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The Supernatural Made Simple: an Introductory Seminar for Postmoderns in Saanich Peninsula, British Columbia

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ABSTRACT

THE SUPERNATURAL MADE SIMPLE: AN INTRODUCTORY
SEMINAR FOR POSTMODERNS IN SAANICH
PENINSULA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

Ern Brake

Adviser: Russell Burrill

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Doctor of Ministry

Title: THE SUPERNATURAL MADE SIMPLE: AN INTRODUCTORY SEMINAR
FOR POSTMODERNS IN SAANICH PENINSULA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Name of researcher: Ern Brake

Name and degree of faculty advisor: Russell Burrill, DMin

Date completed: July 2011

Problem

The doctrine of the state of the dead is not well understood. Popular culture and

philosophy have deluged unchurched residents of the Saanich Peninsula in British

Columbia, and indeed much of the world, with impressive deceptions regarding the

supernatural world. Of particular concern is the increasingly pervasive postmodern

mindset and its inherent resistance to traditional doctrinal preaching. Considering the

strength of this deception, the treatment this subject receives in traditional evangelistic

meetings is inadequate for persons newly introduced to it.

Methodology

I sought to address this problem by conducting a series of experiments in

evangelistic seminars using elements of popular culture to teach the truth about the nature of the supernatural world. Through trial and error, I sought to perfect a seminar that would engage the postmodern mind. This journey of discovery was guided by the theology of evangelism as outlined in chapter 2, the literature on the subject as described in chapter 3, and the results of the previous seminars as recounted in chapter 4.

Results

We, as a church, reached very few hard-core postmoderns. Most of our non-Adventist guests were either postmodern-influenced seekers or Christian seekers. Although most of those we baptized were from these two groups, they still required a social connection to our church. Most of those we baptized had developed friendships within our church, or were already a part of church life.

Looking back on our efforts, I realize that what I developed was how to teach postmoderns rather than how to reach postmoderns. The seminars became part of an ongoing discipleship process of the church.

Conclusions

Preaching alone does not facilitate the necessary paradigm shift in a postmodern or postmodern-influenced seeker. In order to fulfill the great commission within the postmodern world, we need to combine the teaching of doctrine with the development of community.

In order to be a blessing to our postmodern guests, we need a modified set of evangelistic presentations that meet seven criteria. They must (1) start with issues with which postmoderns can identify, (2) answer questions that postmoderns are asking,

(3) address longings that postmoderns are feeling, (4) speak in the language that postmoderns understand, (5) paint pictures and tell stories that postmoderns want to be a part of, (6) develop community into which postmoderns are invited and feel welcome, and (7) introduce an experiment that postmoderns can try.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE SUPERNATURAL MADE SIMPLE: AN INTRODUCTORY
SEMINAR FOR POSTMODERNS IN SAANICH
PENINSULA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

A Project Dissesrtation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

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John Matthews   Date approved

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I would also like to thank the Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sidney, British Columbia, for the seven years we journeyed together. Through tears and laughter, through worship and work, we grew together as we sought to be a blessing to others.

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I would also like to thank the people and professors of Andrews University for their dedication, even in retirement, to the training of men and women for time and eternity.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Project

The general purpose of this project is to reach postmoderns with the Seventh-day Adventist message. More specifically, the purpose of this project is to design an introductory seminar that teaches the doctrine of the state of the dead and the nature of the supernatural world in such a way that inspires postmodern seekers on the Saanich Peninsula to attend a follow-up series of doctrinal presentations.

This project helped my congregation understand that innovation is needed in order to reach postmoderns in our area. It challenged me to develop my skills as a teacher/evangelist. It is my prayer that Adventist gospel communicators in northern and western countries in general find this model useful and relevant to the postmodern culture and faithful to the Adventist message.

Justification for This Project

In order to obey the great commission to reach all people groups, *panta ta ethna* (Matt 28:19), there is a need to spread the gospel net wider by developing and implementing alternate evangelistic strategies in these postmodern times. Popular culture and postmodern philosophy have deluged unchurched residents of the Saanich Peninsula in British Columbia, and indeed much of the world, with impressive deceptions regarding the supernatural world.

The public and media interest in supernatural phenomena (spirits, ghosts, angels, communications from the dead, and connecting with the supernatural/spirit world) has given the Seventh-day Adventist Church an unprecedented opportunity to provide a biblical explanation of the supernatural world. A false view of the state of the dead is advancing on three fronts: (1) the Eastern and New Age philosophy of reincarnation and the spirit world; (2) the traditional theistic view, both Christian and non-Christian, of the immortal soul and unending torture; and (3) the secular belief of an empty hereafter. Considering the strength of this deception, the treatment this subject receives in traditional evangelistic meetings is inadequate for persons newly introduced to it. There are many for whom the traditional evangelistic series is beneficial. However, there is a need to appeal to different audiences. It is hoped that this can be done by focusing on one major theme, especially one that overlaps with public interest. White wrote, "God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them."[1]

Another reason for this project is found in the writings of White. She wrote that one of the greatest deceptions in the last days is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.[2] The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, therefore, involves "undeceiving" people about the nature of man and the supernatural world. Thorough and seeker-sensitive teaching on this subject, therefore, is a sacred responsibility. Although it is gaining some credibility among theologians, the biblical doctrine of the non-immortality of the soul does not now have a prominent place in public dialogue. This project is intended to make a contribution to filling that void. Beginning from the vantage

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[1]Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 222, 223.

[2]Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888), 588.

point of a postmodern seeker, we hope to offer an opportunity to present Jesus Christ as the Savior and center of the supernatural world and the only supernatural Being with whom they need to make contact.

Limitations

I sought to use my teaching gift as the major means of reaching postmoderns. This ended up being a limitation. Even though the café-style and other styles of outreach might be conducive to postmodern evangelism, we wanted to see if the seminar-style of outreach would work with postmoderns. This is mainly because Adventists are comfortable with a seminar style of outreach and most likely to support it. Also, the spiritual gift of teaching is prevalent in many Seventh-day Adventist pastors. I wanted to see what would happen when applying my teaching gifts to postmodern evangelism. It is for these two reasons that we limited the outreach to a seminar format.

Due to the respect for the privacy and anonymity of our postmodern guests at various programs, we refrained from registering them or asking them to sign their names in any official way. While the members were strongly encouraged to get to know their names in a natural way, it did reduce our ability to precisely measure success.

We also recognize that the conclusions are specific to the Saanich Peninsula of British Columbia, Canada. Therefore, care must be taken before generalizing to other contexts.

Methodology

The Bible and the writings of White were reviewed with a view toward understanding what would make postmodern seekers receptive to the gospel message and the biblical teaching of the supernatural world. This provides the theological foundation for the project and is explained in chapter 2. The theological reflections in this paper were written after the process of discovery. I learned as I progressed and applied the theology incrementally throughout the process.

Chapter 3 reviews representative literature on the subject of postmodernism and of teaching the postmodern-influenced seeker.

Chapter 4 recounts the process of implementing the project. It includes the contextual situation of the Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church and a demographic profile of the Saanich Peninsula population of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. A seminar entitled The Supernatural Made Simple was designed and presented in order to bring postmodern seekers to a biblical understanding and experience of the supernatural. It is recognized that postmoderns view biblical authority with incredulity; thus, bold claims of biblical authority were avoided. Rather, the Bible was used as a source book for comparing different viewpoints. We did this with the confidence that the Holy Spirit would attend the teaching of truth even though it was presented as merely an option with which to experiment.

Leonard Sweet's EPIC model (acronym for Experiential, Participatory, Image-based, and Connectedness),[3] which takes into account Adult Learning Theory constituted

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[3]Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 30.

the foundation for the practical outworking of our experiments in postmodern evangelism.

Chapter 5 consists of conclusions and recommendations, both specific and broad.

Expectations

It is my prayer that this project report would be helpful to those contemplating reaching out to postmoderns, whether publically or personally; that they learn from my mistakes and build on the evangelistic experiments presented here. I expect that those who read this paper will gain a greater understanding of how postmoderns think and feel and thus get a sense of how to engage postmoderns with biblical spiritual subjects.

Definition of Terms

Unchurched

Generally, the term *unchurched* classifies individuals for whom church attendance is not a part of their lifestyle and who do not view themselves as belonging to a church group. The term *unchurched* is not meant to imply any particular belief system; it solely indicates practice. An unchurched person may or may not be postmodern in their mindset. He or she may also have a Christian worldview.

Postmodern

Postmodern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard defined postmodernism as a condition characterized by incredulity toward universal explanations, especially scientific ones.[4] Although debatable, I will use this as the working definition of postmodernism in this paper. Because postmodernism pervades our western culture, its very definition tends toward being broad and fluid. Generally speaking, however, postmodernism is the

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[4]Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Benningham and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv, referenced in Myron B. Penner, ed. *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 119.

mindset that questions modern values and ideals and, as such, brings the existence of objectivity, absolute knowledge, truth, and goodness into question. It views institutions, organizations, governments, and hierarchies with suspicion. Postmodernism is a movement away from valuing propositional truth toward valuing experiential truth. It is also critical of long-held classifications and definitions now viewed as rigid, biased, and conditioned. Please note that I use the word *postmodern* not only as an adjective but also as a noun (e.g., how do we reach a postmodern?). Also, the degree to which a person is postmodern in their thinking can vary. This is why I also use the term *postmodern-influenced*, defined below.

Postmodern-influenced

As I set out to develop ways to reach postmoderns, I have come to learn that there are varying degrees to which people are postmodern in their thinking and lifestyle. Postmodernism is so prevalent and so current that perhaps even those who would not consider themselves postmodern are substantially influenced by it. For instance, while a staunch postmodern may be atheist or agnostic, many people who happen to believe in a deity are often still influenced by postmodern thinking in their understanding, experience, and values. Throughout this paper, where the distinction between *postmodern* and *postmodern-influenced* does not matter, I simply use *postmodern* to include the whole spectrum. Where further distinction is relevant, I use *postmodern-influenced* in contrast to *hard-core postmodern*.

State of the Dead

The term "state of the dead" refers to the unconscious intermediate state of all people between their death and the resurrection.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNICATING

TRUTH TO THE POSTMODERN MIND

The Church's Mandate

Postmodern culture has presented a formidable challenge to the North American

church as it carries out the gospel commission to make disciples for Christ. The Seventh-

day Adventist Church has been entrusted with a body of truth to deliver to the world. Yet,

as explained in the following chapter, postmoderns deny the very existence of truth, and

its relevance. Because most of our evangelistic efforts assume the existence and

relevance of absolute truth, evangelistic sermons are not designed for postmoderns. Yet,

postmoderns may still be seeking for meaning, fulfillment, and happiness. As a result of

the church's misunderstanding of the postmodern worldview, the church inadvertently

bypasses a large segment of individuals for whom Christ died and who would benefit

from the Adventist message.

In order to be true to Christ's great commission, the Christian church must include

efforts to reach postmoderns. White wrote, "The very life of the church"[1] depends on

fulfilling Christ's great commission. "We should not be satisfied with our success," she

wrote, until we can, by God's grace, turn unbelievers—which include postmoderns—into

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[1]Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 825.

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"serviceable Christians, who have a true sense of their responsibility, and will do their appointed work."[2] The task of reaching and discipling postmoderns is not only eternally beneficial for them but also necessary for the very existence of the Christian church. Our own faith will "grow dim" when we are not engaged in "active labors for others."[3] "To neglect this work is surely to invite spiritual feebleness and decay."[4]

How, then, shall we go about engaging in "active labor" for North American postmodern-influenced unbelievers? God desires the unbeliever to call on Jesus' name. But, as the apostle Paul asked, "how then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:13-15)[5] So, the Scriptures are clear: postmoderns must hear a Christian preacher. However, postmoderns, even postmodern seekers, rarely go to hear preachers. Postmodern prejudice holds back those who could be eternally benefited if they would only "come and see."[6] Thus, there is a need for something that compels unbelievers to take the first steps along a pathway—a pathway that leads them to hear the Adventist message. Uncovering that pathway in scriptures and the writings of White is the purpose of this chapter.

Much has been written by authors of other denominations regarding how to reach the contemporary unchurched, which encompasses most postmoderns. While much of it has been helpful, we, as Seventh-day Adventists, must ensure that the Holy Scriptures and the writings of White are our guide rather than popular preachers and church-growth

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[2]Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 345.

[3]Ibid., 345.

[4]Ibid., 200.

[5]All scripture references are from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

[6]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 141.

gurus. Adventists see the Bible and the writings of White as a prism through which the works of all others are filtered. Because of this, we will reserve the discussion of other authors and works for the next chapter.

We now turn our attention to the principles of evangelism presented in Scripture and White. The following examination of these two inspired sources will be carried out with a view toward discovering a "how-to" guide for reaching postmodern-influenced lost souls for Christ.

The Seven Aspects of Communicating Truth

In order to uncover ways to reach the postmodern in the writings of White, I examined *The Desire of Ages*, *Evangelism*, and *Gospel Workers*, looking for statements that pertained to reaching "worldlings," "unbelievers," and lost people in general. I underlined hundreds of relevant statements and then reviewed them, searching for general principles of evangelism. I observed that while the content of the gospel message is essential, the appropriate method for delivering the message is equally essential.

