relationship and removes the barriers that separate people from each other (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 2:14-22). "To create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace" (Eph. 2:15 NEB) is language that applies equally to other divisions among people, including those that occur in families. The news that God has dealt with human brokenness through Christ is good news that helps couples to truly know "one flesh" unity in marriage and enables family members to be reconciled when they have been wounded by conflicts. Since God has done this, what is needed now is for individual family members to attach themselves to Christ through faith and through Him to heal the breaches in their relationships.

becoming one through love

Unity among His followers was on Jesus' mind when He prayed to His Father on the eve of His crucifixion (John 17:21-26). He pleads "that the love you have for me may be in them" (vs. 26). *Agape* is the biblical word for God's love used in this prayer. Experiencing this *agape* love is essential to unity. It differs from human love in that it is *unconditional* while human love is *conditional*; it is *self-giving* rather than *self-serving*, and it is *unchangeable*, whereas human love is *changeable*, fickle, and unreliable. God's love is not natural to the sinful human heart (John 5:42). It comes into the believer's life as Jesus dwells there by His Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11).

- What are the characteristics of *agape* love that give it such power to draw individuals together?

Agape love has sometimes been portrayed as stoic and dispassionate. However, it is an encompassing word that includes *philos*, the love of friends for each other. In the movie "Home

for the Holidays,” several adult siblings return home to be with their parents for American Thanksgiving. Their dysfunctional relationships are soon on display and conflicts erupt. One daughter shouts to the others, “We’re family; we don’t have to like each other.” The scriptural view, however, is that Christians—whether at home or at church—should *like* each other and be *friends*. Jesus spoke of His disciples as “my friends” (John 15:14). Paul and Peter encourage believers to love each other as friends with the “warmth of mutual affection” (Rom. 12:10 NEB) and with “brotherly love” (1 Pet. 1:22). The truth is that people who are cold seek warmth and huddle together wherever it is warm. Christian homes and congregations should be settings where people are drawn together by all the affection, tenderness, and caring of a family where people are truly fond of one another.

reflection

In what way does mutual submission express the gospel remedy for the discord, disunity, and distance that sin has brought into families? Discuss the steps necessary to introduce or reinforce this principle in your home.

Submitting to one another. Paul counsels Christian believers to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21). The word “submit” means to place oneself humbly before another person on the basis of voluntary choice. This unique principle began with Christ (Matt. 20:26-28; John 13:4, 5; Phil. 2:5-8) and characterizes all those who are filled with His Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Reverence for Christ is what motivates people to submit in this way (Eph. 5:21 NIV). Mutuality in self-giving was, and still is, a revolutionary Christian teaching about social relationships—all are one in Christ. There are no exceptions.

The proving ground of mutual submission is in the home. If this principle is effective there, it will make a dramatic difference in the church. Paul moves immediately from the introduction of the principle of mutual submission to discuss its application in families. Three pairs of relationships are addressed in Eph. 5:22-6:9—the most common, yet most unequal relationships in the society. The intent is not to reinforce an existing social dominance by one over another, but to show how the faith

culture of Christ operates when there is a radically different voluntary submission of believers to one another in love. These directives must have astonished the believers of the first century. They leveled the ground around the cross and opened the way for true oneness to be experienced in relationships.

The gift of forgiveness. At the heart of Christianity is an incredibly wonderful concept—*forgiveness*. It is God’s gift to families when hearts and relationships have been wounded. Scripture presents forgiveness as both *unconditional* and *conditional*. Through the cross of Christ, unconditional forgiveness is offered even before the offenders ask for it (Luke 23:34; cf. Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18). By His grace, God made a fountain that has washed us and invites us to come, repent, and be clean (compare Rom. 2:4). As humans we can forgive unconditionally when we choose to let go of the destructive malice of revenge. We remind our wounded hearts that Christ has atoned for all sin, ours against God and that of others against us. We then pass forgiveness on. The hurt one is now freed within, whether or not the offender asks for forgiveness. It does not, however, free the wrongdoer from responsibility, from the need to repent, or from all the consequences of the abusive behavior.

Conditional forgiveness is presented in Scripture as forgiveness with an “if” that represents human choice to receive or not the unconditional forgiveness of another: 1 John 1:9; (on the part of God); Luke 17:3, 4 (on the part of humans with one another). If unconditional forgiveness is ultimately to be effective in restoring relationships, there must be repentance on the part of the wrongdoer. Recognizable earmarks of true repentance include: stopping the offending behavior, giving a sincere apology, taking responsibility for the behavior and damage done, showing care for the pain of the wronged one, making restitution in every way possible, and making changes to protect against re-occurrence.

is reconciliation a condition of forgiveness?

Reconciliation—full restoration of the relationship—is not synonymous with forgiveness. Forgiveness can occur and there be no reconciliation, but real reconciliation can certainly not occur

without forgiveness, especially the conditional aspect of forgiveness, being addressed. The gateway to the possibility of reconciliation is true repentance on the part of the wrongdoer with all the earmarks mentioned above. Without true repentance, reconciliation is not a safe course to be considered.

At best, reconciliation may take a very long time, if it is possible at all. Sometimes, and we see this often in cases of abuse and violence, even repentance may not be enough to make reconciliation possible. The destruction wreaked in the relationship is so devastating as to leave no building blocks for restoration. All that can be done is to grieve the lost relationship and minister God's healing grace to the survivors. For reconciliation to take place there must be a desire and re-commitment on the part of both to begin again to rebuild love and trust. When such a desire is present, the reconciliation process may be accomplished over time through improved communication, the processing of the needs and feelings of all concerned, making changes in destructive relational patterns, and the resolution of conflicts and differences in ways that meet the needs of everyone. Through forgiveness, the wounded can find *personal* healing, but *relational* healing is a delicate process involving not only forgiveness, but also rebuilding trust.

lighthouses

The wonder of our faith is the good news that God knows all about us, yet loves us “even when we were sinners” (Rom. 5: 8). He sympathizes with our weaknesses and is full of compassion and longsuffering. Knowing Him, we extend the same loving courtesy to others. We grow to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). Through our family relationships, God wants to show His love to the world. “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). As families learn to live together according to the Word of God, His grace is diffused to all whose lives they touch, winsomely drawing others to Jesus.

- Why is it important for Christians to like each other?
- How can we like other Christians who seem so very different from us?

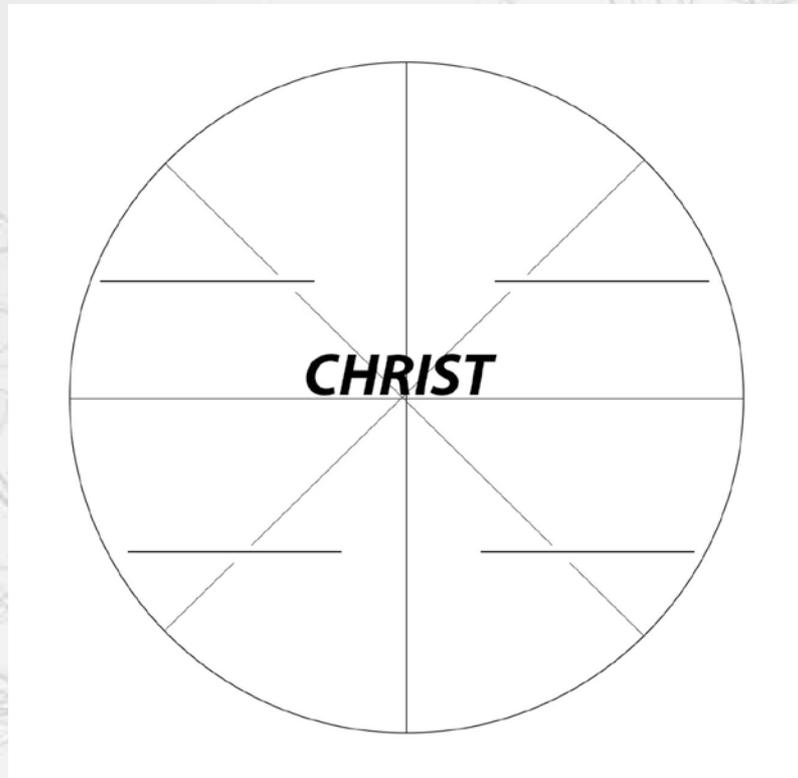
application

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Try placing your name where the word “love” appears. Invite Jesus to bring these qualities of *agape* love into your life by His Spirit. Discuss with others in your group the insights you received.



disciples in action

Enlarge the following diagram to show the relationships in your family as spokes on a wheel with Christ as the hub. The lines connecting family members all pass through Christ. Write your names and those of others in your family or church on the blanks in the circle. How does Christ at the center make a difference in your relationship with the others? What changes in behavior are likely to result when we understand that Christ stands between us and family members as our mediator? What if only one moves closer to Him?