Some have taught that the method does not matter so long as the message is pure. However, White is clear that method does matter. She admonished that we "learn to approach people in the best possible way,"[7] which implies that there are varying degrees of effectiveness in reaching people—the best way as opposed to ways which are not the best. How do we discover the best way to approach people? Ellen White suggested that we pay attention to "systematic training of the mind and manners"[8] in order to find the

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[7]White, *Evangelism*, 107.
[8]Ibid.

best possible way to approach a people group. "In order to lead souls to Jesus there must be a knowledge of human nature and a study of the human mind"[9] White wrote. When it comes to leading souls to Christ, knowing and telling the truth is not enough. She made it clear that the "how-to" of communication is also needed.

While the next chapter deals with the mind of the postmodern person, this chapter seeks to uncover the proper method of preparing his or her mind and heart for the reception of truth. In essence, this chapter lays the theological foundation for communicating eternal truths to the contemporary Western mind. As recounted in chapter 4, some of these outreach principles also seem to apply to non-Adventist Christians as they journey toward Adventism.

A survey of the writings of White yielded an abundance of instruction on communicating gospel truth to lost people. The principles that emerged from my research can be distilled into seven distinctive facets:

1. The character of the truth-giver
2. Social Power of the truth-giver
3. The timing of truth spoken
4. The order in which the truths are spoken
5. The manner in which the truth is spoken
6. The content of the truth spoken
7. The purity of the truth spoken.

The first five facets deal with method; the last two, with the message. Because this paper deals with method, we will discuss the first five.

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[9]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1989), 4:67.

Many would-be witnesses have brought untold embarrassment and damage to the cause of God because they have been ignorant of some or all of these principles of gospel communication. The content of the gospel message is crucial. But, as we shall see, it is worse than wasted without the proper method of delivery.

Character as a Vital Aspect in Reaching Postmoderns

I discovered that the first facet of evangelistic effectiveness has little to do with the cognitive or doctrinal aspect of the message, or even verbal communication techniques. Rather, it concerns character, and its outworking in social interaction. "Character," wrote White, "is power."[10]

Without saying a single word an Adventist church member can have an "almost irresistible influence"[11] for the gospel. White wrote that "our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are."[12] Correct doctrine is even secondary to character, as the following quote bears out: "Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain their confidence, and there will be time enough for doctrines."[13] According to this statement, when it comes to evangelism, the character of the doctrine-explainer is more important than the doctrine he or she explains.

In *The Desire of Ages*, White puts the cognitive aspect of the gospel message into perspective. Note that the following quotations reference something other than reasoning or preaching: "Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a

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[10]Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941)*, 340.
[11]Ibid.
[12]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 142.

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life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world."[14] She also wrote that "a godly example" is hard to resist.[15] Clearly, the kind of influence that is empowered by godly character is a necessity and quite distinct from propositional truth. "Disinterested love" and "meekness" are non-cognitive and non-doctrinal characteristics that do not require a Bible study to be evangelistically influential. For Seventh-day Adventists trying to reach the postmodern generation, this is the first consideration.

The Bible, too, bears out the significance of Christian character in the context of witnessing. Peter emphasizes that it is the inner beauty of the heart that makes the Christian attractive to unbelievers (1 Pet 3:3, 4). Paul writes that Christlike character can even "sanctify" an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:14). He goes on to show the primacy of character over knowledge a few chapters later, in 1 Cor 13:2: "Though I . . . understand all mysteries and have all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing." Hence, one of the most well-known passages of Scripture, the love chapter, argues that knowledge, even perfect knowledge, is secondary to love. This is something the Scriptures have in common with postmoderns. The character of the one communicating the truth is pivotal, and it is not content-centered. In addition, David recognized that he needed a character cleansing before he could effectively witness about God's mercy to others. A conversion of heart must precede any effort to reach out to unbelievers: "Then," exclaims David, "I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You" (Ps 51:13). David had knowledge of eternal truths, but knowledge was not enough. It behoves us as

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[13]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

[14]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 142.

witnesses for Christ to put knowledge in its place. "Then there will be time enough for doctrines."[16]

Scriptures and the writings of White suggest that Christian character manifests itself when Christians mingle with unbelievers. White wrote that it is "through the social relations, Christianity comes in contact with the world,"[17] and it is "through the avenues of the social circle"[18] that we are to reach unbelievers as Christ did. White noted that "social power," when "sanctified by the grace of Christ, must be improved in winning souls to the Savior."[19] Character, as manifested in social interaction with postmoderns, is primary in soul winning. Adventists must socialize.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said we will receive power to connect with unbelievers when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. The "fruit of the Spirit" passage in Gal 5:22, 23 suggests that we will receive a Christlike character as a result of that same Spirit's working. The manifestation of character comes in the act of socializing. Socializing, while not a doctrine-teaching activity, is, however, a required activity for those who seek to evangelize. Christ's followers must learn how to socialize. Christ's leaders must train them.

Social Power

White's "social power" recalls Christ's "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" in Matt 5:13, 14. It may do well to look here when assessing why some of our

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[15]Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 510.

[16]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

[17]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 152.

[18]Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 337.

[19]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 152.

evangelistic efforts fail. The social power of salt and light may be missing from our evangelistic seminars. Before a postmodern hears a sermon, Jesus admonishes church members to let their "light so shine before men, that they may see your [their] good works." The result of this, Jesus said, is that others will "glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). This is evangelistic and has more to do with character than the mere preaching of doctrinal truth. The conclusion that one draws from these passages is that church members would increase their evangelistic effectiveness at an evangelistic series of meetings if they would socialize as Christ did. Perhaps organizers of evangelistic meetings would find more success if they incorporated social activities into the meetings.

White and the scriptures lead to the conclusion that all social activities are potentially evangelistic. Evangelistic presentations mixed with socializing should have a greater chance of drawing in the unbeliever than would evangelistic presentations alone. There is something beyond doctrinal truth that matters. This would necessitate that church leaders train members to properly mingle with guests and that leaders train members to socialize in the secular postmodern world in which they live and work. Paul's admonition to church leaders was to equip "the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11, 12). Training church members to socialize for Christ is, therefore, a biblical mandate.

White noted that Jesus went to gatherings, where invited, in order to mingle and to "sow the seeds of truth."[20] While His purpose was clearly evangelistic, His method, at least in the beginning stages, was to socialize. Matthew indicated that Jesus socialized so much that he was erroneously called "a glutton and a winebibber" (Matt 11:19). But

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[20]White, *Evangelism,* 58.

Jesus saw this as "the best possible way" to "approach people."[21] Luke records that Jesus went to a social event organized by a despised outsider, Matthew. Matthew may correspond to today's postmodern. When questioned as to why He ate with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). In following Christ's lead, Adventist members, too, should attend gatherings where there is eating and drinking. Serendipity, apparently, is expected to come into play, but White gives an overriding caution and goal: "While we should cultivate sociability, let it not be merely for amusement, but for a purpose. There are souls to save."[22] These gatherings were not necessarily the organized gatherings of the local church, but they were used by Christ as a bridge into the next stage of evangelism. Jesus mingled for a purpose: to sow seeds of truth. His method led seekers to the message.

A line of progression is assumed: first, unbelievers are socially engaged as they mingle with Christ; then they are spiritually engaged. To apply this in twenty-first century North America, it might progress like this: first, unbelievers are interested in Christ-followers; second, they are interested in Christ; third, they are interested in Christ's worldview (i.e., doctrines). This evangelistic process may be called the social–spiritual–doctrinal pathway.

If the number of souls won to the Lord is a measure of evangelistic success, then the following quotation is the greatest evangelism quotation in the entirety of White's writings. Yet, surprisingly, it has little to do with the content of the message and much to do with the outworking of the message in the Christian's life. It is about Christlike

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[21]White, *Evangelism*, 107.

[22]Ibid., 495.

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character as it is manifested in the social interaction. White wrote: "If we would be kind, courteous, tender-hearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where there is now only one."[23] This non-cognitive, non-doctrinal aspect of evangelism has the supernatural ability to reach non-believers one hundred times more than theoretical preaching alone. Any "method" that would lead to a hundredfold increase in conversions needs to be eagerly learned and implemented. This is an imperative. It is part of the great commission. The comparison in evangelistic success assumes that what White meant by "where there is now only one" is a condition that is devoid of "kind, courteous, tender-hearted and pitiful" people, but may include doctrinally correct people.

One could reason from this that it makes an incredible evangelistic difference when a non-believer, attending a gathering of the church, observes believers interacting lovingly, respectfully, and humbly with one another. It also makes an evangelistic difference when the non-believer is the direct receiver of that kindness. The effect of a godly character as it manifests itself in the social circle cannot be underestimated. Not only will the remnant church "keep the commandments of God and [have] the faith of Jesus (Rev 14:12), it will contain "kind, courteous, tender-hearted and pitiful" Christians who can humbly and powerfully socialize with outsiders as did their Saviour.

It could be argued, based upon this statement alone, that a "kind, courteous, tender-hearted and pitiful" church member interacting with other members and postmodern guests at a Sabbath morning church service has a greater impact for the kingdom of God than the sermon preached that day. It is possible that the effect of the sermon may be entirely neutralized by the character and conduct of the preacher or the

[23]White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:189.

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congregation. This solemn thought was elucidated by Paul when he said, "Though I have

. . . all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). We may conclude

that two indispensable aspects of outreach have to do with character issues: (1) how we

relate with fellow Christians in front of lost people and (2) how we relate with lost

people. Therefore, we, as a church, need to develop ways to facilitate such intermingling.

At the Rest Haven church we have sought to do that as a regular part of our church

programming.

In conclusion, the possession of Christ-like character, as manifested in social

interaction, is the first step in postmodern evangelism.

The Timing of the Truths Spoken

The second aspect of truth communication I discovered in the writings of White

concerns the amount of truth spoken at any given time. White wrote: "The minister must

not feel that the whole truth is to be spoken to unbelievers on any and every occasion. He

should study carefully when to speak, what to say, and what to leave unsaid." White

addressed the allegation that this is manipulative, by adding: "This is not practicing

deception; it is working as Paul worked."[24] From this we understand that there is a time

to hold back certain truths from an unbeliever, recalling Solomon's words, "There is a

time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccl 3:7). A comparison may be made with

teaching math to students. For good reason, the math teacher "holds back" some higher

mathematical concepts from a third-grader even though they are true. In the math world,

third-graders are "babes."

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[24]White, *Gospel Workers*, 117.

White could have been speaking of postmoderns when she wrote: "But few who have moved in the society of the world, and who view things from a worldling's standpoint are prepared to have a statement of facts in regard to themselves presented before them. The truth even is not to be spoken at all times. There is a fit time and opportunity to speak when words will not offend."[25] White was clearly concerned about offending people with the truth. Hence, the traditional evangelistic series is not the place for some people. Some of our "worldling" neighbors would be unprepared for certain "statement of facts" even though in hearing these facts, our neighbors would be hearing truth. Unbelievers might do better to attend a social event with Christians, similar to Matthew's feast in Luke 5:27-32, or an "introductory" seminar in the context of loving Christians who had been trained to love one another and guests.

Reflecting 1 Cor 3:2 and Heb 5:12; 6:1, 2, White wrote that ministers should "bear in mind that the strongest meat is not to be given to babes who know not the first principles of the truth as we believe it."[26] Timing is important. White noted that Jesus "longed to counsel and instruct [His disciples]. But for this He awaited a quiet hour, when their hearts should be open to receive His words."[27] He said: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). "Christ did not bring many things before them at once lest He might confuse their minds."[28] We are encouraged to be sensitive to unbelievers. We are counseled to wait as Jesus waited for a time when the heart is open. More than knowledge of the truth, this implies knowledge of

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[25]White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:182.

[26]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

[27]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 432.

[28]White, *Evangelism,* 56.

the unbeliever's heart. Christ presented "subjects only which were essential to their advancement. . . . Christ withheld many things."[29] It behooves us, therefore, to advance the worldly postmodern one step along the social–spiritual–doctrinal pathway rather than to urge him or her to swallow much truth all at once. When to take seekers on to the next step of spiritual truth is determined by "what is essential to [their] advancement."

Hence, certain things must not be said during the first stages of evangelism. Note the following piercing admonition: "In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, we are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach."[30] A "formidable barrier" is what White wished to avoid when she wrote, "We are in danger of closing up our own path by arousing the determined spirit of opposition in men in authority before the people are really enlightened in regard to the message God would have us bear."[31] It may seem counter-intuitive to some well-meaning Christians, but holding back some truths is recommended for evangelistic effectiveness. Wise Christians would not "erect a formidable barrier" between themselves and their postmodern friends or church guests. This would be the opposite of evangelism. Wise Christians would instead "let such portions of truth be dealt out to them as they may be able to grasp and appreciate."[32]

White goes on to warn: "If truth were presented in so large a measure they could not receive it, some would go away and never come again. More than this, they would

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[29]White, *Evangelism*, 57.

[30]Ibid., 200.

[31]Ibid., 304.

[32]Ibid., 142.

misrepresent the truth."[33] We may conclude from these solemn statements that the well-meaning Christian is inadvertently assisting Satan when he or she urges too much truth—"so large a measure"—at one time, for he or she ensures that the unbeliever will "never come again" and actually "misrepresent the truth" to others. Rather than watch potential converts "go away and never come again," it seems we must say less, but leave the door open for future conversations. Jesus held back the truth on certain occasions because He knew there was a right time and a wrong time to present it (John 16:12). In following Christ's example we, too, must train ourselves to discern the difference between when hearts are open to receive "all things that [Christ has] commanded [us]" and when they are not (Matt 28:20). We do this by learning to be sensitive as to how much they can grasp and appreciate.

Incorporating an understanding of the postmodern mind in evangelism is necessary in order to prevent the postmodern seeker from misrepresenting truth to others, thus staining our reputation, and more importantly, the reputation of God. The vindication of the character of God is at stake in how we communicate truth to the contemporary world. In reading White on evangelism, one is prompted to ask the question, "What conversation subjects are currently necessary for the spiritual advancement of postmodern-influenced people?" This is what will be addressed in the following section.

In conclusion, the quantity of truth taught at any one time is a determining factor in the effectiveness of evangelism.

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[33]White, *Evangelism*, 142.

The Order of Truths Spoken

The Milk/Meat Concept

When it comes to teaching spiritual truths to postmoderns, or any who are

"unskilled in the word of righteousness" (Heb 5:13), there is an order. Spiritual milk must

come before the meat. The author of Hebrews speaks of "the first principles of the oracles

of God" (Heb 5:12) as being like milk that is given to a baby before he can take solid

food: "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness,

for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by

reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:13, 14).

Jesus had enough truths in the "milk" category to advance souls on their spiritual journey

without having to resort to the "meat" category, which would only choke the spiritual

baby. Using similar language, White concurs: "Let our ministers bear in mind that the

strongest meat is not to be given to babes who know not the first principles of the truth as

we believe it."[34]

Based upon the milk/meat concept, Adventist churches might do well to divide

evangelistic outreach into two parts, one represented by the milk and the other

represented by the meat. Feeding "worldlings" spiritual milk in an introductory seminar

may lead them to desire the "meat" in a follow-up evangelistic seminar. This leads to the

question, what truths would constitute the "milk" and what truths would constitute the

"meat"? For example, would a seminar on success be effective if participants discovered

that the true principles of success were found in the Bible? Or, would a seminar on the

supernatural world be effective if the participants knew that familiar Hollywood movies

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[34]White, *Evangelism*, 200.

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were used as introductions to particular truths? In either case, the introductory seminar would, without causing offense, be a stepping stone toward more advanced truth—the milk before the meat.

Ellen White's Use of the Word "Then"
to Establish the Sequence of Order

A fascinating discovery occurred while I searched the writings of Ellen White. I noticed White's use of the word "then." It indicated what must happen first, and what must happen second, and third, etc. This discovery gave almost mathematical precision to the evangelistic process in reaching an unbeliever, and brought to focus the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. In essence, there are distinct steps or stages that unbelievers must go through in order to end up as disciples of Christ. By becoming sensitive to where the unbeliever is located along this continuum we can match our evangelistic efforts to his or her needs.

For example, the "Christ's method alone"[35] statement from *The Ministry of Healing* is, perhaps, the most quoted statement of White with regard to reaching lost people for Jesus. In this quotation, observe the four verbs, or actions, that White said must transpire *before* the "then" and the one action that must transpire *after* the "then"; this observation can help us develop evangelistic strategies that reach the postmodern generation. The actions are in italics: "Christ's method alone gives true success in reaching the people. The Savior *mingled* with men as one who desired their good. He *showed His sympathy* for them, *ministered* to their needs and *won their confidence*. Then

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[35]Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 143. Emphasis added.

He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"[36] The first three actions—mingling, showing sympathy, and ministering to their needs—come before, and lead to, the fourth action—winning their confidence, which, in itself, is a by-product of the first three actions. "Mingling" is relational. "Showing sympathy" is emotional. "Ministering" is behavioral.

The result of this servant-oriented activity is that we win the confidence of the seeker. Winning the confidence of the seeker seems to be the very purpose of these early stages of evangelism. Winning the confidence of the seeker seems woefully lacking in many evangelistic efforts where theological truth is the only concern. Note that all three of the confidence-winning activities are non-cognitive, non-theological, non-doctrinal, and non-theoretical. Doctrinal preaching must come, but not yet. White is clear that something must come before doctrinal preaching. Strict attention to this admonition would mark a big shift in evangelistic outreach in many Adventist churches today. This shift is increasingly needed as the world around us becomes increasingly postmodern.

The neglect of these three confidence-winning activities may be contributing to the failure of many evangelistic endeavours. For example, when a call for a decision is made, in other words, asking lost people to follow biblical lifestyle and doctrines, they may not respond because we have not yet "won their confidence." Unless God is working on them in some other way, we have, perhaps, inoculated them against the gospel. White warned that people will walk away rejecting the truth and misrepresenting it to others, not because they were insincere seekers, but because they heard the truth in the wrong order. They were given meat before the milk, and they choked. Note, again, the following quote: "Let such portions of truth be dealt out to them as they may be able to grasp and

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[36]White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

appreciate; . . . If truth were presented in so large a measure they could not receive it, some would go away and never come again. More than this, they would misrepresent the truth."[37] This is especially applicable when it comes to reaching the postmodern-influenced generation. Without denying the necessity of meat, twenty-first century evangelism increasingly calls for milk.

Before Adventists can ask unbelievers to follow Adventist teaching and lifestyle, Adventists must find ways to mingle with unbelievers, show sympathy to them, and serve them. It is at the point when we have, thereby, won their confidence that we can do what White said to do after the "then." Then, and only then, can we bid them "Follow me." This method, she wrote, "cannot be without fruit."[38] The fact that the evangelistic seminar is, in most cases, called a reaping event indicates that sowing must be done beforehand in the form of mingling, showing sympathy, and ministering. With regard to the third verb, "ministering," in the above statement, White later wrote, "Kindly deeds make the gospel attractive."[39] The non-cognitive, non-preaching activity of "relieving physical needs" is often "the only avenue by which they can be approached."[40] Adventist church leaders would do well, therefore, to facilitate the doing of "kindly deeds" to make the gospel attractive to postmoderns. It does not seem unreasonable, therefore, to make this a church board item.

If, as White says, "a kind and courteous Christian is the most powerful argument

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[37]White, *Evangelism,* 142.

[38]White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

[39]White, *Evangelism,* 537.

[40]White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 144.

that can be produced in favor of Christianity,"[41] it follows that doctrinal education would

fall in as the second- or third-most powerful argument in favor of Christianity. This is yet

another reminder that when seekers show up at an outreach event, they will be more

influenced by the kindness of the people and preacher than by the doctrinal reasoning of

either. The guest might call it "atmosphere" or "the feel" of the place. Either way, it is

produced by the social dynamics in the room. Perhaps this is why White wrote, "The

formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by

One who cannot err."[42] Community building is a prerequisite for evangelism. The

Christian leader of the twenty-first century will, therefore, be a community builder.

Gaining the confidence of the lost person takes chronological priority over

doctrinal teaching. "Give them evidence," wrote White, "that you are a Christian,

desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious.

Thus you will gain their confidence, and there will be time enough for doctrines."[43]

Having ignored the first steps in an effort to win the soul to the doctrines, we can only

guess how much damage we have done to the cause of God, and how many well-meaning

seekers have departed our meetings only to misrepresent Adventist Bible truth to others.

For our "success will not depend so much upon [our] knowledge . . . as upon [our] ability

to find [a] way to the heart."[44] It is only when lost people "surrender heart and mind and

will to God" that they are "prepared candidly to weigh evidence in regard to these

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[41]White, *Gospel Workers*, 122.

[42]White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:21, 22.

[43]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

[44]White, *Gospel Workers*, 193.

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solemn, testing truths."[45] First comes community building. Then comes truth dissemination. Or, to put it another way, truth must be given in the context of Christian community. This fits the postmodern milieu, and it is in complete accordance with the scriptures and the writings of White. Effective evangelism to unbelievers necessitates a sensitive Christian body of believers, not just a talking head. "There will be time enough for doctrines."[46]

The following statement can be particularly applied to postmoderns. White wrote: "Great wisdom should be used in the presentation of a truth that comes directly in opposition to the opinion and practices of the people. . . . When once the confidence of the people is gained, then it is time enough to introduce publicly the Sabbath and immortality questions."[47] Note what came before the "then" and what follows the "then." The confidence of the unbelieving soul must be gained before presenting doctrine that is in direct opposition to his or her beliefs. It is, therefore, important to learn the beliefs of a postmodern, the subject of the next chapter, and how these beliefs compare and contrast with our Adventist beliefs. Perhaps James was thinking of Christian witness when he admonished the Christian to be quick to listen and slow to speak (Jas 1:19). By first listening to postmoderns, we may learn much about their beliefs and have something relevant to say when we speak. Similarly, Solomon wrote that "good understanding gains favor" (Prov 13:15). In applying this to the twenty-first century, Solomon might have written, "it is in seeking to understand postmoderns that we gain their confidence."

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[45]White, *Evangelism,* 228.

[46]Ibid., 200.

[47]Ibid., 246.

White addressed a "brother" who "wished to know how to present the truth in entering new fields."[48] She wrote: "The best and wisest plan would be to dwell upon subjects that arouse the conscience." To do this, White suggested that we should "talk to them on practical godliness; devotion and piety; and present the self-denial, self-sacrificing life of Jesus as our example until [Notice that the word "until" indicates when to go to the next step.] they will see the contrast in their self-indulgent life, and become dissatisfied with their unchristian lives." In indicating when to go to the next step, she adds the "then": "Then present to them the prophecies; show them the purity and binding claims of the Word of God."[49]

From this statement, we may conclude that a prophecy seminar comes after the unbelievers have gone through three processes. First, their conscience is aroused through three contributing causes: the presentation of practical godliness, devotion and piety, and the self-sacrificing life of Jesus as our example. Second, they begin to see a contrast between themselves and Jesus. Third, they become dissatisfied with their lives. This fits into the second stage, the spiritual stage, of the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. It is not until this point has been reached that White suggests they hear the prophecies and a call to obedience—the doctrinal stage of the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. One practical way to take this seriously is to present the elementary aspects of the Adventist message in an introductory seminar so seekers can process the "milk" without choking on the "meat." The "meat" could be offered in a succeeding seminar in the context of a

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[48]White, *Evangelism*, 226.
[49]Ibid., 226.

Christian community spirit. This was the objective of our experimental seminars at the Rest Haven church.

Notice, in the following quotation, the point at which the cognitive aspect enters the evangelistic process. By observing the word "then" and by observing what comes before it and what comes after it, we learn much. "Christ drew the hearts of His hearers to Him by the manifestation of His love and *then* little by little as they were able to bear it He unfolded to them the great truths of the kingdom."[50] In His evangelistic endeavors, Christ's first step was to draw the heart. Jesus addressed issues that involved the emotions, desires, and longings of His listeners. It is after the heart is engaged that "the great truths of the kingdom"[51] are to be taught. Doctrines are chronologically secondary to issues of the heart. A guiding question for the postmodern evangelist is, What are the issues of the heart for postmoderns?

Even here, when it comes to doctrine, White gave two counsels: first, the truths are to be taught "little by little"; second, we are to advance from one truth to the other only "as they are able to bear it."[52] This means that there are some doctrines that we should not reveal, for they would not be "able to bear it." Sensitivity is needed. "Christ withheld many things from His disciples knowing that then it would be impossible for them to comprehend."[53] Understanding the mindset of the current generation is, therefore, essential. Knowing what truths are easier to digest for the postmodern-influenced seeker has become a necessity for the responsible Christian today.

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[50]White, *Evangelism*, 57.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

We begin to see a pattern. Notice the order of the steps in the evangelistic process in the following statement through the usage of the words 'first' and 'before': "The soul must first be convicted of sin *before* the sinner will feel a desire to come to Christ."[54] First, the unbeliever becomes convicted of sin. Second, he or she develops a desire to come to Christ. Therefore, we should not expect unbelievers to come to Christ unless they are convicted of sin. Since postmodern unbelievers have very little conception of sin this is a challenge to evangelism. But what is impossible with human being is possible with God. It is reasonable to assume that postmoderns have at least a secular conception of self-centeredness. With regard to this, we could invite them to a seminar on how to be successful. A testimony could be given in which someone says, "My self-centeredness hindered me from achieving satisfying success. Because of a new spiritual understanding, I was enabled to identify the blind spots in my character and overcome the road blocks to personal success. If you are interested in experimenting with that, come to the seminar next week." Later in this paper we will show various seminars we have tried at Rest Haven church in order to win the confidence of postmoderns in this way.

In conclusion, attention must be given to the order in which the truths are presented to the postmodern.

The Manner in Which Truth Is Spoken

The manner in which truth is spoken comes with eternal consequences. White referred to the manner of a certain Adventist tent speaker when she wrote:

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[54]Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1979), 31. Emphasis added.