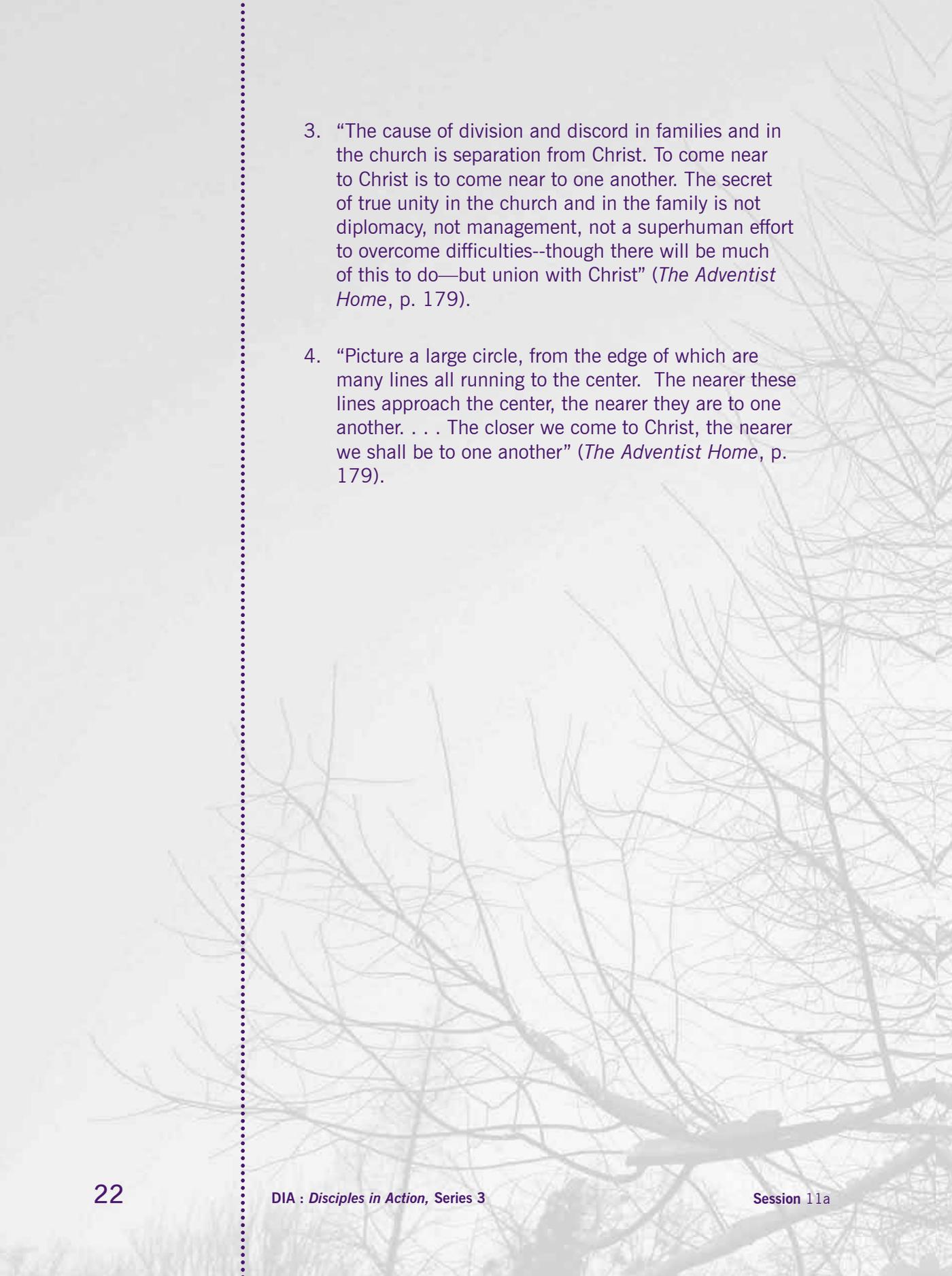
leader's note

confessional leadership

It can be daunting to lead a discussion on family themes. Here, as perhaps with no other topic, a sub-text is attached to what the leader says. The class hears not only what the leader says, but what each one lives. This reality has led many a leader, convicted that his or her own home falls short of the ideal, to decline to open the subject of family relationships with others or to avoid bringing up certain topics with which the leader may or may not be comfortable. A subtle message may thus be conveyed that God has to do only with happy homes. Yet Jesus declared that those who are whole do not need a physician, but rather those who are sick. Jesus specializes in imperfect people and imperfect homes. Thus, if leaders can be authentic, can convey that in this they walk with the youth and experience family as they do, that they strive to bring their families to a perfect Savior rather than striving to be perfect without Him, group members grasp hope and strength. The leader becomes an example of one who is experiencing grace and the gospel in the context of family living. Youth go away with a clearer vision of how the Christian message can make a difference in their family relationships.



1. “The first work of Christians is to be united in the family. . . . The more closely the members of a family are united in their work in the home, the more uplifting and helpful will be the influence that father and mother and sons and daughters will exert outside the home” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 37).
2. “The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward. Jesus wants to see happy marriages, happy firesides” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 99).

- 
3. “The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties--though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 179).
 4. “Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another. . . . The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 179).

understanding God's plan for marriage and sexuality

theme

To commit to developing and maintaining sexual purity, I am:

- recognizing that my commitment to Christ takes priority over every human relationship.
- holding as sacred my commitments and responsibilities to God, spouse, children, and myself.
- passing on the Christian faith to my children through both teaching and living an authentic Christian life.
- creating moral/sexual boundaries.
- committing to live by biblical standards of sexual morality.



big idea

Though in our time sexuality has become uncoupled from marriage, these two are closely intertwined in the biblical value system. As God's gift of sexuality is more fully understood against the backdrop of His plan for marriage, both singles and marrieds will be able to experience greater personal and relational fulfillment.



connector

Look: Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:18-25; Prov. 5:3-20; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Eph. 5:21-32; Heb. 13:4

Memorize: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'" (Gen. 1:28).



THE JOURNEY exploration

a very good day

Creation of humankind as sexual beings. Day six of creation week was a very good day! Then, God created humankind. They were fashioned as sexual beings—male and female. In Genesis 1, God addresses the new humans as coregents over the earth and charges them to use the reproductive capacity of their sexuality to bear children (Gen. 1:26-28). Genesis 2 focuses more particularly on the details of the creation of male and female, including the divine assessment that the absence of a suitable companion for Adam was “not good.” The woman, the “helper corresponding to him,” is created from Adam’s flesh. Rapturous joy bursts forth from the man as he recognizes himself for the first time as “man” and the new being as “woman,” a counterpart and companion for him (Gen. 2:18-25).

Creation of marriage as an institution. On this sixth day, God also institutes marriage as the centerpiece of the family (Gen. 2:23-25). Beginning with Genesis, God’s design for marriage is presented as a lifelong, exclusive union between a male and a female with three essential elements: 1) leaving father and mother; 2) being joined to each other; and 3) becoming one flesh. “Leaving” means that a distinct new family unit is created, publicly recognized by the couple’s families, the community of faith, and the society at large. “Being joined” speaks of a mutual commitment made by the couple that is expressed in a formal marriage covenant. “One flesh” entails their sexual union as well as the process of growth in intimacy, unity, and

fulfillment as their two lives converge emotionally and spiritually. At day's end comes the evaluation: "God saw all that he had made, and it was *very good*" (Gen. 1:31, emphasis supplied).

A positive attitude toward sexuality. The report of this day as being "very good"—when humans were created with their sexual characteristics—helps with a problem that frequently handicaps the discussion of sexuality in Christian circles, i.e., *dualism*—a philosophical view that the characteristics of the physical body are unholy and therefore detrimental to the flourishing of the spirit, which is holy and seen as somehow separate from the body. This idea, traceable to the Greek Hellenistic period, infiltrated both Jewish and Christian thinking with negative attitudes toward the human body and sexuality. Wherever this view is still prevalent, it hampers a wholesome approach to the topic of sexuality.

The Bible, however, presents a wholistic (holistic) view of human beings with no dichotomy between body and spirit. A person is a "living being," a whole entity with "body" and "breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). Worship for the Psalmist, for example, involves the totality of one's being (Ps. 63:1; 84:2). The wise man encourages his son to freely enjoy sexual delights with his wife (Prov. 5: 18, 19). A whole Bible book, the Song of Solomon, unashamedly presents the sexual attraction and passion that draws a man and woman to each other and blossoms within their married love. In the New Testament, the total person is the object of Christian sanctification; all that one is and has is set apart for the holy purposes God intended (1 Thess. 5:23). "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

to marry or not to marry

For men and women to marry is God's general plan for humankind (Gen. 2:18, 20-24), though some individuals are specifically called, like Jeremiah, to live singly (Jer. 16:1-9). God does not condemn people for not marrying. Christian believers have the freedom to marry or not. Many individuals do not marry and the reasons are varied. The apostle Paul, for example, chose to live as an unmarried man for the sake of involvement in the mission of spreading the gospel, an especially

arduous assignment in his time, unbefitting family life (1 Cor. 7:8). For still others, circumstances dictate their choices, such as a personal health or medical condition, the fact that they may be needed more to care for other family members, or the unavailability of suitable Christian partners (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14). The fellowship of the church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their state as single or married.

marriage and sexuality

Sexuality and marriage are especially intertwined in the biblical value system, and though some by choice or circumstances may face adult life alone, the privilege of sexual intimacy is reserved only for marriage. The Genesis blueprint for marriage was reaffirmed by Jesus (Matt. 19:4-6) and upheld by the apostles. “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb. 13:4).

A lifelong union of one male and one female is specifically intended in the divine blueprint, with married couples expected to adhere to the standard of sexual faithfulness to each other (Ex. 20:14, 17; Matt. 5:27, 28; 1 Cor. 6:15-19; Heb. 13:4). Marriage is a covenant relationship, based on promises made to each other before God (cf. Mal. 2:14).

Clearly, sexual intimacy in marriage has a procreative function (Gen. 1:28). A loving home, where a husband and wife have made a covenant with each other in marriage, is the divinely ordained setting for bearing and rearing children. The procreative mandate to our first parents notwithstanding, Scripture never presents procreation as an obligation of every couple in order to please God. Divine revelation does place a high value on children and expresses the joy to be found in parenting (Matt 19:14; Ps 127:3), but the decision to bear children should be intentional, based on factors such as the ability to provide for them (1 Tim 5:8), the well-being of the mother (3 John 2; 1 Cor. 6:19; Phil 2:4; Eph 5:25), and the circumstances into which children will be born (Matt 24:19). We are stewards of God’s creation and of our children. Parenting is a special form of stewardship. We must look beyond our own happiness and desires to consider the needs of others (Phil 2:4).¹

Sexual intimacy, however, serves a unifying purpose needed throughout marriage apart from conceiving children. “One flesh” in the creation account signals this unity and Paul alludes to the mystery of it (Gen. 2: 24, 25; Eph. 5:32). The unbounded delights of sexual love-making in marriage are presented in the Song of Solomon without reference to bearing children. The wise man counsels his son in Proverbs 5 to be satisfied and captivated “always” by the sexual love of his wife (Prov. 5:19). In Paul’s writings, we find that, since each partner’s body belongs to the other, loving mutuality is to characterize the sexual relationship of husbands and wives who follow Christ. Decisions about their sexual experience are made together; neither one should seek to deny sexual privileges to the other (1 Cor. 7:3-5). The scriptural use of “the wife of your youth” (Prov. 5:18; Mal. 2:14, 15) reinforces the biblical value that marriage is lifelong and shows further that sexual intimacy is to be savored into old age. Sexual faithfulness to a married partner may require sexual abstinence in cases of protracted illness or disability. Separation caused by work or travel especially requires commitment to fidelity. Not that abstinence for marrieds—any more than for singles—is a small thing, but Christian couples make the sacrifice. Extremity serves only to highlight what they have come to know about the mystery of love in marriage—sex is for marriage and not marriage for sex. (See also “*Birth Control: A Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Consensus.*” <http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat44.html>. The statement addresses the ethical issues that arise from the concurrence in marriage of the unifying and procreative purposes of sexuality. It offers guidance regarding appropriate methods of birth control.)

This commitment of loyalty and exclusivity to one partner in a marriage covenant is used in Scripture to illustrate the covenant faithfulness of God, the heavenly Husband, for His Bride (Is. 54:5; 62:5; Mark 2:19, 20). No wonder the Scripture declares that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), even though for the hardness of human hearts it was permitted (Deut. 24:1ff; Matt. 19:8). Each marriage has the potential to bear witness to the power of God working in human hearts to bring the differentness of a man and a woman together in a profound oneness. Along with all the other heartaches and complications it brings into the lives of former partners and their children, divorce mutes that witness.

safeguarding the Creator's gift

Like a precious gem destined for a royal crown, human sexuality finds its ultimate showcase in heterosexual marriage. God had a special purpose in creating humankind as male and female (Gen. 1:16-18). While each bear His image, the joining of gender opposites in the “one flesh” of marriage reflects the unity within the Godhead in a special way. It also provides for procreation of a new life, an original human expression of the divine image. Scripture therefore places off limits all uses of the human sexual powers that would defeat or pose as a counterfeit to His divine purpose.

Sexual intimacy with a person who is not one's spouse or is the spouse of another is immoral (Ex. 20:14, 17; Heb. 13:14). The command bans singles from sexually intimacy with a married man or woman. Joseph knew this moral boundary: “How . . . could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God (Gen. 39:9)?”

Sexual intercourse between members of the same sex is denounced (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; cf. Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9). A variety of aberrant sexual behaviors, including bestiality and sexual relationships between males and females who are close family relatives, are prohibited (cf. Lev. 18, 20). The New Testament views the bodies of Christians as redeemed by Christ and therefore His property. Since they belong to the Lord, believers' bodies are not meant for sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:13).

God speaks about premarital sex

Sexual characteristics, present in girls and boys from birth, become pronounced at the time of puberty. Biologically, the sexual organs mature well ahead of the time when emotionally and socially—not to mention educationally or economically—youth can manage the momentous choices of adult life. Sexual instincts are real and they are powerful. Knowing well the realities of human development, Scripture nevertheless urges upon youth its value that sexual intimacy is a privilege of marriage.