It seemed as if he was holding out to the people a vessel filled with most beautiful fruit, but that while offering this fruit to them his attitude and manner were such that no one wanted any. Thus it has too often been with the spiritual truth that he offers to the people. . . . Words are sometimes spoken, reproofs given, with a drive, a vim, that causes people to turn away from the beautiful truths that He has for them.[55]

Note, here, that pure doctrinal truth was presented and rejected. But it is the speaker, not the listener, who is responsible for its rejection. The truth-speaker actually "caused" people to turn away from the truth. Having the form of godliness, he did the work of Satan. He had the right knowledge, but not the right spirit. His tone of voice betrayed an evil spirit. Paul put knowledge in proper perspective when he wrote, "Though I . . . understand all mysteries and have all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2, 3). In the absence of love, truth is irrelevant. Postmoderns feel this keenly.

On another occasion, White was concerned over the manner in which a man referred to as Brother Baker presented the truth. He was attempting to get into the various churches to present the third angel's message concerning the mark of the beast. White wrote: "I told Brother Baker, his going to the churches to proclaim the third angel's message was all wrong, that he had to tame down that message or he could not have gotten into the churches."[56] Notice that White did not commend him for his desire to present Adventist truth. Instead, she chastised him for the manner in which he presented it. She admonished the truth-teller to "tame down" the third angel's message so he could get into the churches, for his method was "all wrong." This harks back to the milk/meat concept. The meat must be given, but only after the milk. This statement suggests that the

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[55]White, *Evangelism,* 281.

[56]Ellen G. White, MS 1851, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

third angel's message must be preached, but only after people first hear a "tamed down" version of it. This is not compromise. It is spiritual wisdom.

Paul preached to the unbelievers in Athens, who, like today's postmoderns, "had no intelligent conception of God."[57] Paul evidently knew the evangelistic principle of which White later spoke: "The classes of people you meet with decide for you the way in which the work should be handled."[58] Therefore, Paul approached the Athenians with the following unusual words: "For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you . . . for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring'" (Acts 17:23, 28). Here, we note that Paul studied the people in this location before he spoke to them: "For as I passed by and beheld your devotions." White said the same: "Study your location with a view to letting your light shine forth to others."[59]

Notice three things about the source that Paul used in his preaching to unbelievers: First, it was not taken from words of inspiration. When Paul spoke to the Athenians he did not quote Moses or David, even though Moses and David were inspired by God. He, instead, quoted a non-inspired source that agreed with inspiration. Second, his quotation was unfamiliar to Jews. While not known to his fellow believers, the quoted source of authority was known to Paul's target audience: unbelievers. Third, the non-

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[57]White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 235.

[58]White, *Evangelism,* 106.

[59]Ibid., 74.

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inspired quotation agreed with the truth when taken out of its setting of error and put into a Christological setting. White states: "All the truths of God's word came from Him. But these priceless gems had been placed in false settings. Their precious light had been made to minister to error. God desired them to be removed from their settings of error and replaced in the framework of truth."[60] Christians must apply this to postmodern evangelism. We must take the "priceless gems" of truth out of their false settings within the popular culture and reframe them within the great controversy paradigm. This is what we at the Rest Haven church tried to do in the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar.

Paul challenges us to identify a non-inspired "poet" familiar to the postmodern generation. In this context, White notes that Paul "showed himself familiar with their works of art, their literature, and their religion."[61] Daniel showed similar awareness of Babylonian literature (Dan 1:17-20).

The question arises, what "works of art" and "literature" should we become familiar with as we seek to reach the postmodern generation? A second question arises. Is it possible to "show ourselves familiar" with the art, literature, and religion of postmoderns without becoming tainted by it? Scripture makes it obvious that Daniel found a way that was honoring to God, as did Paul, who said, "Imitate me." Similarly, we must find a way. We need to become familiar with our target audience, for there are souls to save.

An evangelistic approach that may be foreign to fellow Christians may be exactly what is needed for postmoderns. The order of the truths Paul preached varied from

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[60]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 287, 288.

[61]White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 237.

audience to audience. When Paul tried to reach a different people group, such as the

Jews, he used a different approach. In the following statement from White, note my

comments in square brackets:

> Paul did not approach the Jews in such a way as to arouse their prejudices. He did not
> at first tell them that they must believe in Jesus of Nazareth; but dwelt upon the
> prophecies that spoke of Christ, His mission and His work. [Contrary to the advice
> White gave to Brother Baker, discussed above, here is where the prophecies are
> actually appropriate to teach first because, due to the Jews' familiarity with them,
> Paul could profitably use Hebrew prophecies as a launching pad into Christological
> truth.] Step by step he led his hearers on, showing the importance of honoring the law
> of God. He gave due honor to the ceremonial law, [because they, too, honored the
> ceremonial law] showing that it was Christ who instituted the Jewish economy and
> the sacrificial service. [Could we not, in a seminar, similarly give honor to principles
> of success in business, or in parenting, appealing to the postmodern sensitivity to
> intolerance, etc., then, step by step, lead our hearers to see that Christ is behind those
> principles, especially since "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" Jas
> 1:17?] Then he brought them down to the first advent of the Redeemer, and showed
> that in the life and death of Christ every specification of the sacrificial service had
> been fulfilled.[62]

This method would not have been effective in reaching the Athenians. But it worked for

the Jews. Likewise, a method that does not reach the Jews may draw the Athenians. In

the twenty-first century, therefore, an evangelistic approach that does not attract fellow

Christians may be exactly what is needed for postmoderns.

White also reflected this when she wrote, "The servants of Christ should

accommodate themselves to the varied conditions of the people. They cannot carry out

exact rules, if they meet the cases of all."[63] The responsible witness for Christ will

therefore ask, What are the "conditions" of our media-saturated, secular postmodern

neighbors? And how shall we "accommodate" ourselves to them? Here is where White

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[62]White, *Gospel Workers*, 118.

[63]Ibid., 92.

used the word "should." She admonished that the Seventh-day Adventist Church "should" accommodate ourselves to the postmodern condition. How shall we do this without being tainted by worldliness? We must find a way, for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in postmodern North America is admonished to do so.

White also used the word "adapt." She wrote: "The people of every country have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people."[64] The responsible witness for Christ will therefore ask, How shall we "adapt" to the "peculiar distinctive characteristics" of postmoderns today? How shall we adapt to their "ideas," as "peculiar" as they may be? White wrote that we "should be wise in order that they [we] may know how" to do this. What, on the surface, may sound like compromise, is actually advocated by White. However, doctrine and truth are not what White is speaking of when she says we should accommodate ourselves to conditions of the people and adapt ourselves to their ideas. As we give thought to postmodern evangelism, we are urged to ask the question, What are the "conditions" and "peculiar ideas" of postmoderns? Whatever they may be, White says that it is "necessary" to "accommodate" them and "adapt" to them. This is a call for Seventh-day Adventists to do postmodern evangelism.

In twenty-first century North America, Adventism finds itself in uncharted territory. "New methods must be introduced," wrote White. "God's people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living."[65] White said the laborer for God

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[64]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 213.

[65]White, *Evangelism,* 70.

should "study carefully the best methods, in order that he may not needlessly arouse prejudice to stir up combativeness in his hearers."[66] We should do everything possible "to make prejudice less."[67] This should instruct us when we plan our outreach.

White wrote that Jesus "sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations."[68] Jesus used not only what was "familiar" to His target audience but also what was the "most familiar." This leads the postmodern evangelist to ask, What are the "most familiar associations" of a postmodern-influenced person today? Regarding this, White wrote: "The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the sower and the seed, the shepherd and the sheep—with these Christ illustrated immortal truth. He drew illustrations also from the events of life, facts of experience familiar to the hearers."[69] Therefore, we are to identify the "events of life" and "facts of experience" that are "familiar" to postmoderns. "Jesus found access to minds by the pathway of their most familiar associations."[70] It seems this would be a radical departure from a typical evangelistic seminar, which would be more familiar to Christians and most familiar to many Adventist Christians. This is where an introductory seminar, the milk, may be useful before the evangelistic effort, the meat. In such a seminar, we would have to imitate the Jesus who "disturbed as little as possible their accustomed train of thought by abrupt actions or prescribed rules."[71] Exploring the "train of thought" in the mind of a

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[66]White, *Gospel Workers*, 300.

[67]White, *Evangelism,* 65.

[68]Ibid., 55.

[69]Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 51.

[70]White, *Evangelism,* 140.

[71]Ibid.

postmodern is the subject of the next chapter. "Through imagination He reached the heart."[72] We also, as pastors and gospel communicators, must appeal to the imagination to reach the hearts of our neighbors and friends.

Since Jesus drew illustrations using birds, lilies, sowers, and shepherds, one could conclude that we also should illustrate truth with birds, lilies, sowers, and shepherds when reaching postmoderns. However, this would be applicable only if such things are "familiar" to postmoderns, only if such things "touch the common life experience, the daily necessities; . . . the immediate requirements, the present trials."[73] Varying illustrations, therefore, should be employed depending upon the makeup of the audience. If the audience is not agrarian, they may not relate to birds, lilies, sowers, or shepherds. This principle could be applied to other categories of people as well, such as the boomers versus the busters, the rich versus the poor, the cultured versus the uncultured, etc. In the past, when North American society was predominantly agrarian, uniform presentations of truth were relevant to almost every audience—a luxury that does not exist today. But because of a more diversified and less agrarian population today in Canada and the United States, the following mandate needs to be applied: "Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past; but let no one, because of this block the way because of criticism."[74]

In referring to a difference between believers and nonbelievers, Jesus said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8).

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[72]White, *Evangelism,* 123.

[73]Ibid., 182.

[74]Ibid., 105.

On this curious passage, White makes the following comment: "Businessmen and politicians study courtesy. It is their policy to make themselves as attractive as possible. They study to render their address and manners such that they may have the greatest influence over the minds of those about them."[75] Implied in this biblical passage and White's comment on it is the concept that we must learn from these "wiser" children how to apply their principles of success to things of eternity—principles that, in reality, first came from God. Many postmoderns are unknowingly using biblical principles such as courtesy to gain worldly success. Perhaps a seminar that appeals to the "wiser" children of this world can be developed to help them advance and succeed further, but with the added step that these principles of success are actually from the Bible. This may accomplish two things: first, it could "win their confidence" in the presenter and the scriptures; second, it could lead a postmodern-influenced audience to the next step of inquiring what other truths are found in the Bible that would help them in more long-term success, eternal success. Perhaps a creative and postmodern-sensitive explanation of the supernatural world would work as a next step.

If we could give such seminars, we would be in compliance with White's admonition that "something must be done to break down the prejudice existing in the world against the truth."[76] For, when the "businessmen and politicians study courtesy," they are unknowingly "dwelling upon practical godliness"[77] and "experimental godliness,"[78] which is what White advocates in the introductory steps to truth. The

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[75]White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:68.

[76]White, *Evangelism,* 129.

[77]Ibid., 142.

[78]Ibid., 163.

assumption is that as they see biblical principles help them in their life and work, their prejudice against God and the Bible would be disarmed. This is the philosophy behind our experimental seminar Success Thru Spirituality. In conclusion, attention must be given to the manner in which truth is presented.

The Need for Steps

We have shown that steps are needed to advance the potential convert from "uninterested" to "interested" through a social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. Once a Christian has found a way to the postmodern heart, what is the next step? When the time comes to share why we appear to be experiencing more than they are, how shall we begin? Is it now time for doctrine? No. Rather than instructing us to share doctrine, White said, "Tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true."[79] White admonished Adventists to first share their experiences, not their doctrines. As we shall see in the next chapter, postmoderns are looking for an experience. They want to know ours. Having a personal experience of our own is, therefore, a prerequisite step in our being used of God to win postmoderns to Christ. We must be able to tell how Christ has "led us."

It is plausible that many Christians share doctrine precisely because they are unable to share an experience. It may be that they simply do not have an experience. Without a connection to Christ, all we have to share is propositions and truth claims.

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[79]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 340.

White makes it clear: if the message is only in the head of the Christian, it will not soften the heart of the listener, and we will be powerless to win him or her to Christ.

Members may be trained to sense when lost friends, neighbors, or guests are going through some kind of problem and recognize that "God allows them to suffer calamity that their senses may be awakened."[80] The ensuing conversation between the sensitive Adventist and the seeker would not then center around doctrine, but around personal experience.

The Need to Gain Confidence

When it is time for doctrine, what is true in personal witness is evidently true in public witness. White wrote, "All points of our faith are not to be born to the front and presented before prejudiced crowds. . . . The truths that we hold in common should be dwelled upon first and the confidence of our hearers obtained."[81] Note, again that we are to gain the confidence of the postmodern through the truths that we hold in common with them. What do we have in common with postmoderns? We have in common with the "wise" children of this world the desire for peace, influence, success in business, health and physical vitality, healthy relationships, current affairs, and popular media. Some of the truths that they believe overlap with some of the truths that we believe. They have a vague sense that not all is right in this world. We do, too; only our sense is not vague. They have a vague sense that character matters. White says to capitalize on what we have in common with our target audience. They have a desire for community. They have a desire to interpret world affairs. We have options for them to consider.