A bountiful fountain. Counseling the unmarried to wait for marriage and the married to be faithful, Proverbs 5:3-20 presents the unfavorable comparison between love for the “right” woman (sexual bonding and intercourse within marriage) and love for the “wrong” woman (sexual bonding and intercourse outside

marriage). The advice of the wise man is that the godly unmarried individual should *reserve* and, if married, should *preserve* his or her deepest affection and sexual intimacy for marriage. The powerful attraction of illicit love must be weighed against its life-threatening consequences. Addressing men specifically, Proverbs uses the imagery of water as a delicate symbol of sexuality. The pleasure and satisfaction of a bountiful fountain springing from committed married love is contrasted with waste water soiling the streets through unfaithfulness. Casual sexual liaisons lack commitment and fall far short of true intimacy. Material, physical, and emotional resources are squandered and regret results. Most importantly, one must answer to God for the choices made in life.

a “door” or a “wall”?

We find God’s plan for premarital sexual abstinence also in the Song of Solomon. A poetic flashback in 8:8-10 has the bride (Shulamith) reflecting on her brothers’ concern for her as a little girl. *How will she handle puberty?* they wonder. They use the metaphor of a “wall” to speak of chaste behavior and the metaphor of a “door” to speak of sexual promiscuity. If she is a *wall*, that is, if she protects her virginity, they will reward her. But if she is a *door*, allowing easy access to herself, they will have to “enclose” (“guard” or “constrict”) her until she is married. Reflecting on this and speaking as an adult, Shulamith strongly declares the values and commitment by which she has lived. “I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers” (NIV). “Dear brothers, I’m a walled-in virgin still, but my breasts are full” (The Message). “Thus I have become in his eyes like one bringing contentment” (NIV). The verse expresses the joy of coming to marriage *whole*, as a virgin. “Contentment” is from the Hebrew *shalom*, often translated “peace,” but with a root meaning of “wholeness.”

Elsewhere, the Song further supports premarital chastity. Solomon declares on their wedding night, “You are a *garden locked up*; you are a *spring enclosed*, a *sealed fountain* (4:12, NIV, emphasis supplied). Commentators agree that these symbols describe her virginity. Also, in several asides to the “daughters of Jerusalem,” a poetic device of an imaginary group of young women that allows her inner thoughts as a young bride to be expressed, Shulamith advises, “Do not awaken love until its time” (2:7; 8:4). Several versions translate this similarly to:

“Do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time” (Holman Christian Standard Bible). The comment is made following sexual love play, as if Shulamith would warn against such a level of intimate sexual expression and lovemaking outside the covenant of marriage.

singleness and sexuality

As challenging as waiting for marriage can be for youth amid the flush of adolescence, with a decisive focus on being a “wall” and with reliance on God’s power, it is doable. Delay until marriage is one thing. But what of those singles whose waiting has gone on interminably? While some seem more comfortable with being adult, single, and celibate, others know the feeling of Adam whose aloneness was declared by God “not good.” Well into adulthood they long for the blessing of a sexual partner and for the experience of marriage, or perhaps to marry again after being widowed or divorced. They struggle through long and lonely nights with tears. All of the sexual energy and desire that is part of being an adult male or female does not dissipate just because a suitable partner cannot be found. What does God have in mind for such as these?

The reality is that some Christians who want to marry will never know the joy of physical and emotional sexual satisfaction in the arms of a marriage partner. The biblical emphasis on sexuality as something that can be fulfilled only in marriage can result in an unhealthy bias in Christian communities that leaves many Christian singles feeling second-class at best and at worst marginalized or alienated. Further, advice and suggestions from those who are married can often be well-meant but misguided and hurtful. The church is at its best when it facilitates ministry to one another without bias and prejudice, when all are accepted equally as members of the body of Christ, and when a lot of honest listening occurs. We must learn to “rejoice with those who rejoice” and “mourn with those who mourn” (Rom. 12:15). Loss must be grieved, hopefully with the support of loving fellow believers, before any resolution can come.

In recent years, ministry for singles has developed and much thoughtful, reflective writing has been done by Christian singles on the topic of sexuality. A simple Internet search for works on Christian singleness will reveal a plethora of resources that can be helpful. The best among these have grasped the divine plan

for sexuality in marriage, but understand as well that sexuality is something much bigger, that sexuality shapes our lives in many ways, creating the distinctive physical and emotional components of manhood and womanhood, influencing a person's capacity to give and receive affection and to connect with others in friendship. Importantly, they have found healthy ways to resolve sexual longing in the awareness that happiness and satisfaction are ultimately not defined by the presence or absence of a mate, but by one's relationship with God.

submitting our sexuality to God

The reality of sin in human nature is universal. Sin ignores God's stated will for human sexuality and pursues another agenda of personal, selfish desire. Furthermore, Satan exploits the weakness of our nature.

The good news is that God has smiled upon the human family in the person of His Son and has reconciled the world to Himself. Jesus Christ has triumphed over sin. Satan is an enemy who has been defeated. In Jesus Christ, God has bound Himself to humanity with a tie of love that can never be broken except by human choice. He has given us His Holy Spirit to comfort us and strengthen us for living for Him.

God forgives those who repent of sin (1 John 1:9). The gospel enables individuals who formerly engaged in promiscuity and sinful sexual activity to be part of the fellowship of believers (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11). God feels human pain and graciously comforts and extends His keeping power (2 Cor. 1:3, 4; 12:9; Jude 24).

When the gospel rings clear, we create the best likelihood that people will be drawn to Jesus and find hope and peace and joy in the assurance of salvation that is theirs in Him if they will only unclasp their hands to receive it. It is only when we submit our sexuality to God that the call to living holy sexually makes sense. The gospel and the gospel alone is the most powerful motivator for sexual purity. It is a call to which those who have experienced grace will respond.

summary

The divine will is evident again and again in the Word of God that the precious bestowment of human sexuality is to be sacredly guarded. Its ultimate emotional and physical display is in heterosexual marriage. Our age, however, is one that has uncoupled sexuality from marriage. Greater emphasis on individualism and sexual freedom, a decline in the number of couples who marry and stay married, along with social acceptance of alternative sexual practices constitute a cacophony of voices that threaten to shout down the biblical view as antiquated. Youth today stand at the crossroads. We who know that old does not necessarily mean old-fashioned must make sure that the biblical view on sexuality and marriage is discernible, legible to be read in words, and visible to be seen in lives. Then we must appeal with Jeremiah: “This is what the LORD says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls’” (Jer. 6:16).

reflection

1. In what ways does Scripture help us to become more comfortable with the idea that male and female sexuality is good?
2. What is it that makes marriage such a compelling metaphor for intimacy with God?
3. Why is it important to guard God’s design for sexuality?
4. How does the picture of God as the heavenly husband inspire and inform our human marital covenants?
5. What should be the attitude of Christians to fellow believers who are experiencing marital difficulty or have divorced?

application

In what ways has this study heightened your awareness of competing views about sexuality? What are the strengths of the biblical view that sexuality and marriage are inextricably intertwined?

What are the challenges to this view today? List one or two areas where you would like to deepen your study of the biblical view of sexuality. Discuss your conclusions with others in your group.



disciples in action

Christians have a loving Creator to thank for the special gifts of sexuality and marriage He gave to the human family.

Married couples: Express thanks to God for your spouse. Think of a special romantic way—a new perfume, a candlelight dinner, a CD of romantic music, a get-away for the two of you—in which you can affirm the gift of sexuality that you share.

Youth: Express thanks to God for couples that model sexuality in a healthy way. Then show appreciation to a married couple for the way they portray marriage. Mention some specific loving gestures or actions they incorporate in their relationship that you consider a model for how you would like to relate to your future married partner.

Adult singles: Express thanks to God for the experiences of married love on the human level that have enabled you to glimpse the depth of God's love as a divine husband to His bride, the church. Then take time to tangibly express feelings of closeness that you experience with a good friend, with family members, or with fellow believers at church. You might also try writing a love letter to God.



leader's note

balancing openness with discretion

One of the greatest gifts parents and leaders can give youth is the willingness to discuss sexual subjects. Raising the topic, though, can be a frightening task. Not many adults feel comfortable doing it. However, the greatest enemy of sexual wholeness may well be silence about it. It is never too late to teach children and youth about healthy sexuality because our learning on this topic is lifelong.

Our own sexual history, sexual traumas experienced in the past, or sexual addictions that may afflict us may contribute to our discomfort. Personal reflection, along with healthy dialogue with a spouse, counselor, pastor, or friend may contribute to healing and a greater level of comfort with our own sexuality. Many Christian books (see the brief bibliography) are now available that can provide valuable aids to help parents and leaders become more intelligent about, and at ease with the topic.

At the same time as we endeavor to be more open about the topic of sexuality, we must also have appropriate sensitivity and respect. Jestering, joking, and treating the subject casually or with street language do not befit this special gift of God to His children. Also, discretion must be used in choosing what to share out of one's personal stories. Openness toward the topic does not mean full disclosure of one's sexual experience.

tips on discussing sexuality with youth

- Discuss choices and options, which are easier for adolescents, rather than “do’s” and “don’ts.”
- Keep the focus of the discussion on processing the teen’s feelings, attitudes, and beliefs rather than your own.
- Ask questions that lead to reflection: “How do you feel when you see that?” “What do you and your friends think that means?” “Have you had a chance to talk this over with others?”
- Spring-board into conversation from magazine articles or television reports, such as date-rape, sexual harassment, and abuse.
- Affirm adolescents often for what they are doing well in handling issues of sexuality.
- Confront problematic behavior positively, avoiding over-reaction: “It’s normal for you to be curious about sex. I would like to talk with you about what women/men are really like and what healthy sexuality means to them.” “I know what it’s like to be attracted to those kinds of

videos. It's pretty normal. I'd like to share some things about sexuality that the videos don't always tell you."



1. "Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. . . . Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity" (*The Adventist Home*, pp. 340, 341).
2. "Like every other one of God's good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty" (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 64).
3. "True love is a high and holy principle, altogether different in character from that love which is awakened by impulse and which suddenly dies when severely tested. It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial and manifest kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy. Thus love will be kept warm in the heart, and he who goes out from such a household to stand at the head of a family of his own will know how to promote the happiness of her whom he has chosen as a companion for life. Marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be only its beginning" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 176).
4. "The children need to be instructed in regard to their own bodies. There are but few youth who have any definite knowledge of the mysteries of human life. They know but little about the living machinery. Says David, 'I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made'. . . . Continue to teach your children in regard to their own bodies, and how to take care of them. Recklessness in regard to bodily health tends to recklessness in moral character" (*Child Guidance*, pp. 103, 104).

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SESSION TWELVE

by Philip Oreso

understanding the consequences of the human fall



Tony Philip Oreso is a freelance writer from Nairobi, Kenya. Widely known as “Philip”, he attended Ranen Adventist High School in Kenya where he developed a strong passion for writing. Currently he contributes to Sabbath School Quarterlies for youth and young adults, and he is working on a book for the same readership.



theme

To understand the consequences of the human fall from God's original plan, I am learning that:

- the great controversy between God and Satan originated in heaven.
- because of the disobedience of the first human beings, I have a will to sin and a sinful nature.
- the Ten Commandment law of God expresses the character of God and gives the standard for human conduct.
- the natural world no longer reflects the perfection in which God created it.
- the Bible is needed to interpret the natural world as an expression of the character of God.



big idea

The consequences of the human fall and the great controversy at large help you to understand God's love for you.



connector

Look: Prov. 16:18; Matt 5:17-19

Memorize: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov.16:18 NIV).



THE JOURNEY

exploration

God's character and purpose in His law

In your own words, how do you describe God? Many world-wide communities of people have given God different names and descriptions depending on how much importance they attach to Him. One common phrase we usually hear about God is, "God is good all the time; all the time God is good." The main reason why God is good to you and me all the time is because His love is boundless. Period. He gives it in equal measure to all His children, devoid of any limitation.

This quality of love has been deeply entrenched in the character of God since the beginning of time. When Lucifer and other angels rebelled against Him in heaven, God had the power to destroy them completely at one time. However, as a compassionate Savior, He chose the law of love as the foundation of His government. He sought, through His mercy, to draw back the rebels from the abyss of ruin into which they were about to plunge. But the rebels resisted His mercy until their cup was full to the brim, and they had to pay the price.

In the same way, we sometimes resist God's mercy and continue to sin until we are totally lost into it. However, God does not want us to perish in sin. He remains loving to us, even as He remained loving to the rebels in heaven. Each one of us is a special child of God and His love and care are upon us at all times. Owing to the sinful nature we inherited from our first parents (Adam and Eve), we are prone to sin.

It is for this reason that God has given us His law expressed in the Bible to serve as the mirror through which we look into our spiritual and moral conduct. God changes people through His Word. We need to embrace this change because we live in a world that no longer reflects the perfection in which God created it.

Share: What do you think is the best way to mend the rift caused by sin between God and humankind?

dig deep

The “great controversy” is the name we have given to the greatest battle of all time—the battle between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan. It is what draws the dividing line between the character of God and that of Satan. The Bible states that the rebellion started in heaven with one archangel filled with pride and indulgence in self-exaltation. Before then, the heavenly community was in perfect harmony. God the Creator commanded the highest authority. Christ was second in command and glory. Lucifer was the leader of all the angels.



“Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation ... Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35).

The selfish desire to be equal to God was the driving force behind the great controversy that would mar the celestial harmonies for millennia to come. But God, in His infinite power over everything, allowed this rebellion to take place in order to explain in detail His character of infinite love and mercy. Self-exaltation, which caused the great controversy in heaven, is the main way Satan has used to lure us into his trap ever since. We often see ourselves first before we give our Creator the first priority in our lives. This keeps us from recognizing the direct connection between God’s character and His law, which He has given us to check our spirituality and morality.

The Ten Commandment law is a set of instructions from our Father in heaven to show us how we should allow Him to bring His character into our lives. The laws are vital for our relationship with God as well as with our fellow humans. One lesson we can learn from the great plan of redemption for each of us is that it opens our eyes so we can see sin and its consequences.



“Satan’s rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages-- a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan’s rule, its effects upon both men [and women] and angels would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God’s government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 42-3).

Share: Where in your life do you see the great controversy play out? What does the character of God in dealing with Satan teach you about how He deals with you when you commit sin?

reflection

It is a fact that at various points in your life you have continually witnessed the effect of sin and its circumstances. The great controversy is always active, although, owing to our sinful nature, we cannot fully understand the circumstances revolving around it.

- Why do you think that God did not destroy Satan immediately at the start of the great controversy? How much time to change do you think God should give you before He destroys you completely after sin?
- Suggested alternative question: Why do you think God did not allow Lucifer’s sin (deliberate disconnection from God, the source of life) to destroy him immediately? How long do you think He should allow this “sin experiment” to go on before allowing sin to have its natural consequences and destroy itself and everything and everyone unalterably connected with it?

- What are some of the impacts of the great controversy that we still feel now, thousands of years after Lucifer started it and our first parents chose to join it?
- What role does the Ten Commandment law play in your life, especially in shaping your character?
- Look at the environment around you. Do you see the great controversy in play? What is not perfect as originally created by God?
- Does the Bible give you enough freedom to live as you want? Or does it enslave you to live by some specific rules? Give reasons for your answer.

application

shedding light on the great controversy

The biblical tale of the great controversy is enough to show you that something was wrong somewhere, which led to this pain and suffering and uncertainty that we experience in the world today. Perhaps you have a friend or you know of a person who is still in the dark about the great controversy. God wants you to shed light on the origin of the duel, how we are involved in it, and how we can get out of its web.

The Ten Commandment law expresses God's loving character and gives us the rationale for our conduct as Christians. God gave us the Ten Commandments to restore us, to set us free, and help us survive in a world engulfed in sin. For this reason the Bible stands out as the only vessel that will steer us back to the direction of God. The Bible helps us to interpret the world and sets guideline for Christian living.

God wants you to understand His character through His written Word. As His child, you have a mission to accomplish—to reenergize your love for Him and apply the Bible suitably in all areas of your life.



disciples in action

In some parts of the world, Christianity is dying and the use of Bible has been neglected. With your accountability partner, share how you will do a mission this week to promote the Word of God in the areas where it is dying.

Choose one commandment of God that appeals to you most. Share with your partner how you will apply this commandment practically in your life for the next three weeks and encourage others to do the same.

prayer time

- In your prayer time, thank God for His love for you despite your sinful nature.
- Pray about three factors that may be hindering your better understanding of the great controversy.
- Ask God to give you the insight and power to resist the temptation of pride and selfishness.



leader's note

the spirit and letter of the Ten Commandment law

Considered as the basic tenet of Christianity, the Ten Commandment law defines our relationship with our Creator as well as the social interaction we have with each other across the globe. In recent times the media has highlighted that religion is dying, especially in the West, and atheism is taking its toll.

One of the reasons that might weaken the foundations of our Christian belief and propagate atheism is failure on our part to utilize the spiritual and doctrinal energy entrenched in the Ten Commandments. God created us in His own image, but sin caused alienation and marred the image of God in us. In the confusion that followed in the aftermath of sin, humanity is now divided as to whether to seek God or Satan.

However, God intends to bring us back to His camp. How then, do we seek Him? The Bible says, “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20, KJV).

“The law is the *Torah*. The term can be understood in a narrower and wider sense. Not just in the New Testament but even in the Old Testament law (*tôrah/nomos*) was used to designate the Books of Moses (Joshua 8:31) *Torah* involves instruction commands and guidance. It comes from God and His revealed will. As such it is authoritative and is a gracious gift” (Ekkehardt Mueller, *The Foundation of Christian Life*, LEAD magazine Jan, Feb, Mar ‘09, p. 56).

“Against this backdrop, we are obliged as Christians to revisit the law again and again to renew our sight of God’s intention for us in this life. God could in no way enslave us by giving us the law. He had removed His people from Egypt and now they were free, liberated and joyful to breathe again the sweet air of freedom. This kind of liberation had to come from an act of obedience to the law as well as complete reverence to God. In the words of George Vandeman, “He was trying to keep them free. He knew there were a lot of false gods around that could make them slaves again” (*Sail Your Own Seas*, p. 32).

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SESSION THIRTEEN

by *Kerryann Francis*

recognizing and responding to the needs of God's suffering children



Kerryann Francis is an international development worker based in Jamaica who currently works with vulnerable older persons and their families; she has also worked with other vulnerable groups including at-risk youth.



theme

To recognize and respond to the needs of God's suffering children locally and abroad, I am:

- looking for physical, mental, social and spiritual needs in the community.
- responding mercifully to the discovered needs, individually and/or as a church.
- speaking out and acting to relieve suffering and injustice in society.
- reducing human suffering by being a faithful steward of God's creation.
- acting compassionately on behalf of people who are disadvantaged or at risk.



big idea

As children of God we are called to reach out to our brothers and sisters, especially those who are not yet part of the household of faith, and minister to their needs in the spirit of Jesus Christ.



connector

Look: James 1:27; Matthew 25: 31-46

Memorize: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27, NIV).



THE JOURNEY exploration

It is important to reach out to members of our community who are hurting in different ways and equally important to render assistance to help alleviate their pain and suffering.

What are some of the ways members in our community suffer?

Suffering can happen in many different forms. For some people it is physical illness; for others it is feeling discriminated against; for some it is emotional, such as losing a loved one; for others it is feeling the pangs of hunger, isolation, or homelessness. There are those persons who suffer openly while others suffer in silence. There are many ways in which we as children of God can minister to the needs of our brothers and sisters in our community. However, before we can meet a need we have to know what these needs are. A good start is to be a friendly person in your community. When we come across the problems our brothers and sister face, we should respond.

reflection

It is Sabbath, and you are headed out to church. It is music day and you have been looking forward to this special day for a long time because of the plans that have been put in place. On your way to church you have to pass a river; while passing the river you hear someone screaming for help! What would you do?



“A Christian is a Christlike man, a Christlike woman, who is active in God’s service, who is present at the social meeting, whose presence will encourage others also. Religion does not consist in works, but religion works; it is not dormant” (*Letter 7, 1883, p. 935.14*).



dig deep

There are a number of high points to take away from James 1:27 and the above Spirit of Prophecy quotation. For this session we will highlight two major areas of focus:

- Christ-likeness
- Active participation in the service of God

Christ-likeness

Use words from the bag to describe or paint a picture/portrait of Jesus.

The word “likeness,” according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, means “copy” or “portrait” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>). Based on that definition, we can say that “Christ-likeness” means to be a copy of Christ, to be a portrait (picture) of Him. To be a copy of Christ or portray Him to the world, we have to know what He did and how He lived. Most of His time here on earth was spent ministering to the needs of others in so many different ways. Can you recall the stories of His performing His first miracle by turning water into wine (John 2: 6-10) and talking to the woman at the well of Samaria?

Jesus stated His mission this way, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” (Luke 4: 16) He came not for the righteous but to call sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13). Jesus had a burning passion for souls and turned no needy person away. It was He who, when His disciples refused the children, said the famous words, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of heaven” (Mark 10: 14). There are many other stories in the Bible

that speak of our Lord and His compassion for human kind, His love for each soul. The call is for us to be like Him, to mirror His character, to copy Him, to be a living portrait, to daily thirst for the salvation of souls. Ellen G. White calls it a “hunger for souls” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, volume 3 p. 121).

Speaking on the subject of imitating Christ, she goes on to say:



“Is not God the proper object of imitation? It should be the work of the Christian’s life to put on Christ, and to bring himself to a more perfect likeness of Christ. The sons and daughters of God are to advance in their resemblance to Christ, our pattern. Daily they are to behold His glory, and contemplate His incomparable excellence.

“Tender, true, and full of compassion, they are to pull souls out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, volume 3 p. 122).

active participation in the service of God

As Christians, we are saved to serve. Have you ever watched a great movie or maybe had a sumptuous meal from a restaurant? Maybe it was a new song you heard and became very excited about it; or it could even have been a new toy. Can you remember your reaction? Did you just sit by and keep the movie/food/song/toy to yourself? More than likely you did not. You were too excited to keep quiet. This is how we should be when we meet Christ. One of my favorite texts in the Bible contains these words spoken by Jesus to Peter, “...when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32, KJV).

That instruction was not only applicable to Peter back then; it also applies to us today. Our religion is one of actively reaching out to our brothers and sisters with the chief aim being that of leading them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. I dare say that Christianity, then, is not a noun but a verb. I can imagine a few raised eyebrows at this point. However, if we look back at James 1:27, this is what it says: “pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and

widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (NIV). This is a text about doing and being; it is one that describes Christianity using action words – “to visit” and “to keep.”