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[80]White, *Evangelism,* 27.

An Introductory Seminar

The previous discussion led the Rest Haven church to the conclusion that an introductory seminar is a must. The following quotations served as we thought through what it meant to have an introductory seminar. First, this would have to be a seminar in which the speaker speaks the same language as the postmodern. Referring to Christ's incarnational ministry, White wrote, "Lessons must be given to humanity in the language of humanity."[82] When it came to actually speaking to those He wished to save, "Christ reached the people where they were. . . . He did not perplex the ignorant with mysterious inferences, or use unaccustomed and learned words, of which they had no knowledge."[83] Since postmoderns have no knowledge of biblical themes, we would do well to eliminate "unaccustomed and learned words" from our dialogue with the unchurched. This is following Christ's example.

Postmodern people, like the ancient Athenians in Acts 17, are ignorant of the "Unknown God." White said it was imperative that we do not "perplex them." Instead, an introductory seminar may include "the immediate requirements, the present trials—for these, men and women need present help."[84] For example, since it is fair to assume that postmoderns are interested in being successful, a seminar on success was tried with the hopes that participants would discover that the true principles of success were found in the Bible. The seminar on the supernatural world was tried using Hollywood movies as a diving board into an interpretation of supernatural phenomena. In either case, the

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[81]White, *Evangelism,* 164.

[82]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 34.

[83]White, *Gospel Workers,* 49, 50.

[84]Ibid., 153.

introductory seminar was, without causing offense, meant to be a stepping stone toward more advanced truth.

Paul spoke of the necessity of communicating clearly "lest we sound like the foreigner" (1 Cor 14:11). "If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me" (1 Cor 14:11). The King James Version uses "barbarian" to describe this would-be communicator that does not speak in the language of the audience. To the contemporary generation, steeped in postmodern culture, much of Christian communication has been foreign, perhaps even barbaric. Perhaps this is why White wrote, "The manner in which the truth is presented often has much to do in determining whether it will be accepted or rejected."[85] If Adventists wish to have audiences accept Bible teachings, consideration of the manner of presentation is imperative. Paul acted like his listeners as much as he could conscientiously do so (1 Cor 9:20-22). It behooves us to find ways to do the same.

Summary

When reaching postmoderns for Christ, we must give serious consideration to five aspects of gospel communication:

1. The character of the truth-giver. This has much to do with his or her personal relationship with Jesus and his or her ability to let His light shine when in social interaction with postmoderns.

2. Social power is a necessary componant.

3. The timing of truth spoken. It is possible to give too much truth at once,

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[85]White, *Evangelism,* 168.

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resulting in anti-evangelism. Sensitivity to the needs of the seeker is needed in order to access how much truth to give at one time.

4.   The order of the truths spoken. Only when the seeker has digested the milk is he or she ready for the meat.

5.   The manner in which the truth is spoken. While we are to "be as wise as serpents," we are to be as "harmless as doves" (Matt 10:16).

In the next two chapters, I will identify the mind of a postmodern and what we did at the Rest Haven church to apply these principles of evangelism to reaching postmoderns in the Saanich Peninsula. I will describe what worked and what did not.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Postmodern Mind

One of the fundamental questions that arises when seeking to evangelize

postmoderns is, How certain can we be of anyone's articulation of truth? Postmoderns

would say, "Not very." Upon this soft ground of cognitive uncertainty are built most of

the elements that characterize postmodernism and postmodern evangelism. In this

chapter, we will review the literature on postmodernism, giving special attention to

authors who teach how to engage postmodern-influenced seekers. As we shall see, most

authors' comments are tethered to the concept that postmoderns view all truth claims

with a natural incredulity.

Before defining postmodernism, two cautions are in order. First, Myron B. Penner

wrote that postmodernism is best understood when we resist the temptation to narrowly

define it as a philosophy or a set of beliefs.[1] Quoting Calvin Schrag, he suggests that we

understand postmodernism as "an assemblage of attitudes and discursive practices"[2] that

signal a "fundamental change in which the world is perceived."[3] The second caution is an

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[1]Myron B. Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 16.

[2]Calvin O. Schrag, *The Resources of Rationality: A Response to the Postmodern Challenge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 14, quoted in Penner, 16.

[3]Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn,* 17.

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observation by D. A. Carson, author of *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications*. In the words of Brian Hedges in his review of Carson's book, Carson noted that many Christian proponents of postmodern evangelism "tend to be overly reductionistic in their understanding of modernism."[4] Carson declared that "the modern period is treated as if it were all of a piece, consistently devoted to the rational, the cerebral, the linear, the absolute, the objective. But history isn't that neat."[5] With these two cautions, we now move to a definition of postmodernism.

James Sire, while admitting its meaning is often fuzzy[6] and still in flux,[7] approaches the definition of postmodernism by offering six descriptions:

1. "The first question postmodernism addresses is not what is there or how we know what is there but how language functions to construct meaning."[8]

2. "The truth about reality itself is forever hidden from us. All we can do is tell stories."[9]

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[4]Brian Hedges, "A Wise and Discerning Perspective on the Emergent Church," review of *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications*, by D. A. Carson, September 30, 2005, http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Conversant-Emerging-Church- and http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Conversant-Emerging-Church-Understanding/product-reviews/0310259479 (accessed September 10, 2009).

[5]D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 59, quoted in Brian Hedges, "A Wise and Discerning Perspective on the Emergent Church," review of *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications*, by D. A. Carson, September 30, 2005, http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Conversant-Emerging-Church-Understanding/product-reviews/0310259479 (accessed September 10, 2009).

[6]James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 212.

[7]Ibid, 228.

[8]Ibid, 214.

[9]Ibid, 219.

3. "Stories give communities their cohesive character."[10]

4. "All narratives mask a play for power. Any one narrative used as a metanarrative is oppressive."[11]

5. "There is no substantial self. Human beings make themselves who they are by the languages they construct about themselves."[12]

6. "Ethics, like knowledge, is a linguistic construct. Social good is whatever society takes it to be."[13]

Postmodern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard defined postmodernism as a condition characterized by incredulity toward universal explanations, especially scientific ones.[14] This constitutes the working definition of postmodernism for the purposes in this paper. For Lyotard, who was suspicious of Enlightenment philosophy, truth is elusive. Therefore, certainty is given up. Penner added that postmodernism is an attempt to theorize after absolute certainty is given up.[15] Echoing Lyotard, Penner wrote that postmodernism is, at its core, a criticism of all ideologies.

Humberto Rasi agreed when he wrote that postmodernism "has pushed forward secularization by maintaining that human beings cannot have access to reality and, therefore, have no means of perceiving truth."[16] From Rasi's comment, one can imagine a

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[10]Sire, *The Universe Next Door,* 223.

[11]Ibid, 224.

[12]Ibid, 225.

[13]Ibid, 226.

[14]Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Benningham and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv, referenced in Penner, 119.

[15]Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn,* 17.

[16]Humberto M. Rasi, "The Challenge of Secularism," in *Adventist Mission in the Twenty-first Century,* ed. Jon Dybdahl (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 64.

conversation between a postmodern and modern. The postmodern claims that since the only reality is that which can be experienced through the five senses, individuals must deny that there can be certainty in anything beyond the five senses. In response, moderns advance reason as a way to determine truth beyond the five senses. However, because many people use reason to come to contradictory conclusions, postmoderns reject reason as an arbiter of truth.[17] Hence, experience is the only thing that matters. One cannot really know truth or reality. One only experiences his or her perception of it.

Perception of reality is also culturally conditioned. Postmoderns claim that "it is through language that we create reality, and therefore, the nature of reality is determined by those who have power to shape language,"[18] explains Rasi. Hence, for the postmodern, both truth and reality are mere fabrications of the powerful and cultural elite. O'Donnell noted that Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche wrote similarly.[19] Since there is, therefore, no basis for objectively gained knowledge, postmoderns flip the old adage "knowledge is power" into "power is knowledge."

This brings a challenge to Adventist evangelism. Since truth, reality, and knowledge are the very currency of Adventist proclamation, postmodernism and Adventism are positioned on either side of a great gulf. However, other authors offer hope to transverse this gulf. Echoing White, they advocate that part of the answer lies in finding common ground.

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[17]Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 7.

[18]Rasi, "The Challenge of Secularism," 64.

[19]O'Donnell, *Postmodernism,* 26.

Common Ground: The Postmodern in Our Message

In this section we will look at what Adventism has in common with postmodernism. Postmodernism, for Kevin Vanhoozer, is "a radical protest against oppressive systems of thought."[20] Rather than see this as a threat to the Adventist system of thought, Adventists may see this protest as a postmodern articulation of Adventist eschatology, which also protests against oppressive systems of thought. Adventist theology actually deconstructs papal theology and its claims to power. It seeks to provide a conceptual framework through which experiences of oppression—indeed, all experiences—may be interpreted and evaluated. In providing such a framework, Adventism does what postmodernism does; it deconstructs oppressive ideologies. In this way, Adventism addresses one of Vanhoozer's characterizations of postmodernism by finding common ground.

Craig Loscalzo pointed out, for example, that postmoderns are repulsed by the use religionists make of politics. They have seen in religious leaders over the years a grab for control and power. With Loscalzo, Adventism sees this too, but Adventism offers an explanation that is provocative to postmoderns. Agreeing with Adventism, Craig Loscalzo wrote: "Christians of every age had better be careful, because it's an easy slip from authentic Christian zeal to the Inquisition. . . . When the word Christian is used to emphasize a political ideology rather than authentic spirituality, that should alarm us. . . . When the word Christian is used to champion dogmatism and intolerance, that should alarm us."[21] It is a fascinating coincidence that Seventh-day Adventism also views the

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[20]Vanhoozer, quoted in Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn,* 80.

[21]Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 59.

amalgamation of politics and religion with great suspicion. This common ground between Adventism and postmodernism provides a very clear and unique opportunity for Adventists to preach the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ to postmoderns. The real gospel reveals the loving, non-tyrannical character of God, one that is not often represented by the "face of Christianity" that postmoderns see on television or in movie theaters. Loscalzo, although not an Adventist, reminds us that Adventist eschatology—especially the component that deals with separation of church and state—would appeal to a postmodern.

James Sire noted that Michel Foucault, a prominent postmodern philosopher, held that all human endeavor, including the expression of truth, is a quest for power.[22] Adventist evangelism is an expression of truth, and would, therefore, be seen by postmoderns as a quest for power. However, if our proclamation of truth included calls for freedom from oppressive powers, we could, perhaps, gain a listening ear among postmoderns. We could speak of free choice and freedom of conscience. These are values that postmoderns and Adventists truly have in common.

After I learned this, I included in my seminars issues of religious liberty as a way to introduce the topic of the mark of the beast. Warning postmoderns of the threat religious institutionalism (both Catholic and Protestant) poses to religious liberty became natural and easy. Postmoderns already believed it. They just did not know it was prophesied in the Bible. Enter the Adventist evangelist, analogous to Paul's answer to the Athenian "unknown god" (Acts 17:23). As Paul did for the Athenians, the Adventist

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[22]James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2004), 31.

evangelist can explain more fully what the postmodern knows in part.

The Adventist understanding of the state of the dead is another example of a teaching that deconstructs the oppressive doctrine of a never-ending hellfire and its tyrannical god. In protesting against this abhorrent doctrine, Adventists agree with and give voice to postmodern criticism of traditional Christianity. One can imagine, therefore, a postmodern listening to a biblical explanation of hell, hellfire, and the state of the dead with great interest.

Another point we have in common with postmoderns is the health message. It is interesting that Leonard Sweet views the health message as necessary to reaching postmoderns. "Ministries of healing, health service, and health care," he wrote, "are at the front and centre in the church reaching out to postmodern culture."[23] Of all the denominations in the world, it is the Seventh-day Adventist Church that can best deliver the health message to postmoderns. The health message becomes experiential because people feel better when they are healthier. It is subjective because it is self-authenticating. One can easily assess his or her own energy level before and after implementing the health message.

On Doctrine

Another area where Adventism and postmodernism may bridge the gulf is, surprisingly, in the area of doctrine. Thom Rainer wrote that the unchurched are interested in doctrine. While postmoderns cannot be equated with the unchurched, there may be an overlap worth considering. Rainer has made it clear that propositional truth is

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[23]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 256.

still important to those who would be converted from the realms of the unchurched. He

wrote:

> Some readers may have been surprised by how vociferous the formerly unchurched
> were about their desires for strong biblical teaching. The evidence of data are clear.
> Both the formerly unchurched and the leaders of the churches that reached them
> verified the efficacy of "meaty" teaching and preaching to reach the unchurched and
> to strengthen the Christians. Strategies of recent years that sought to reach the
> unchurched through "lighter" less demanding teaching and preaching not only were
> ineffective, they were counterproductive.[24]

In spite of all the literature on non-cognitive ways of experiencing God, Thom Rainer

demonstrated that unchurched seekers are definitely searching for doctrinal clarity, a very

cognitive experience. Given the times in which we live, it may be fruitful to consider that

some of these unchurched people are influenced by postmodernism. Rainer's study

provides justification for my project, the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar[25], which

teaches doctrine. More specifically, I sought to teach the doctrine of the state of the dead

within the great controversy theme. While writers like Leonard Sweet advocate an EPIC

model—Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, Connectedness[26]—the Seventh-day

Adventist Church has a doctrinal component at the very core of its mission that cannot be

ignored. Rainer has shown that doctrinal preaching, the stronghold of Adventism, is still a

draw for the unchurched. This gave impetus for my project.