Additionally, our religion goes beyond the spiritual outreach and extends to the social – “visit orphans and widows in their trouble.” Our other connector text, Matthew 25:31-46, looks at the judgment where Jesus divides His followers into two classes – the sheep (the saved) and the goats (the lost). In the context of these verses, how did He make the distinction between the two classes? It was through their service. If you quickly reread the verses you will realize that He points to ministry on several fronts – prison ministry, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, and visiting the sick. Do you find it interesting that these are the grounds on which the separation is made? I do. And it also says to me that these are very important areas of work for the Christian.

Discuss

What are some practical ways in which you can actively participate in the work of meeting the needs of others?

speaking out and acting to relieve suffering and injustice in society

So far we have established that to be a Christian means that you are an active participant in the soul winning of the church. This work also involves advocating on the behalf of God’s suffering children. Advocacy is speaking up for, or acting on behalf of, yourself or another person. One of the challenges to truly developing a Christlike character in this regard is that to minister to the needs of others could sometimes cause us to be shunned.

Imagine being at school/college and hanging with your friends when all of a sudden a young lady walks by. Your friends start to laugh at her and describe her as being fat and ugly. But what your friends do not know is that you know her and she is also a friend of yours—someone you find to be genuine and good company to be around. It is a tough situation because you know that if you tell your friends that she is also a friend of yours, you could become an object of their ridicule just as

she is at present. On the flipside, to not say anything will mean that they will continue to put her down and her feelings will be even more hurt, especially when she sees that you are not willing to stand up for her. You know deep down that what they are doing is wrong. What do you do?

Our example, Jesus, faced these situations as well. He was criticized for associating with Zacchaeus, “a sinner” (Luke 19:7). He was also put down for being a friend of sinners. However, He declared to His disciples (and we can safely infer that He was speaking to us as well) that the world will treat us in the same manner that it treated Him (John 15: 18-19). Standing up for this girl is not the popular choice, but it would be the right thing to do even though you risk losing your popularity.

Even though we may lose some friends when we choose to do what is right and speak up for the rights of those who face hardships and discrimination, we have the assurance from Jesus that, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28: 20, NIV).

reflection

As Christians, we tend to think that the work of saving souls is the work of others—and we are content with that. But as the text in Matthew 25 revealed, the work to be done is an individual work. As you think about the discussion so far, ponder the following questions:

1. When was the last time you reached out to someone in need?
2. How do you respond when you see someone being laughed at or ridiculed?
3. What matters to you more, doing what is right or doing what is popular (even if it is wrong)?
4. If Christ were to come today, what group would you be placed in (sheep or goats)?

application

Finding hurting persons is not a very difficult task these days. Living in an imperfect world means that we will experience difficulties ourselves and will very often encounter others who are suffering. Some will cry out openly and ask for help while others will go through it in silence. In our walk as Christians we may lend a helping hand to these persons by sharing a kind word, by praying with/for them and listening to them as they share their hurts, fears, and concerns. There are some persons in our communities who suffer but feel like they do not have a voice. As a disciple of Christ called to work with Him, you can be the voice to that “voiceless” person through advocacy and providing practical assistance where possible.

You may not always be able to minister directly to a need on your own and may oftentimes need additional help and support. It is very important to be aware of the different ministries in your local church and the leaders of those ministries. Additionally, you may be of even greater help to someone by pointing them to a health, social service, etc. that is available to meet their need(s).

Above all else, it is important to remember that Christianity is practical living.



disciples in action

- Share with your accountability partner one lesson you would like to practice this week to help you become more in tune with the needs of those in your community and be a true disciple for Christ. Contact each other during the week to see how things are working out with this.
- Choose one aspect of Christ-likeness that you want to learn more about this week. Inform your accountability partner about this and seek his/her guidance in putting together a study plan.

prayer time

- When you pray, ask the Lord to give you a desire to win souls for His kingdom.
- Pray that God will give you a sensitivity towards others that will allow you to see their needs and be willing to help.
- Ask God to help you choose to do what is right even when the wrong thing is more popular.

The objectives of the session are that you will:

- **Know** the importance of reaching out to members of our community who are suffering in different ways and assist them when and where possible.
- **Feel** the need to reach out to your community and minister to God's suffering and disadvantaged children.
- **Become** actively involved in witnessing.



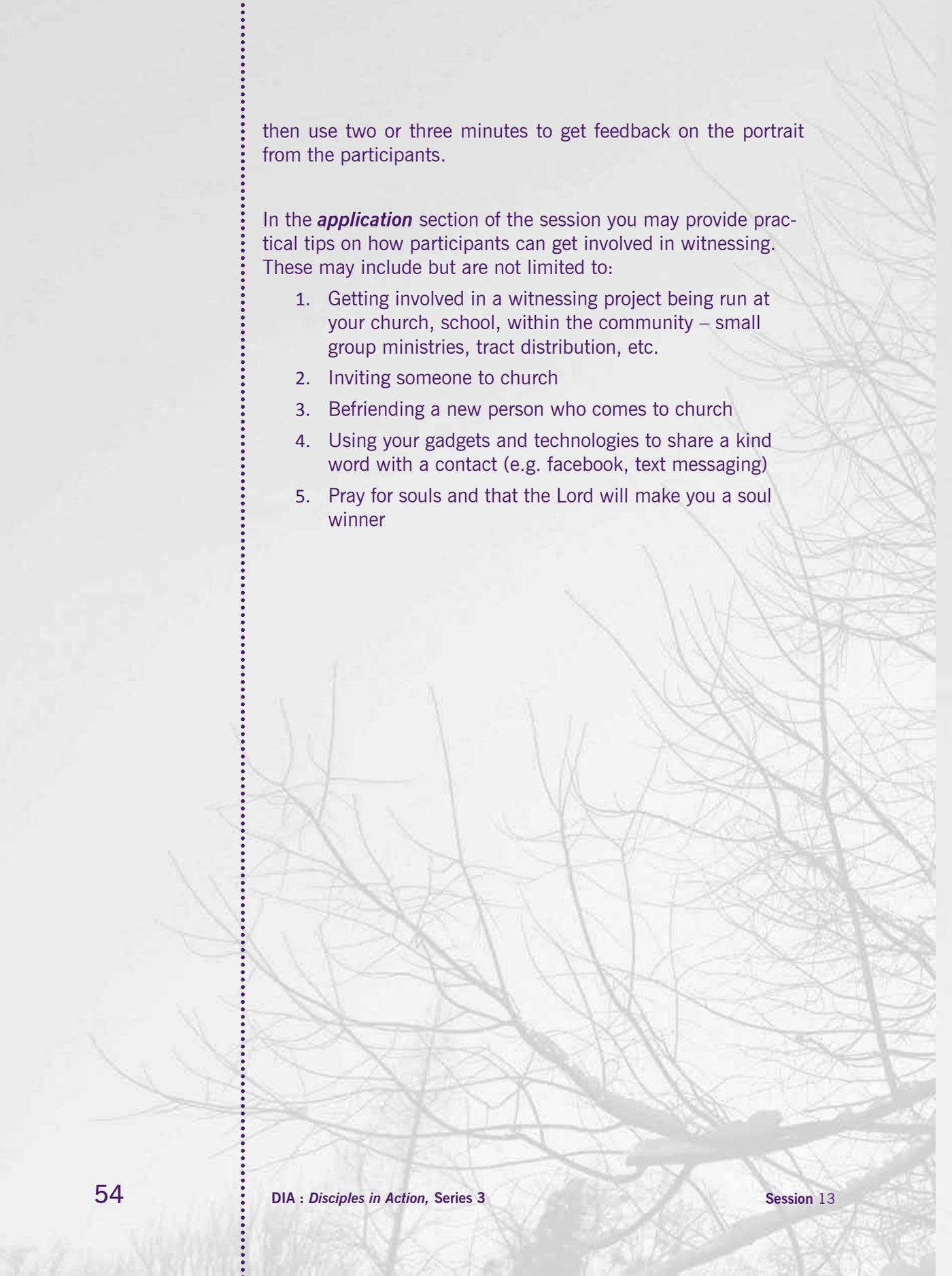
leader's note

Activity: Case Study (see reflection on page forty-seven)

This is based on a true story from Jamaica where two young men stopped and jumped into a river on Sabbath to save the lives of persons who were at risk of drowning. You may read the story at http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/161848_Boys-break-Sabbath-tradition-to-rescue-drowning-motorists.

Activity: Painting a portrait of Jesus

For this exercise you will need a sheet of poster board with the heading, "Portrait of Jesus." In addition you will need a box or bag with the following words written on separate pieces of paper: healer; friend of sinners; voice of the voiceless; compassionate; defender of the oppressed (These are just some suggestions. You may add words you feel are suitable given the focus of the exercise). It might be helpful to have each word on either a different color paper or written in different colors. As many persons as possible will select a word from the bag/box and place it on the poster board until all the words have been used up. You may



then use two or three minutes to get feedback on the portrait from the participants.

In the **application** section of the session you may provide practical tips on how participants can get involved in witnessing. These may include but are not limited to:

1. Getting involved in a witnessing project being run at your church, school, within the community – small group ministries, tract distribution, etc.
2. Inviting someone to church
3. Befriending a new person who comes to church
4. Using your gadgets and technologies to share a kind word with a contact (e.g. facebook, text messaging)
5. Pray for souls and that the Lord will make you a soul winner

SESSION FOURTEEN

by Steve Thomas and Julian Thompson

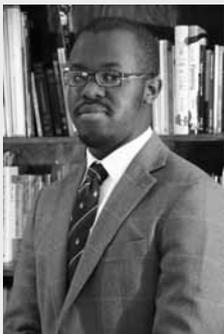
helping believers study and obey God's Word



Steve Thomas is the Youth and Young Adults Director of the South England Conference in Watford, England. Previously he pastored the Reading Central and Whitley Seventh-day Adventist churches, two multi-national, dynamic and growing congregations located in Berkshire, England.

The author of two books, *Evangelism: The Evangelistic Guide* and *Relationship: Taking the Biblical Approach*, Dr. Thomas has also written numerous Bible study series.

Pastor Thomas has a bachelor's degree in theology, a master's degree in religion with an emphasis in systematic theology, and a Doctor of Ministry degree, emphasis in strategic planning. He is also an architect/building surveyor and has utilized this skill in the development of the churches he has pastored. He is happily married to his wife Lurline and is the proud father of two young adults, Christina and Stephanie.



Julian Thompson currently serves as president for the Thames Valley Youth Federation (TVYF), a vibrant youth organization supported by the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Having completed a degree in political science at the University of Nottingham, Julian answered the call to ministry in 2009 and commenced ministerial training at Newbold College (UK) where he is completing a master's degree in Old Testament

Studies. According to Julian, "the most important thing that we as leaders can do for our youth is to lead them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ." Julian is also a keen saxophonist and enjoys jogging in his spare time.



theme

To help believers study and obey God's word, I am showing others to:

- understand the purpose of Scripture.
- discover study methods that will help them engage in regular Bible study.
- apply biblical principles to live their lives thoughtfully and faithfully.
- use tools to more effectively interpret biblical meanings.
- discern spiritual truth in a balanced manner.



big idea

The way in which we study the Bible can greatly influence the way in which we obey the Bible.



connector

Look: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 1:20-21; Luke 24:25-27, 44-45

Memorize: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



THE JOURNEY exploration

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “You Christians have in your keeping a document with enough dynamite in it to blow the whole of civilization to bits; to turn society upside down; to bring peace to this war-torn world, But you read it as if it were just good literature, and nothing else.”