Regarding which doctrines ought to be addressed, James Sire suggested we start

with the concerns of the seeker rather than with the concerns of the church. He

recommends we start with "answers to objections, whether naturalistic or postmodern,

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[24]Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 226.

[25]I developed this seminar. See appendices B, C, and D for various handbills.

[26]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, xxi.

the most common of which is the problem of evil."[27] Sire also recommended the following topics: belief in God, the origin of the universe, evolutionary origin of human beings, and the relativity of all truth claims. "When these are disposed of," recommended Sire, "attention should be directed to the best evidence for God in any time or place: Jesus Himself. The focus should be on Jesus' character, teaching, life, death and resurrection."[28] In chapter 4, I review the most common questions that friends of my parishioners had about God. These questions reflected most of the objections and topics Sire listed, the most common of which was the problem of suffering.

Through Rainer's other observations, however, we see that doctrinal learning has to occur in an environment of relationship building. Hence, evangelistic outreach should be more successful among contemporary seekers if the seekers experience a combination of doctrinal learning and relationship building at the same time.[29]

After conducting a North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI) survey in 2001, Russell Burrill observed that most of the North American Division conferences were unable to reach people outside of traditional public evangelism. "One conference spent over one million dollars on new ways to reach people, but none of it worked, so they returned to public evangelism."[30] One would need to analyze what means were actually employed here, but we could take from this that doctrinal teaching should not be ignored in reaching people for Christ.

The question is, How is doctrinal teaching to be done in order to maximize its

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[27]Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 70.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Monte Sahlin wrote about this concept in his book *How to Share Your Faith with Your Friends Without Losing Either* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1990).

receptivity to postmoderns? A partial answer may include the recognition that a subgroup

of postmoderns consists of postmodern-influenced unchurched Christians. The

unchurched want community with their doctrine. It would need to be tested, but we might

hypothesize that postmoderns want this as well—especially in the light of Leonard

Sweet's EPIC recommendation explained in the following section.

While Russell Burrill did not advocate traditional public evangelism to reach

postmoderns, he did discover that the unchurched attendee responded to community more

than the churched attendee. Burrill reported, "While initially we attract many churched

people, they usually don't stay; it is the unchurched that stay and they are primarily the

ones we baptize." Again, it must be noted that the unchurched should not be equated with

postmoderns. According to a Barna Survey taken in April 2010, approximately 60

percent of unchurched persons in America describe themselves as Christians.[31]

However, another observation is important here. It seems the distinction between

those who stayed and those who left corresponded to the distinction between those who

belonged to a faith community and those who did not. The unchurched, we may theorize,

belonged less to a community and, therefore, were more receptive to joining the

Adventist community. From this we can conclude that more than doctrine was needed to

keep them. A socio-psychological factor was also needed. This further validates the

social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum concept in the last chapter.

Burrill also reported on a study by Mike Regele, who discovered that most church

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[30]Russell Burrill, *Reaping the Harvest* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2007), 28.

[31]Michelle A. Vu, "Survey: 3 in 5 Unchurched Americans Are Christian," *The Christian Post*, April 13, 2010, http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100413/majority-of-unchurched-are-christians-survey-finds (accessed October 10, 2010).

growth has been done at the expense of other denominations rather than actually reaching unchurched people.[32] Regele said, however, two denominations were "successful in reaching unchurched people, but they were so small that they hardly made much of a difference."[33] Surprisingly, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was one of these two denominations. We "actually do better than any other denomination in reaching the unchurched, almost as good as the non-denominational churches,"[34] wrote Burrill. If we assume that some postmoderns are included in this unchurched mix, then we may conclude that Adventism is definitely poised to reach some postmoderns. While postmoderns question the existence of, or need for, objective truth, evangelistic results nevertheless indicate that doctrine is relevant and attractive to the unchurched, possibly even to the postmodern. If we change the packaging of our teaching perhaps we could reach even more. Additional research would provide suggestions on how to better communicate with postmoderns.

Communicating to Postmoderns

According to Leonard Sweet in his *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, evangelism to postmoderns must appeal to the broad range of human experience, not just the intellect. Sweet suggests that what is needed to evangelize postmoderns is an EPIC church, where EPIC stands for Experiential, Participatory, Image-Based, and Connectedness.[35] Postmoderns need to experience God, not just learn about Him. Postmoderns need to participate in a spiritual community, not just listen to a speaker. Postmoderns need to be

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[32]Burrill, *Reaping the Harvest*, 32.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

part of an image-driven environment, not just a verbal one. Sweet wrote that

"Christendom is divided today between Old World Churches and New World Churches.

. . . One is book-centric, the other web-centric."[36] Finally, postmoderns are looking for a

sense of connection, not only with God, but with others. Since, as James Sire asserted,

one's experiences contribute to the formation of one's worldview,[37] we should expect

that experiences are needed to facilitate a change in one's worldview. Even though

Adventist evangelism has focused on words, logic, and propositional truth throughout

most of its history, I tried to facilitate an EPIC environment in our evangelistic

experiments for unchurched postmodern-influenced seekers. Leonard Sweet asserted it

can be done.

Like Sweet, Eddie Gibbs noted that we now live in a "post-literary culture for

which sound and image have largely replaced the written word."[38] The last thing

postmoderns need is what Gibbs termed "an alien traditionalism characterized by archaic

language."[39] Gibbs observed that the "popular culture is constantly raising questions

regarding the meaning of life and a cry for a sense of significance and fulfillment. The

problem lies in the inability of most churches to connect with young people in terms they

can understand."[40] Adventism has much to say about the big questions of life. We merely

need to be EPIC about it. Given the shortness of time and Adventist eschatology, we need

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[35]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 30.

[36]Ibid., 140.

[37]Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 46.

[38]Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 127.

[39]Ibid., 27.

[40]Ibid., 179.

to find ways to sound the alarm with a postmodern ring because postmoderns are unable to hear the alarm when it is sounded with a modern ring. "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor 14:8). Gibbs prompted me to think that we have a need for a pictorial narrativization of the Adventist worldview, not just a systematic explication.

While modern gospel presentations have been essentially rational, postmodern presentations seem to require a greater emphasis on art, narrative, and image without losing rationality. Churches today attempt to feed postmoderns with propositional truths, when such offerings only reinforce the postmodern view that Christians are outdated, narrow-minded, bigoted, and, therefore, not credible. For heralders of good news, this is bad news. Brian D. McLaren quoted Dennis Haack of Ransom Fellowship, who said, "Popular culture (TV, film, popular music), the very heart of the postmodern ethos, can become the beginning point for exploring the claims of Christ, and thus serve as the postmodern equivalent of the Athenian altar to the unknown god."[41] Perhaps Adventist evangelism can, likewise, explain more fully what postmoderns know in part, and do it by using elements of popular culture. One example of this could be the use of movie clips pressed into didactic service.

Martin Robinson, in his book *A World Apart: Creating a Church for the Unchurched; Learning from Willow Creek* lamented that we have erected a barrier—a cultural barrier—before the seeker. While written for churches ministering in the secular world, his words seem to apply to churches ministering in the postmodern world.

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[41]Dennis Haack, quoted in Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 181.

Robinson wrote: "It is as if the chapel folk are silently saying to the community: 'To become a Christian, you not only have to believe that Jesus Christ was the son of God [without explaining the term], that he died on a cross and was raised from the dead on the third day; you also have to find a way of living in a culture that no longer exists in everyday life.'"[42] Robinson compels Adventist leaders to think hard about the difference between cultural offense and gospel offense. He leads us to conclude that Adventism should look like its surrounding culture as much as biblically permissible, thus allowing the truth of the gospel to be the only offense. The safe and familiar environment thus produced may yield more fruit from the postmodern vineyard.

Picking up on Robinson's idea of using forms of communication familiar to those in the mainstream of our culture, Steve Turner wrote in his book *Hungry for Heaven: Rock 'n' Roll and the Search for Redemption* that the themes in much of the popular music mirror a spiritual search. The postmodern seeker can relate to the feelings expressed by the popular singer/songwriter. "I became convinced," he said, "that one of the reasons that rock 'n' rollers eventually embrace a religious world view is that the best rock 'n' roll is itself a crying out for an experience of transcendence that the modern secular world doesn't offer."[43]

The "cry of the culture,"[44] is heard in the songs that are made popular. They are popular for a reason. In spite of the evil and frivolity in many popular songs, there are

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[42]Martin Robinson, *A World Apart: Creating a Church for the Unchurched; Learning from Willow Creek* (Tunbridge Wells, England: Monarch Books, 1992).

[43]Steve Turner, *Hungry for Heaven: Rock 'n' Roll and the Search for Redemption* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 14.

[44]Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago repeatedly used this expression.

sentiments in many others that touch the heart. Many of the most popular songs of the past five decades reflect a longing for someone or something to fill an inner emptiness. The publishers of *The Desire of Ages* wrote something similar: "In the heart of all mankind, of whatever race or station in life, there are inexpressible longings for something they do not now possess."[45] Steve Turner said it differently, but nothing has changed. This desire expressed in the songs of today is the desire people have had for all ages. By using elements of popular culture in our public and private presentations, we have an opportunity to identify with those we are trying to reach. We have an opportunity to tap into their innermost desires and thereby increase their receptivity to Jesus, the ultimate, and often unknown, Desire of all people in all ages. It was this concept that inspired part of the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar.

Movie critic Brian Godawa observed that a well-told story embodying a well thought-out philosophy is a powerful way to communicate an idea, or even an ideology. In *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom & Discernment*, he wrote, "If this exploration of different worldviews presented in movies proves anything, it is that the storytellers of cinema are engaging in their craft with an intent to communicate their view of the world and how we ought or ought not to live in it."[46] According to Godawa, character, plot, and image are powerful tools in the hands of communicators. For postmoderns, these tools seem to be more powerful than truth claims. But Adventists can use these tools to make truth claims. Godawa wrote: "In the same way that worldviews involve a network of different ideas that are interconnected to serve a greater

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[45]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 13.

[46]Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 126.

philosophical interpretation of our experience, so movies are a network of events, images and themes that serve a unified way of interpreting our experience through the effective means of drama."[47] The writers and directors of the motion picture industry have been shrewd to cash in on this powerful method of communication. They sell feelings and vicarious experiences to hungry consumers. In doing so, Hollywood infiltrates their minds with the Trojan horse of faulty worldviews.

In light of Godawa's observations, evangelism in today's postmodern milieu would be sinfully negligent if it ignored this powerful method of communication. Amazingly, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been entrusted with a "well-told story" embodying a "well thought-out philosophy." The great controversy theme, the story of all stories, has been given to us as the oracles of God were given to the Jews. We, as "sons of the light," may be more shrewd in our generation than the "sons of this world" (Luke 16:8) if we understand the postmodern times in which we live.

Godawa advocated that popular culture is the vehicle for indoctrination. Similarly, Leonard Sweet said the modern world gave us the book whereas the postmodern world gave us the screen. Quoting Phyllis A. Tickle, Sweet wrote, "More theology is conveyed in . . . one hour of popular television than from all the sermons that are also delivered on any given weekend."[48] Even if Tickle is only partially correct, Adventists might do well to learn from it, but not before filtering it through the prism of the scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The question, then, is, How shall we modify gospel communication to pierce the

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[47]Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews,* 126, 127.

[48]Phyllis A. Tickle, *God-Talk in America* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 126, quoted in Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 32.

postmodern ear? Or, as Sally Morgenthaler asked, "How can preaching become less abstract and more experiential?" Quoting Steve Stogren in an interview, Morgenthaler suggested "stories of God intervening in the affairs of mankind today." Using fresh illustrations from personalities, events, music, movies, and magazines from the culture are how we ought to teach truth.[49] She cautioned, however, to "use their best stuff, not the trash."[50]

Hence, we need to find ways to narrativize or pictorialize our theology. We also need to find ways of excising our theology from the popular culture. The traditional Adventist method of communication—in many ways a one-way mechanism in an "institutional" environment—should be evaluated and modified in the light of postmodern sensitivities.

To summarize: (1) we need to find ways of narrativizing our theology, (2) we need to find ways of pictorializing our theology, (3) we need to find ways of excising pieces of our theology from popular culture and placing these pieces within a great controversy framework.

The Need for Community

Brain D. McLaren said we need to abandon the old apologetic that includes circular reasoning, defensiveness, and combativeness. Circular reasoning works very well on nominal Christians who assume a biblical authority, wrote McLaren, but it does not impress or convince the unchurched. In our presentations, we Adventist preachers might

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[49]Steve Storgren, interview, quoted in Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 194.