The document of which he spoke was the Bible. The suggestion underlying this profound critique of our faith is that we as Christians—or more specifically as Seventh-day Adventists—should read the Bible as it ought to be read and treat the Bible as it ought to be treated; then our ability to witness and impact this present world for good will increase exponentially. Although Gandhi was not himself a Christian, he recognized an important principle that many of us overlook, namely, that the way in which we study the Bible can greatly influence the way in which we obey the Bible. This impact can be for the good, but as history has shown, it can also be for the bad.

“No book has been so loved, so hated, so revered, so damned as the Bible. People have died for the Bible. Others have killed for it. It has inspired man’s greatest, noblest acts and been blamed for his most damnable and degenerate. (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 11).

“The Bible’s uniqueness does not come from its unparalleled political, cultural, and social influence, but from its source and its subject matter. It is God’s revelation of the unique God-man: the Son of God, Jesus Christ—the Savior of the world” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 11).

the reason for the Bible

Since it is the revelation of the unique God and contains the express will of God, with instructions for all those desiring to develop a relationship with Him, it is necessary that we truly understand its purpose.

So, if the way in which we study the Bible will greatly influence the way in which we obey the Bible, it becomes all the more important to develop appropriate Bible study habits so that we can in turn develop and render appropriate attitudes of obedience. For the Bible to become the *Word of God* we will need to use our minds to hear what God is saying to us.



dig deep

first principles of biblical interpretation

One of the first principles when it comes to studying and obeying God’s word is to think about *how* we think! Indeed this is where many people have gone astray in their attempts to study and obey the Bible.

Whether we realize it or not, no one is able to approach Scripture with a blank mind; we all hold certain presuppositions - *assumptions or attitudes* - that influence how we come to understand and interpret the Bible (*Reid, 2005:27*). The proper name for the process of thinking about how to understand and interpret a biblical text is called *hermeneutics*, and if you have ever discussed the Bible with someone who is an atheist, you will realize just how important hermeneutics can be.

I remember having a debate with a good friend of mine who was an atheist at the time. She questioned me over whether the miracles of Jesus really took place. To justify my position, I turned to the pages of the Bible; to justify her position, she turned to the encyclopedia. My belief in the authority of Scrip-

ture meant that I viewed the Bible as being the ultimate source of truth in these matters; her belief in rationalism meant that she viewed science as the ultimate source of truth. Therefore, although we were both reading the same Bible text, we were approaching it from very different perspectives, and because we were approaching the text from very different perspectives, we both arrived at very different conclusions.

For Seventh-day Adventists, the following attitudes and pre-suppositions are understood as being necessary for interpreting and developing an understanding of the Bible: openness, honesty, faith, humility, obedience, love, and prayer.

Share: How might these influence the way you interpret and understand the Bible?

the purpose of Scripture

Since it is the revelation of the unique God and contains the express will of God, with instructions for all those desiring to develop a relationship with Him, it is necessary that we truly understand its purpose.

Through the centuries, the faithful have recognized that spiritual growth requires disciplined and steadfast attention to Scripture. In Jesus' day, Jewish religious leaders searched the Scriptures because they believed "that in them you have eternal life" (John 5:39).

The first Christians recognized how essential it was to apply their minds to Scripture. For one thing, convincing those who lived in a Jewish context of the truth of their message required it. In Acts, Luke provides us with a graphic picture of the application of their mind to Scripture (8:26-40). However, none surpassed that of the apostle Paul, a converted Rabbi, in establishing an argument by searching the Scriptures "to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Paul's arguments were carefully worked, based on Scripture, into every letter. In fact, as the primitive church increased in converts from among non-Jewish community members, they held steadfastly to the importance of studying Scriptures. Notice Paul's statement, "All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3: 16-17).

“Wars have raged over the Bible, revolutions have been nurtured in its pages, and kingdoms crumbled through its ideas. People of all viewpoints—from liberation theologians to capitalists, from fascists to Marxists, from dictators to liberators, from pacifists to militarists—search its pages for words with which to justify their deeds.” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 11)

Indeed history has shown that many people have used the Bible to ‘justify their deeds,’ but is this really the purpose of the Bible?

*And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall **beat their swords into plowshares**, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more. - Micah 4.3*

***Their sword will become our plow**, and from the tears of war the daily bread of future generations will grow.
- Adolf Hitler*

Are individuals like Hitler, who have used the Bible to justify their actions, interpreting the Bible correctly? Was God’s purpose in giving us the Bible to provide us with a means of exonerating inhumane actions?

In short, the answer to the questions above is a resounding “no!”

According to Timothy, the purpose of Scripture is ‘so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work’ (2 Timothy 3:17, *New International Version*). If our use of the Bible does not line up with this principle, then unfortunately we will be mistaken in our understanding. We are to allow the Bible to equip us, rather than having us equip the Bible. In other words, we must allow the Bible to speak for itself and not attempt to make the Bible say what we would want it to say. The process of attempting to understand the Bible on its own terms is called “Exegesis.” The process of reading into the Bible what we might want it to say is called “Eisegesis.” The Bible student who attempts to understand the Bible from a perspective of “Openness and Honesty, Faith, Humility, Obedience, Love and Prayer” will carry out “Exegesis” and not “Eisegesis.”

Share: Think about the world in which we live; do people today still use the Bible to justify their actions—be they good or bad?

application

In this section we will be conducting an “Exegesis” exercise in order to uncover further what the Bible says about its purpose. The process outlined below can also be used to gain further insight and meaning from any Bible text:

1. **Read the Text** - Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. If possible it is best to read the text in more than one Bible version.
2. **Write down an outline** - Write down an outline of the text, highlighting what you believe are the most important words or statements. *In this case your outline should include a list of what the text says are the four purposes of the Scripture.*
3. **Find out what the main words mean** - Using both an English dictionary and a Bible dictionary (electronic version available at <http://www.Biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary>), write down the meaning of each of the four reasons/purposes of the Scripture.
4. **Look up the words in a concordance and examine how they are used** - Using a Bible concordance, or if you have a study Bible you will find one at the rear, look up how each of the words you have listed are used. What meanings have you discovered?
5. **Reread the same passage and replace each word with the meanings you discovered.**
6. **How does this passage apply to us today?** As well as gaining an understanding of a Bible passage, it is also important to consider what principles a passage gives us and how they might apply to our lives today.

After completing Steps 1-6, depending on time, encourage participants to share what they have learned with the rest of the class. Take note of your class’s reactions as they share. Finally, read Luke 24:25-27; 44-45. Ask the class the following questions:

- How does Jesus use the Scripture?
- What was He actually saying about its overall theme and contents?



leader's note

- Divide into groups of two or more.
- If possible, try to make English dictionaries, Bible dictionaries, and concordances available for each person to use. If this is not possible, another option is to photocopy the appropriate excerpts and make these resources available to students as handouts.
- Encourage your students to copy and use this structure in their everyday Bible study.



disciples in action

- Write out again the four areas that Scripture can be used for. Draw a star beside the areas with which you feel you have the least experience and share them with your accountability partner.
- Use the above six-step outline in your Bible study this week, and share what you have learned with your accountability partner.



dig deep

According to Ellen G. White, “many are the ways in which God is seeking to make himself known to us and to bring us into communion with him.” Commenting on the purpose of the Scripture, she wrote:

“God speaks to us in his word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of his character, of his dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of the patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men “subject to like



passions as we are. We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptations as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God; and beholding, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a flame of holy emulation in our hearts, and a desire to be like them in character, like them to walk with God.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 87)

For Ellen White, Scripture is the expressed will of God. It reveals all that is necessary for our daily walk with God and sufficient information for our salvation. In order to better understand God’s purpose, please read *Steps to Christ*, chapter six, “A Knowledge of God,” and chapter eight, “Growing Up into Christ.”

1. How does Ellen White incorporate Scripture in her writing?
2. In what four ways does God speak to us in the twenty-first century?
3. What special lessons are to be learned from a study of the Bible characters?
4. What will be the positive result of study and meditation on Scripture?
5. What should precede Bible study?

reflection

1. What should be the basis of your standard for truth?
2. Why do these verses say that you can rely on Scripture for teaching as well as correcting and training?
3. Describe a time when you relied on sources other than God’s Word to receive guidance for your life?

prayer time

Pray for God’s help to understand and obey His word.

leader's note

how to use study tools to more effectively interpret biblical meanings

Like other complex and profound writings, Scriptures will scarcely reveal their insights to us unless we learn all we can about the author, purpose, date, place, circumstances of writing, and many other things. Different kinds of literature will pose different challenges. To discover the deep truths that we all desire from the writings of the Bible requires disciplined study using the best methods and information available.

tools for the study of the Bible

To properly interpret passages from the Bible and avoid reading our ideas and impressions into the area we are studying, we have an abundance of excellent English translations as well as some acceptable paraphrases for serious students of the Scripture. However, we need to be careful in the selection of the various translations. This is because older translations can be misleading as languages become dated—words change. [1 Thessalonians 4:15, King James Version: “That we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (that is, precede or go before) them which are asleep.” While this was understandable in the seventeenth century, this translation will be misleading to the twenty-first century reader because of the development of the English. “Prevent,” in modern English, means to stop.]

study tools

concordances

Most study Bibles include a concordance. **Each concordance is keyed to a particular translation of the Bible.** You wouldn't use Strong's Concordance, for example, for the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Strong's is keyed to the King James Version (KJV).

For a particular translation, a concordance lists major names, places, terms, and words and tells you where they appear in the texts. The concordance entry for people's names also briefly describes that person, as a dictionary would.

use a concordance to:

- Find all the places the Bible mentions an important person, place, or idea.
- Read brief information about people in the Bible.
- Locate quotations using key words.

If you use a study Bible, you'll always have a concordance available.

online searches

A faster way to locate biblical words and phrases is to search a Bible translation online:

- Search the **Revised Standard Version (RSV)** (with Apocrypha) online at the University of Michigan Digital Library (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/r/rsv/>).

Search the **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)** online at <http://www.biblestudytools.com/nrsv/>.

Bible dictionaries

A good Bible dictionary may be the most useful tool a student committed to Bible study could own. In many ways, it's more like a one-volume encyclopedia focused on the Bible. You can:

- **Quickly find information about the Bible's people and places**, whether you're reading new texts or need to refresh your memory. What's the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees? What do we know about ancient Antioch?
- **Learn about the objects of the Bible's world.** You'll understand the beginning of Exodus much better if you read the Bible dictionary's entry on "brick." You'll understand many texts of the Bible better if you read the entry on "water."
- **Learn about the Bible's social, cultural, economic, and religious worlds.** What was a "family" in biblical times? What was "marriage"? How did most people make their livings? How did Jews worship in the time of Jesus?
- **Get overviews of each biblical book and of important theological ideas in the Bible.** How do the meanings of holiness, faith, love, and grace develop across the Bible? What did sacrifice mean to people in the time of Jesus?

A good Bible dictionary's entries are based both on citations from the biblical texts themselves and on modern biblical scholarship. The editors of the dictionary may have a particular theological orientation, which means not all Bible dictionaries are helpful.

Parallel Bibles

Parallel Bibles are special Bible study tools that some advanced beginner and intermediate students may find helpful:

- **Parallel Bibles** let you compare several different translations of a single biblical text.

keep learning

Read John 1:1-18. Read all the cross-references that connect with texts of the Old Testament.