[50]Ibid., 138.

learn that a non-Christian audience needs a line of reasoning that does not presuppose biblical authority. When mentioning defensiveness, McLaren referred to angry Christians who have too often tied their identity to being against things. When speaking of combativeness, McLaren referred, in part, to preachers who treat their listeners like enemies. McLaren looks to replace this approach by offering mysteries rather than answers, and essentials rather than minutiae. He proposes gentleness, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, in preaching rather than condemnation.[51] By appearing more tentative in our truth claims, our humility would give us credibility. By offering the truth as an option, the postmodern might then be more willing to "try it on for size." They would be more willing to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Gibbs made it very clear that today's leaders need to be flexible. He noted that "baby boomers and Gen Xers are deeply suspicious of religious institutions."[52] Interestingly, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a religious institution. We must somehow find a way to create a community in which the seeker will feel comfortable, a community that does not look institutional. Rather than getting people to join our institutions, we are admonished to invite people to join a community.

Russell Burrill wrote: "The purpose of evangelism is to bring people into community. If people are brought to a knowledge of salvation and truth but are not brought into community, Christian mission has failed."[53] This sense of community is what was missing in my first seminars. This may be what is missing from many

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[51]McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side,* 73–81.

[52]Gibbs, *Church Next,* 123.

[53]Russell Burrill, *The Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1998), 119.

evangelistic thrusts in Adventist evangelism, especially with the postmodern generation. "The church is not a building; it is not a creed; it is a fellowship. It exists for the sake of bringing other people into its fellowship. It is not a fellowship of just any individuals, but of individuals who are in fellowship with the Father and the Son."[54] The church ought to be a community rather than an institution.

Regarding institutionalism, William Beckham admonished the Christian leader to ask whether his or her church is a living organism or an organization. "If you were to do away with the building and the Sunday morning meeting, could the church survive? If the church would survive without a building and Sunday morning meetings, it passes the first test for a New Testament cell church."[55] The institutionalization of something as personal as spirituality must seem odd to postmoderns. The development of small groups independent of a physical church structure or corporate structure, but not independent of Adventism, may deserve consideration. This, however, remains outside the scope of this paper. The point is that the church needs to be a community rather than an institution.

Eddie Gibbs wrote, "Pastors must be equally skilled in exegeting both scripture and culture."[56] After reading Gibbs' *Church Next*, one gets the impression that Gibbs is trying to depict church leaders as riding into the future sitting backwards with eyes turned to the past. This, perhaps, explains why churchgoers seem to be blinded to the signs of the times and deafened to the cry of present-day culture. He noted that postmoderns need to belong in order to believe, rather than to believe in order to belong, echoing Richard

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[54]Burrill, *The Life and Mission of the Local Church*, 119.

[55]William A. Beckham, *The Second Reformation* (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1995), 29.

[56]Gibbs, *Church Next,* 32.

Rice in his book *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church*.[57]

Gibbs, along with many writers on the subject, appealed to the church leaders to create

incarnational communities in the context of our pluralistic society in order to reach

postmoderns. By incarnational, he meant becoming like the people we are trying to reach,

as God became human in order to reach humanity. This echoes the Apostle Paul, who

said: "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor

9:22b).

Jimmy Long, in his book *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the

Postmodern Generation*, wrote that we should "use this generation's yearning for

community and God as a point of connection."[58] He, therefore, suggested the small group

as a context for ministry to postmoderns. However, this is a challenge to some Adventist

evangelizers, as they are more trained to preach the message than to listen. Some

traditional evangelists would treat a small group discussion as little more than a

monologue with interruptions. Long wrote, "Xers cannot be convinced by rational

argument because they do not believe in absolute truth. However, because of their

commitment to community, they are impressed with the truth lived out in community."[59]

We must find a way to bring truth and community together. Long suggested that one way

to do this is to focus on their spiritual journeys, offering them hope as a basis for

evangelism, not just propositional truth. Gibbs also suggested that "this emphasis on

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[57]Richard Rice. *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville, CA: The Association of Adventist Forums, 2002).

[58]Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 16.

[59]Jimmy Long, *Emerging Hope: A Strategy for Reaching Postmodern Generations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 206.

venturing and process is appealing to Gen-Xers."[60]

In accordance with adult learning theory, M. Scott Boren wrote that small groups are "crucial to the learning experience. Most academic curriculum focuses on individual processing, but research reveals that learning best occurs when students are allowed to process topics with peers in a small group."[61] Since Adventist seminars are designed to teach, and since learning best occurs "when students are allowed to process topics with peers in a small group," Adventists may do well to find ways to incorporate discussion groups into outreach seminars. This, as I discovered in my later seminars, would not only facilitate learning but also develop community. Boren might suggest a question-and-answer period after a presentation, for example—a little dialogue, even. White's comment "there will be time enough for doctrines"[62] prompts us to ask: Does it really matter if we do not have all the answers so long as we provide an atmosphere where answers can be sought within an authentic, seeking community of believers? This brings a new relational attitude, one of we-know-something–you-know-something-too. Evidence suggests that this attitude would keep twenty-first century guests coming back to our churches more than a we-know-it-all stance.

It seems that Boren would agree that when a postmodern witnesses a loving, non-judgmental community, he or she is witnessing the power of God. Therefore, generating community in an evangelistic audience seems essential in today's public evangelism. When Jesus spoke of light and salt, He spoke of an influence that could be seen and

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[60]Gibbs, *Church Next,* 137.

[61]M. Scott Boren, *Making Cell Groups Work* (Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources, 2003), 405.

[62]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

tasted, not just heard. The honest seeker will see the true light and salt as something extraordinary. Therefore, a social element must coincide with the preaching element in order for us to reach postmoderns. In the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar, we budgeted for this.

Another effective use of community, albeit a virtual community, was found in the children's television program *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood.* It was neither a preaching service nor a religious institution, but in it the voice of God was heard. Fred Rogers, ordained as a Presbyterian minister, for the sole purpose of reaching children for God through his television "ministry," did not preach in propositional truths. Yet, he created a comforting sense of community, a safe haven for children to learn the biblical principles of love, honesty, and respect—"practical godliness,"[63] as White would say. Many who grew up with him in their living rooms, may have, because of this, listened to what he had to say about God. We can learn from Fred Rogers. The saying "they don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care"[64] has been powerfully illustrated by Mister Rogers and advocated by White in her oft-quoted "Christ's method alone" statement in *The Ministry of Healing.*[65]

Amy Hollingsworth cited an example of the postmodern ministry of Fred Rogers in his real community, outside of his virtual television community. She recounted the experience of Lauren Tewes, an actress from the television series *The Love Boat* who struggled with a cocaine addiction. Tewes knew that Fred Rogers daily prayed for her,

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[63]White, *Evangelism,* 226.

[64]While it seems that the originator of this statement is no longer known with certainty, the statement is sometimes attributed to Theodore Roosevelt.

[65]White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

saying, "Dear God, let some word that is heard be Yours."[66] "I didn't know at that time that that was God speaking to me through Mister Rogers," Tewes said, "but I had a glimpse of hope and moved closer from that day to a cocaine-free life which I have enjoyed for decades now."[67] It was Rogers' gentle non-judgmental approach, rather than the propositional truth approach, that set a captive free. It is likely that the respect Rogers gained could be used to guide Tewes to God. In light of the milk/meat concept from chapter 2, the Adventist church could perhaps do a "Mister Rogers" type of ministry. The building of an inclusive, non-judgmental community—whether real or virtual—coupled with a prayer ministry, allowed Mr. Rogers to effect a change in the lives of others.

Creating Experience Rather Than Agreement

Don Miller hit the nail on the head when he wrote that sharing Christianity can be like "trying to get somebody to agree with me rather than meet God."[68] This is an important point. Getting listeners to agree with us seems to have been the approach of many evangelists for decades. While it works for some, it does not seem to work for the increasingly pervasive postmodern mind. So, Adventist evangelism to postmoderns cannot be primarily an attempt to get people to agree with our doctrines. It cannot be an attempt to bring people into an institution of doctrine holders. It must have everything to do with introducing people to an experience with a supernatural being named Jesus Christ. After this, assured White, "there will be time enough for doctrines."[69]

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[66]Amy Hollingsworth, *The Simple Faith of Mister Rogers: Spiritual Insights from the World's Most Beloved Neighbor* (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2005), 38.

[67]Ibid., 38.

[68]Don Miller, *Blue Like Jazz* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 115.

[69]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

Morgenthaler quoted Narty Nystrom, who said: "I've never had anybody look me in the eye and say, 'You know, I experienced the presence of God, and quite honestly, I don't want it.'"[70] Helping people experience God rather than getting them to agree with us is a major shift in how Adventists currently minister to the unchurched. This is what we sought to do in our evangelism experiments, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Eddie Gibbs prompted the question, Could it be that the reason we focus on teaching propositional truth is that we do not truly know Christ? That is to say, without a supernatural experience, we have nothing but truth claims to share. In this, Gibbs agrees with Paul's statement in 1 Cor 13:2, "If I have . . . all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing." Postmoderns seem to sense this deficiency.

Gibbs observed that the evangelistic endeavor has largely been an attempt to answer philosophical questions, such as the existence of God. But today's generation is "not interested in people who presume to have all the answers about God. Rather they want to meet people who have a transforming relationship with God."[71] We have sadly and needlessly missed the boat with respect to many people who could be reached. Gibbs wrote, "Doctrinal differences take second place to experiential authenticity,"[72] echoing White's "there will be time enough for doctrines."[73] Thus, the analytical style of gospel communication needs to be modified in order to connect with the current culture.[74] It needs to be modified to address different questions and must do so in postmodern modes

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[70]Narty Nystrom, taped workshop, "Heart of a Worshipper," tape #H33, Christian Artists' Music Seminar, 425 W. 115th Ave., Denver, CO 80234, quoted in Morgenthaler, 98.

[71]Gibbs, *Church Next,* 130.

[72]Ibid., 162.

[73]White, *Evangelism,* 200.

[74]Gibbs, *Church Next,* 184.

of communication. One thing that gospel communication to postmoderns must not do is make agreement the primary focus.

Following Eph 4:12, Robertson said that we must train our members to actively seek seekers. We must also have events at which they can hear a preacher sound the trumpet in a language and form they understand. Understanding the pathos of the audience means being aware of the listener's apprehension about swallowing the whole gospel at once. So, Robinson reminded us how Bill Hybels approaches people: "Even if you can't accept the whole package, try this particular principle and see if it works."[75] This echoes Ps 34:8: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." This Bible text, when quoted to me in my seeking mode, caused me to consider accepting Christ as an experiment without having to swallow Christian philosophy hook, line, and sinker. This is a postmodern text because the psalmist speaks of experience, not just cognition. One can imagine the postmodern evangelist gently challenging his audience, or the small group leader challenging his group with, "Try the taste test for a month, and see for yourself that the Lord is good." Thus the seeker is invited to an adventure with the Truth rather than accosted by an overload of propositional truth claims.

Robinson articulated one of the challenges in communicating the gospel to the contemporary culture: "The form of our communication of the gospel or 'good news' has often meant that many people hear our message as a burden or something which is far from good; and because they think they have heard it so many times before, it ceases to be news. What kind of gospel are we preaching which is neither 'good' nor 'news'?"[76]

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[75]Robinson, *A World Apart,* 99.
[76]Ibid., 90.

The contemporary culture needs to perceive the gospel as news that is good. Robinson said two factors are crucial in accomplishing this. The first is to use forms of communication familiar to those in the mainstream of our culture. Leonard Sweet's EPIC[77] comes to mind here. If the gospel is to be received by postmodern listeners, they must experience it, participate in it, see images of it, and connect with people who live it. The second factor in assuring that postmoderns receive the gospel as news that is good is "to use a variety of those communication forms, so that the message is communicated on a number of levels, each level acting to reinforce the others,"[78] wrote Robinson.

Barry Oliver wrote, "It is not only desirable but absolutely essential for the church to be appropriately adaptable when it engages in cross-cultural ministry and mission."[79] He quoted White, who wrote, "the apostle [Paul] varied his manner of labor, shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed" and "[the] advocacy of truth must vary with the class of people among whom [we] are working and the circumstances [we] have to meet."[80] Similarly, Leonard Sweet recommended that we should "rework popular culture to the gospel's advantage."[81] Enter the how question.

We can start to address the how question by realizing that "postmodern evangelism is recognizing that God is already at work in people's lives before we arrived on the scene, and that our role is helping people see that God is present and active in their

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[77]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 30.

[78]Robinson, *A World Apart,* 90.

[79]Barry D. Oliver, "Can or Should Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs Be Adapted to Culture?" in *Adventist Mission in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Jon Dybdahl (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 73.

[80]Ibid., 73.

[81]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 54.

lives, calling them home."[82] Similarly, Henry Blackaby wrote that God is already at work in people around us. We merely need to be perceptive enough to join in where God is working.[83] When I understood it, I incorporated this concept into my seminar by suggesting that a person's particular experience may actually be the Holy Spirit trying to get through. It may be God at work in his or her life. The goal of the Adventist evangelist, in this case, is to offer an interpretation or a spiritual contextualization of a person's experience.

This is similar to the Apostle Peter interpreting the tongues experience to the onlookers in Acts 2. God was at work. They just did not know it. It is also similar to Paul interpreting the unknown god to the Athenians. God was the Unknown God. They just did not know it. Similarly, Adventists have been called as a people of prophecy to interpret world affairs to worldlings. God is behind the affairs of this world. People just do not know it. Not only is God revealing the signs of the times to the world; He is, as Sweet and Blackaby declare, revealing personal signs to individuals.