What do you learn that helps you better understand the beginning of John?

how to use Bible study tools

- Invest in a good parallel Bible or read one online. Parallel Bibles contain several different versions side by side, designed to help you better interpret the text. Some popular versions are the King James Version, New International Version, New American Standard, Amplified, and the Message, but there are many other versions as well. Most parallel Bibles have between two and four of these different versions side by side.
- Refer to a concordance to help study topics or find specific passages. A concordance is an alphabetical index of words used in the Bible. You can search a certain topic or word used in the Bible and be referenced to every verse in the Bible that the word is used. There are online concordances that make it easy to look up virtually anything. This can be helpful if, for example, you can remember only a portion of a Scripture and want to find it in the Bible. The concordance is also a good reference if you are studying a particular topic.

- Use a Bible lexicon or word study dictionary, such as “The New Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words” or an “Expository Dictionary of Bible Words.” (Every word in the Greek New Testament is explained in great detail, covering all context usages for these words. Numbered to Strong’s numbering system, each word has a basic definition and further commentary is provided.) This is helpful for words that are translated in different ways and also allows you to find Greek and Hebrew definitions of words in the Bible.
- Read commentaries in addition to reading the Bible. Commentaries are interpretations of the Bible written by people, designed to help you understand what the Bible means. Ministers or biblical scholars write many. Keep in mind, however, that this is a person’s interpretation of what the Bible means, and it may differ from the beliefs that you have.
- Acquire a devotional to be used during your daily Bible study, or subscribe to one that can be sent to your email such as “The Word For Today” (<http://www.ucb.co.uk/w4u>) or Ellen White Estate Daily Devotional (<http://www.whiteestate.org/devotional/subscribe.asp>). Here, you would spend a portion of each day devoting time to God to pray and study His Word, and devotionals are designed to help guide you in that process. Each daily devotional usually focuses on a certain topic and specific Scriptures. They are written from another person’s point of view and usually contain personal stories that relate to that day’s verses. Some also allow you to journal how that passage relates to your life.
- Commit to a plan to help you read the Bible during the course of a year. There are books and online guides that are designed to help you accomplish this. Some are offered in a chronological plan, while others give a daily reading plan that may contain readings from both the Old and New Testament. This is helpful because it gives you a structured plan to read a specific amount of text each day.

SESSION FIFTEEN

by *Debbonnaire Kovacs*

debriefing sessions 11 - 14



Debbonnaire Kovacs has been writing since she could hold a pencil and sold her first story to Junior Guide when she was eleven years old. By her twenties, she recognized that writing and speaking were not just what she loved to do, but what God wanted her to do. She has written off and on for most of her life, but has been writing full time since 1990, having written fourteen books including the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade Bible textbooks used in Adventist schools in North America and more than 150 stories and articles for all ages. She speaks at camp meetings, women's retreats, and other events, and also does copyediting. She urges everyone to take their dreams to God and see whether they are more than just dreams. They may be assignments from the King of Heaven.

You can reach her at debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com or on the Web at www.debbonnaire.com



debriefing sessions 11-14

Time: 90 minutes. *Try to spend approximately 15-20 minutes discussing each section below, leaving time for small group prayer and commitment at the end.*

discipleship begins and ends with Jesus—the focal point!

During sessions 11 through 14, we have literally studied from our hearts and homes to the world and back to our own hearts again. First, we explored what it means to have healthy Christian families and what to do when they falter. Next, we took a look back through the ages to the origins of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, which is clearly the origin of all our difficulties with sin and sorrow, beginning in our first family and moving onward from there. After that, we looked out toward a suffering world and reminded ourselves that the family of God extends to His children on every continent—both those who know they are His and those who do not. We realized that the controversy and Fall have affected every human being and every family. Throughout this series, of course we have depended on what the Bible has to say and how it guides us in these difficulties, but in the final session we spent time exploring just that—how can we understand and apply the Bible to our own lives, and how can we help others to see that need and do the same?

As always, it begins and ends with God and His words, works, and plans. We are blessed beyond measure to be privileged to join in His efforts to bring the controversy to a final close, forever and ever. Amen!

Here is a review of the Big Ideas we have covered

1. a. God made us social beings and placed us in families. He has provided through Christ the divine resources to help us live in unity and harmony.
b. Though in our time sexuality has become uncoupled from marriage, these two are closely intertwined in the biblical value system. As God's gift of sexuality is more fully understood against the backdrop of His plan for marriage, both singles and marrieds will be able to experience greater personal and relational fulfillment.
2. The consequences of the human fall and the great controversy at large help you to understand God's love for you.
3. As children of God we are called to reach out to our brothers and sisters, especially those who are not yet part of the household of faith, and minister to their needs in the spirit of Jesus Christ.
4. God gave the Bible to show His children what He is like, how He works, and how to work with Him. The simplest person, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, can learn to understand the Bible and its purposes in human life.

During session 11a we discovered that God has provided divine resources to enable us to have close relationships in our families, and we learned to respond in practical and specific ways to strengthen those relationships.

designed for relationships

- Are there new insights and understandings about families and relationships that you have learned as a result of this session? Share with the group.
- What is the difference, if any, between liking and loving? Is one more important than the other? Do they always go together?
- Is your family/church a place that's warm, where people are drawn together? Are there changes you would like to see happen to make that more true? What can you personally do about it?

- What is submission? What is it not? What do you like/dislike about it?
- Think of daily realities in your life when you are the one doing the submitting, such as student or worker. When do you submit willingly and when not? Now think of realities in which you are the one being submitted to. From your side, is this an act of love or domination?
- What about equal relationships, such as marriage or friendship, which move back and forth at different times, one submitting in one matter, the other submitting in a different matter. How can these pairs make decisions that will help these moments of submission be loving and joyful rather than painful and resentful?

forgiveness and reconciliation

- Have you seen Christ heal breaches? Are there breaches you wish He would heal?
- Whom do you need to forgive? Who needs you to ask forgiveness?
- What is the difference between forgiveness and full reconciliation?

In session 11b we learned to bring a more Christ-centered mindset about sexuality to a personal understanding of ourselves and our relationships, and that God created humans as sexual beings and gave the institution of marriage as the setting for the fullest expression of sexual intimacy.

- This subject can be difficult to discuss, but in a prayerful and trusting setting, it can only help. Try to be as open and honest as you can about issues and questions, without telling personal secrets and especially without so much as a hint of the private issues of others you may know about. God created sex and sexuality and intended it to be a huge blessing to us. That's the very reason Satan has perverted it so successfully, and you need to know as much as you can about God's values in order to avoid being taken in by Satan's lies.

- Do your *thoughts* about sex and sexuality and your *feelings* about them match? Why or why not? Explore this, both personally in the privacy of your prayers and journal, and, if possible, within the group.
- How has divorce affected your life? Name some ways you have seen the grace of God operate even in that brokenness.
- Is chastity as important for men as for women? Why?
- What does it mean to you to submit your sexuality to God? Have you clearly and intentionally done this? What feelings does it bring up?

Session 12 helped us understand the consequences of the human fall from God’s original plan. Discuss.

- Does God destroy sinners, or does sin destroy sinners? Would it be possible for God to destroy sin without destroying any sinners in the process? Why or why not? What insight does this give you into why He is waiting so long and so patiently before making a final end?
- What one word would you give to describe the very beginning and heart of sin? You may want to write the different answers on a white board and compare them. Can the group consolidate all their answers into *one* word?
- Have you been able to find practical ways to share your views of the great controversy with someone? Share the results.

In session 13 we discovered how to recognize and respond to the needs of suffering, both locally and globally. Discuss.

- Share some ways in which you have been involved in helping to alleviate the suffering of others. (Don’t include only “official,” organized relief efforts, but also personal, individual ones.) How did it feel? Are there other ways you would like to become involved?

- Becoming involved in a “big issue” such as discrimination is one thing. Quietly standing up for one person, as in the example of the girl who was being ridiculed in this session, is another. It can be harder. How are you at doing that? Can you share a story of a time someone stood up for *you* and what it meant to you?
- Has the time you have spent with your group in this session made any difference in your ability to stand against negative peer pressure?
- Did you and your accountability partner try any of the exercises suggested? What were the results?

Session 14 helped us understand the purpose of Scripture and examined tools that will help us interpret spiritual truths in a balanced manner. Discuss.

- Did you try the exercise about the four purposes for Scripture given in 2 Tim 3:16, 17? Share the results in your heart and in your life.
- Share some ways in which Bible study has helped you and enriched your life.
- Are there difficulties or questions you would like the group to help you with?
- How can reading the Bible help you understand God more?
- Do you think the Bible can help you define your purpose in life?

encouraging youth to be disciples of Christ and mentors to others



Pastor Mark McCleary began his pastoral career in 1974 after receiving his Bachelor of Arts in theology and a minor in history from Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. He earned his Master of Divinity degree in 1978 from Andrews University Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry degree from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1998. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from NOVA Southeastern University.

Dr. McCleary continued to gain experience in spiritual leadership through the years, beginning in 1974 as an associate evangelist in Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas. He now serves as the senior pastor of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C.

Dr. McCleary is affiliated with the Faith-Based Community Association Partnership (FBCAP) and the Metro Area Ministerium of Seventh-day Adventists. He has written several publications, “A Guide to Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts”, “Gospel Presentation,” “A Comprehensive Study Guide: Back to Basics,” and “A Study Guide and Workbook: Daniel and Revelation.” These are available online at <http://www.firstsdachurch.org/pastor/books.html>.

Pastor McCleary is the loving husband of Queenie and their union has been blessed with two sons, Brian and Michael, and a daughter, Michelle. Pastor McCleary says his sincere goal is to be a role model of Christian values in order to inspire positive lifestyle transformation in others.



DISCIPLESHIP—MENTORING FOR YOUTH

By Dr. Mark McCleary

objectives

- To encourage youth to be disciples of Christ and mentors to other youth
- To provide basic understanding of discipleship and mentoring as correlating endeavors
- To inspire youth to be productive stewards in view of social well-being and Kingdom building

big idea

As a youth, you are uniquely wired to reach other youth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Scriptural Connection: Matthew 28:18-20; 1Timothy 4:12-16

the journey

The following guide has been produced primarily, but not exclusively, for youth and young adults. It comprises a format that focuses on discipleship and mentoring of young people on their journey toward an authentic relationship with Jesus.

I want to highlight the congruence between the concepts of discipleship and mentoring. Discipleship involves following a teacher as Peter, James, John, and the others followed Jesus. On the other hand, mentoring highlights the role of the teacher or coach toward his followers, such as a basketball coach to his players or someone with a particular expertise to his or her student/mentoree. Thus, this guide emphasizes the dual roles of following and leading—discipleship and mentoring—in the context of youth-to-youth interaction.

how can I benefit from a discipleship-mentoring experience?

- Start with family members (i.e., parents, guardians, siblings).
- Seek same-sex role models who have demonstrated their effectiveness in discipleship and/or mentoring.
- Practice discipleship and mentoring with youth who want your involvement.
- Learn what discipleship or mentoring ministries are available at your church.
- Research successful discipleship and mentoring programs.

what can I do to help someone begin the discipleship journey?

Why not use a functional tool like my *Gospel Presentation* guidebook? This booklet consists of twelve steps for leading someone to a conscious relationship with Jesus. This method is more directed and purposeful in its approach to making disciples of Jesus. Of course if another approach works better for you, feel free to use that method. But we must go beyond the notion and practice of merely leading an individual to complete a set of Bible lessons and pass an oral examination in order to be baptized and voted as a member of a congregation.

Rehearse the steps (on page 65 of the *Gospel Presentation* guidebook) and reflect on their key phrases and intent. They comprise a tool for helping you lead other unsaved youth to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Memorize these twelve guidelines, listen actively, and you will become a youth-fisher of men and catcher of born-again individuals, many of whom will be youth like yourself. Is not this the essence of discipleship? The fulfilling of Jesus' Great Commission in a one-to-one approach.

the youth-mentor

“Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country,” stated the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, during his inauguration speech. He was challenging Americans to seek to work and live for the common good and not by an ethos of rugged individualism that espoused personal interest by any means necessary at the expense of others.

It might seem ironic to exhort youth to be mentors because often they need the same themselves as they mature into productive adulthood. Nevertheless, their personal need for mentoring does not negate the need for youth fulfilling the same for other youth. Someone said, “When you learn, teach,” and “When you receive, give.” Both statements are indicative of mentoring. In fact, the best mentors are those who learn and receive from others and in turn share their life lessons with their peers during informal and formal times of giving and teaching.

Gospel Presentation Steps:



1. Obtain permission to enter the other person's space.
2. "May I share something with you?"
3. If "Yes" to # 2, "Do you have the assurance of eternal life?" (1 John 5:11-13)
4. Check up question, "If God asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' What would your response be?" (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 5:15-17)
5. "Why do you think it is a free gift?" Use an illustration of breaking the law (eg. traffic)—establish guilt.
6. Bible references for human guilt (1 John 3:4; Romans 3:23; 6:23)
7. "Could I/you pay our sin-guilt penalty?"
"Yes—consequences?" "No, Alternative?" (John 3:16)
8. Accepting Jesus' sacrifice pays our debt. It justifies us before the Father and reconciles our relationship with Him.
9. "We need more than Jesus' death" (Romans 5:10,19)
10. "Do you want to accept Jesus' provision for you receiving eternal life?" By faith and prayer of confession and acceptance.
11. "Welcome!" (John 1:12; 6:37)
12. Caution:
 - "Don't look to your goodness—legalism; Pharasism (Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5)
 - "Don't look to your badness—discouragement (Hebrews 12:2; 4:14-16)

(McCleary, 2006: 31, 32)

For information on getting a copy of the *Gospel Presentation* guidebook contact the author, Dr. Mark McCleary, at QMacbmm@aol.com.

how can a youth take advantage of mentoring opportunities?

- Begin by forming genuine friendships with other youth.
- Connect with another youth by suggesting and scheduling a Bible study session.
- Suggest and establish, with pastoral blessing, a youth prayer ministry (i.e., group meeting or prayer line).
- Start a youth book reading group.
- Coordinate a discipleship training ministry for youth to use *The Gospel Presentation* tool to lead other youth to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

to the discipleship and/or mentoring leaders

It is likely your church does not have nor ever has had a ministry specifically focused on youth fulfilling the roles of discipleship and/or mentoring. Well, “To be or not to be, ah, that is the question,” according to Macbeth. In other words, dare to be a youth discipler or mentor like explorers Lewis and Clark, who blazed a trail to the Northwest United States; or Booker T. Washington, who walked 100’s of miles to attend Hampton University and eventually began Tuskegee University; or James Naismith, who invented the game of basketball at a youth recreation facility so boys and girls could develop their physical, mental, and social skills; or Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who invested all she had into His formative training so that He might “increase in wisdom and stature and in favor of God and man” (Luke 2:52). She disciplined and mentored Him so well, He one day commissioned His disciples and mentors to “Go into all the world and do likewise” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

practical ways to lead out in discipleship and/or mentorship training

1. Recruit youth disciples via public and private media.
 - Use church announcement periods, bulletins, bulletin boards, and flyers.
 - Use face-to-face, email, phone, or other electronic media.
2. Determine a meeting schedule that is best for the group of trainees.
 - Distribute, collect, analyze, and report the individual group member’s multiple meeting options.

- Use the same media options for recruiting and announcing the meeting schedule.
3. Maintain an updated roster of all disciplers and mentors (i.e., name, address, phone, email). Use this list for mass communication.
 4. Use this roster for your prayer list also. Without their personal information, share this list with your prayer ministry leaders and group for systematic intercession.
 5. Establish a meeting format—this can be at church, home, or other informal settings. Meetings should not last more than 45-60 minutes—one half for discipleship and the other half for mentoring. Leave about a third for actual practice, questions, and answers.
 6. Maintain summary records of meetings and activities to report to pastor, assigned or elder-sponsor, youth ministry, and church board and business meetings.

discippler/mentor connecting with disciple/mentoree

1. Invite disciple/mentoree to church or church-sponsored event with you (Hebrew 10:25).
2. Encourage disciple/mentoree to enroll in Sabbath school class or other church-sponsored youth activities that appeal to their interest (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. Delegate disciple/mentoree to proactive, hospitable, and Christ-centered individuals.
4. Encourage disciple/mentoree who would like to be baptized after completing the Gospel Presentation and/or Bible studies to respond to the appeal for baptism (Acts 2:41).
5. Offer to accompany disciples/mentorees who are ready for baptism as they make their public response to accept Jesus as Savior and join His church (Acts 2:47).
6. Encourage and offer to educate disciples/mentorees of the importance of continuing in prayer (1Thessalonians; Matthew 17:21).
7. Encourage the disciple/mentoree to practice the habit of reading God's word for knowledge and growth (2 Peter 3:18).

reflection

1. What do you think about yourself as a disciple and/or mentor?
2. What do you think others might say are the primary factors that make you suitable as a discipler and/or mentor?
3. What would others say are your major priorities that make you suitable or unsuitable as a disciple and/or mentor?
4. What do you think it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
5. What do you think it means to be a mentor?
6. What factors might prevent you from being a good disciple and/or mentor?

application

As a growing young man in my neighborhood, I used to hear people say of a hot issue or during a confrontation, “Talk is cheap.” In other words, what we say needs to be backed up by what we do. Our actions need to be where our mouth is. Researchers make a distinction between one’s “espoused theory” and one’s “theory in use.” This analysis is similar to my previous two descriptions above. My point is that all that has been shared concerning discipleship and mentoring is espoused theory, profession, or talk unless you apply it, move beyond profession to action, and put it to use.

Ask God to help you and guide you to fulfill your call to discipleship and/or mentoring. The following are questions you might ask yourself to express such help and guidance:

- How can you change your schedule to ensure proper discipleship and/or mentorship training?
- What and who are positive influences in your life that are helping you develop into a productive disciple and/or mentor?
- What is the single most important factor for increasing your success as a disciple and/or mentor?
- How, when, and where is it best for focusing on God’s grace for electing and empowering you as a disciple and/or mentor?

personal prayer time

- Thank God for expressing His love to you by calling you to faithful stewardship as a disciple and/or mentor.
- Pray that God will give you discernment to avoid pitfalls and take advantage of opportunities to fulfill your discipleship and/or mentorship.
- Ask God to use you to effectively and positively reach other youth to His glory, for social edification, and the Devil's horrification.

REFERENCE:

McCleary, Mark (2006). *The Gospel Presentation: A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Lead Someone to Jesus*, Burtonsville, MD: McCleary Publishing.

APPLICATION FOR A MENTOR



Participant, if you would like to work with a mentor during the period of these discipleship sessions, please fill out this form and send it as an attachment to _____

(Name and phone number of facilitator/contact person)

Your Contact Information	
Name	
Street Address 1	
Street Address 2	
City, State & Zip Code	
Preferred Phone	
E-Mail Address	

How can your mentor help you?	
Please check any of the following topics that you would like your mentor to specifically address.	
<input type="checkbox"/> To begin a relationship with Christ	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing my resources (stewardship)
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthful living	<input type="checkbox"/> Prayer (can be for yourself, family members, friends, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding the Bible	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding my relationship with myself and others
<input type="checkbox"/> Time management (stewardship)	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding my relationship with God
<input type="checkbox"/> Transforming my devotional life	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing positive relationships outside the church
<input type="checkbox"/> Leading others to Christ	<input type="checkbox"/> Embracing the mission to bring others to Christ

<input type="checkbox"/> Learning to trust God	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing the needs of the less fortunate
<input type="checkbox"/> Discipling others	<input type="checkbox"/> Committing to live by biblical standards of sexual morality
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding biblical truths	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding that God forgives sin and restores brokenness

What is your primary motivation for attending these discipleship session

Please describe how a mentor could best assist you.

Do you have any special requests for a mentor?

How would you prefer to communicate with your mentor?

<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Skype
<input type="checkbox"/> IM	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Commitment as a Mentee

Participants who wish to have a mentor are asked to carry on a regular conversation with the mentor. Mentees should try to respond to a mentor's emails at least once a week. This regular contact helps to build the relationship between the mentor and the participant. Persons in the mentor program should contact the session facilitator/coordinator or their pastor if they need assistance beyond the help of their mentor. If a participant no longer wishes to participate in the program, or does not feel their mentor is the right match, then the participant should contact the facilitator to make them aware of the situation.

Growing Disciples Inventory

A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call of Christ to follow Him. Discipleship is not something we do alone, only on Sabbath or during a seminar. Discipleship is about growing spiritually. Closer to God, self, and others. Daily. Forever.

Take an Inventory of your spiritual walk today. Here's how: Respond to the 20 statements below. Score your answers. Ask the Holy Spirit and Christian friends to guide you. Serve and equip others using the two processes you score higher in. Plan to grow in the two processes you score lower in.

How often is this true of you? Circle one number for each commitment.	Rarely /Never	Not Often	Quite Often	Regularly /Always	Write the number you circled in the white space.	
I am developing a dynamic relationship with God.	1	2	3	4		
I keep learning more about what it means to be a growing Christian.	1	2	3	4		
I am seeking opportunities in all my daily activities to minister to others.	1	2	3	4		
I am teaching others how to build Christ-like relationships.	1	2	3	4		
I am discovering who I am in relationship to Christ.	1	2	3	4		
I keep learning more about who God is.	1	2	3	4		
I am helping one or more friends to grow in their relationship with God.	1	2	3	4		
I am helping others to study and obey God's Word.	1	2	3	4		
I am developing Christ-centered family relationships.	1	2	3	4		
I keep learning more about the human fall from God's original plan	1	2	3	4		
I volunteer to serve in my community without reward, outside my family.	1	2	3	4		
I am showing others how to live as committed, healthy Christians.	1	2	3	4		
I am developing Christ-like relationships with church members.	1	2	3	4		
I keep learning more about God's grace and plan of salvation.	1	2	3	4		
I am supporting my church's ministries with my time and/or money.	1	2	3	4		
I am helping others discover where God is working in their lives and world.	1	2	3	4		
I am developing positive relationships with those who are not part of my church or family – at work, in my community.	1	2	3	4		
I keep learning more about how God has provided everything needed to restore me to His image.	1	2	3	4		
I am helping my church tell the story of Jesus e.g. friendship evangelism.	1	2	3	4		
I am teaching others how to use spiritual gifts in God's work.	1	2	3	4		
TOTALS	To score, total each column →					
Processes: C=Connecting; U=Understanding; M=Ministering; E=Equipping					C	U
Learn more: growingfruitfuldisciples.org Full GD: inventory.growingdisciples.info					M	E

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THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The development of an effective curriculum is a multi-step, ongoing, and cyclical process. The process progresses from evaluating what we are doing now, to designing an improved program, to implementing a new program and back to evaluating the revised program. Your honest review and analysis of the information provided, its impact on lives (yours and others), as well as on people's perception of its strengths and weaknesses will help form the foundation of future curriculums and resources as we look forward to developing other curricula to assist in the discipleship process of our youth and young adults.

Please send comments or concerns to dunchiem@gc.adventist.org or write to:

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