Conclusion

In this chapter I showed that postmoderns have a natural disinclination toward believing truth claims, but they are open to joining a community that finds common ground with them. One place where we, as Adventists, find common ground with postmodernism is in our deconstruction of oppressive organizations and systems of thought. Another place that Adventists may find common ground with postmoderns is in

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[82]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 53, 54.

[83]Henry Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 1990), 19.

elements of popular culture. A postmodern unchurched seeker, therefore, would more likely come to an evangelism meeting if three conditions were met: (1) the learning context is a comfortable, non-judgmental community atmosphere; (2) an EPIC teaching method is incorporated starting with what we have in common; and (3) the presentations come across as an invitation to an experience.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

My Journey of Experiments

Port Hardy

When I was in Port Hardy, British Columbia, in the late 1990s, I noted the

secularity of this affluent fishing and lumber town and promoted seeker services as a

form of evangelism that was non-threatening and seeker-friendly. I suggested using a

choreographed combination of contemporary music, video clips, non-churchy language,

lighting, staging, theater curtains, sound systems, and visual props—something after the

order of Willow Creek. We held the seeker services in the school amphitheater for two

reasons: first, it was a neutral and creative location; second, the church sanctuary was

"respected." We conducted four seeker services. Eventually, four baptisms and an

additional three individuals who began attending regularly were a direct result from those

seeker services. It was not determined whether they were postmodern. They were,

however, formerly churched people now returning.

An Analogy

Later, having become aware of postmodernism and its increasing prevalence, I

wanted to find a way to teach these souls Bible truths. My intention was to generate on a

public scale what may be illustrated by a personal conversation with my niece, an

unchurched teen, in 2002.

At the time of the conversation, she was a 14-year-old straight-A student, popular in school, and a high achiever in a broad range of activities. After a family dinner, I engaged her in conversation, asking for her thoughts on various Hollywood movies that she had seen. We got into the subject of angels and spirits. In the course of the conversation, she tried to recall a man's name from the Bible. She had once heard of a story concerning him. In trying to jog her own memory, she asked about "that man that comes from Jerusalem." I said, "Do you mean Jesus?" She said, "Yeah. That's him."

This refreshing mixture of ignorance, innocence, and inquiry was something I wished to address on a grander scale. With laptop in hand, I showed her movie clips from my developing Angels, Souls, and the Spirit World seminar. I showed her different interpretations of supernatural reality and famous people who held to each worldview. For example, I showed her a clip of the 1946 film *It's a Wonderful Life,*[1] in which the angel character indicates that he was once human. I then showed her a clip from the film *City of Angels,*[2] in which the angel character says, "We were never human." This seemed to engage her mind. She was surprised to learn that Hollywood makes contradictory assertions regarding the spirit world and the state of the dead.

Up until our conversation, she tentatively believed that a person became an angel when he or she died. She said she and her friends simply believed what the movies said about these subjects without giving it much thought. This was a textbook example of spiritually unarmed youth believing the devil's lies simply because that is all they see in the media.

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[1]*It's a Wonderful Life*, DVD, directed by Frank Capra (1946; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2006).

[2]*City of Angels*, DVD, directed by Brad Silberling (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1998).

I asked her, "Do your friends believe what the movies teach about what happens after you die?" Her response was classic. She said: "Yes, they do—except my religious friends. They don't believe it. They just watch it for the entertainment. I guess they have something to compare it to." She was referring to the Bible.

Once I suggested to my niece that she was allowed to question her Hollywood-influenced worldview, she was now open to other possibilities. She then machine-gunned me with questions about what happens when you die, the resurrections, the second coming of Jesus, judgment, and heaven and hell. I answered them with 30-second sound bites along with diagrams on paper. (Those diagrams became the basis of a later seminar called Napkin Evangelism.) She responded with, "Cool!" It was that "cool" effect I wanted to similarly generate in a public series of meetings.

How This Project Began

The conversation with my niece occurred while I was pastoring in Mission, B.C., from 2000 to 2003. During this time, church members encouraged me to be the speaker at our own evangelistic meetings rather than have an evangelist come in. I shared with my church leaders that I wanted to reach more than just the Christians of other denominations. I wished to do a series of meetings that would start with the mindset of a postmodern and lead him or her step by step to the point of accepting the Adventist worldview typically presented at an Adventist evangelistic series. This eventually led into my D.Min. project.

To do this, I thought of the process of my own conversion from postmodern atheism in 1980–1981. It was a major paradigm shift. I did not believe in God, creation, the Bible, the hereafter, absolute truth, or a need for salvation. It took eighteen months

from my first contact with a Christian to baptism in the Halifax Seventh-day Adventist Church. It required many steps. Now as a speaker twenty years later, I would have to preach over fifty sermons in order to cover what was needed to facilitate a paradigm shift of similar magnitude. The traditional series of meetings would not suffice. In my evangelism meetings, I could not presuppose God, creation, Christianity, Jesus, or the need for salvation. I could not presuppose the Bible to be authoritative or even relevant. In order to truly facilitate the paradigm shift needed for the salvation of lost postmodern souls, I would have to build a solid foundation from meeting to meeting for a brand new worldview. Knowing few would come to such a long series of meetings, I decided to do a section of the series—the part of Adventist doctrine that overlapped with popular culture. My intent was to use this as a bridge to the other Bible truths.

The doctrine of the state of the dead came to me as the one doctrine that rose in need above all others for two reasons: First, White said Satan would use it in the last days to deceive.[3] Second, the popularity of television and movie depictions of angels and the afterlife showed that people were interested in supernatural themes.

I thought to lift this doctrine out of the myopic world of theological debate and set it before the general public in a pleasing way as the great explainer of the supernatural world. But given postmodernism's incredulity toward universal explanations, mentioned in the previous chapter, I could not be dogmatic. I sought, rather, to portray this doctrine as an optional worldview that, when attended by our prayers and the Holy Spirit, would impress itself upon the mind of the listener as the best worldview, one that not only appealed to the mind but gripped the heart. Perhaps, by God's grace, I could contribute a

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[3]White, *The Great Controversy*, 588.

small part in helping our church carry out its evangelistic responsibility by packaging an entertaining, yet informative seminar on the state of the dead, one that could lead the postmodern seeker not only to an intellectual understanding of the great controversy but to a relationship with the most powerful and loving being within that controversy, a being that has stepped out of the supernatural world and into our natural world. Three optional working titles were Angels, Souls, and the Spirit World; The Supernatural Made Simple; and Hollywood and the Hereafter.

I approached the church board with the idea and explained that the seminar would be the packaging of the crucial last-day truth of the state of the dead in the light of popular interest, fostered by Hollywood, in angels and the spirit world. The board set a date in the spring of 2002 to experiment with this idea.

In conceptualizing the series of lectures, I started with the traditional evangelistic sermon on the state of the dead, the millennium, heaven, and hell. In the conventional series of meetings, these topics would get two to four hours of lecture time. I expanded that to ten hours, one hour per presentation. To get conference funding as a traditional evangelistic series, I felt I needed to have at least twenty meetings. Since I came up with only ten, I gave each presentation twice, holding three meetings on the weekend, and repeating them during the week. This made a total of six nights per week. This also allowed us the advantage to observe whether postmoderns would attend on weekends or weekdays. We called the seminar Angels, Souls, and the Spirit World because that title encompassed the whole Adventist doctrine of the state of the dead.

The "image-driven" part of EPIC was applied through the use of Hollywood movie clips and PowerPoint pictures and diagrams. Thanks to a couple of technological

literates, I learned PowerPoint while developing the presentations. We made sure that the advertising mentioned that there would be movie clips. We advertised with handbills and newspaper advertisements. Because we were attempting to reach non-Christians, we decided not to have Christian music at the meetings. We called the series of meetings "classes" as a way to avoid the religious overtones of "meetings" and to indicate that they were neutral and informational rather than "preachy."

From Thom Rainer we learned that doctrine attracts unchurched people,[4] some of whom we may assume to be postmodern seekers. From Leonard Sweet[5] we learned that the EPIC model attracts postmodern seekers. In our project we attempted to meld the two together with the doctrine of the state of the dead. For example, postmoderns would better receive this doctrine if it could be pictorialized. By first teaching the difference between the various uses of the word "Spirit," the preacher can then find a way to pictorialize it. Samuele Bacchiocchi helped here. He wrote:

> It is evident that the Spirit God gave to Gideon and Jephthah to judge, and to David to rule, is not the same "breath of life" that is present in every human being. The latter is the principle of life that animates every human being, while the former is God's Spirit given to chosen individuals to equip them for a special mission. In the case of Bezazel, for example, God's Spirit equipped him with special skills for the building of the sanctuary. "I have filled him with the Spirit [ruach] of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for the work of every craft" (Exod 31:3–4).[6]

Combining Sweet's EPIC concept[7] with Thom Rainer's discovery of the need for

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[4]Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched,* 226.

[5]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, xxi, 30.

[6]Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997), 70, 71.

[7]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, xxi, 30.

doctrine,[8] the evangelist might express part of the Adventist doctrine of the state of the dead in the following way: Newton's first law of motion states that an object will stay at rest or stay in motion unless a force acts upon it.[9] This law is analogous to the Holy Spirit acting on an individual. An individual will stay in his or her current state until the spirit of God energizes him or her. Then the individual is changed in some way. It is the "spirit," as in the "breath of God," that animates a lifeless Adam. Or it may be the "Spirit," as in the "Holy Spirit," that brings "zoe" life to a lost soul. Or it may be the "Spirit," as in the "Holy Spirit," that imparts to that saved soul the spiritual gift of encouragement to get a job done for God. In each case, the action of the spirit/Spirit is different. But in each case, the spirit/Spirit acts as an energizer, raising the individual from one level of existence to the next. When clarifying for the postmodern seeker what "spirit" is in the doctrine of the state of the dead, I thought it would be powerful to pictorialize the different uses of "spirit" using three horizontal lines, one above the other, to represent the different levels of existence. I used up-arrows between the lines to represent the energizing effect of the spirit/Spirit. An image of the Energizer battery and Energizer bunny of pop culture commercial fame aided in this. Thus, the confusing concept of the energizing spirit/Spirit of God is clarified by the familiar concept of a battery called the Energizer battery energizing something from one level to another. I used an image to concretize a concept.

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[8]Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched,* 226.

[9]"Newton's Laws of Motion." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Newton's_laws_of_motion (accessed February 9, 2011).

White wrote that Jesus "sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations."[10] Jesus used, not only what was "familiar" to His target audience, but what was "most familiar." This led us to ask, What are the "most familiar associations" of a postmodern-influenced person today? We were partially guided by the following White quotation: "All the truths of God's word came from Him. But these priceless gems had been placed in false settings. Their precious light had been made to minister to error. God designed them to be removed from their settings of error and replaced in the framework of truth."[11] My goal, then, was to take the "priceless gems" of truth regarding the state of the dead out of their "false settings" of Hollywood stories and reframe them within the great controversy story.

In a quest to quote "a poet of their own,"[12] I also searched for Hollywood celebrities who made statements that agreed with Adventism.[13] For example, the late Hollywood actor Christopher Reeve, of *Superman* fame, said, "I think we all have a little voice inside us that will guide us. If we shut out all the noise and clutter from our lives and listen to that voice, it will tell us the right thing to do."[14] This is a statement that an

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[10]White, *Evangelism*, 2002 ed., 55.

[11]White, *The Desire of Ages*, 287.

[12]I am here alluding to Acts 17:28, where the Apostle Paul quotes poets of his day to reach his audience.

[13]Ellen G. White, *Education* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1903), 67.

[14]"Christopher Reeve," *Wikipedia:The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/ Christopher_Reeve (accessed February 9, 2011).

Adventist preacher might make. I sought to make this claim more interesting by quoting "a poet of their own."[15]

I searched the Internet for lists of movies with supernatural themes. Then I chose clips from thirteen movies that offered various understandings of the supernatural world. During the presentation, the movie clip would act as a diving board into the doctrine of the state of the dead and the supernatural world. I was careful not to say that these teachings were right or wrong, only how they compared and contrasted with the Bible, leaving guests to make their own choices. We depended on the Holy Spirit to bring conviction.

Below is the list of the movies we used along with the doctrinal topic to which it contributed. See appendix A for a more detailed explanation as to why we chose each movie.

> *Angels in the Outfield*[16] – Angels
>
> *Bruce Almighty*[17] – Connection with God
>
> *Casper*[18] – Ghosts, Angels, state of the dead
>
> *City of Angels*[19] – Angels, state of the dead
>
> *Ghost*[20] – Ghosts, State of the dead, Judgment, mediums

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[15]I am here alluding to Acts 17:28, where the Apostle Paul quotes poets of his day to reach his audience.

[16]*Angels in the Outfield*, DVD, directed by William Dear (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2003).

[17]*Bruce Almighty*, DVD, directed by Tom Shadyac (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2003).

[18]*Casper*, DVD, directed by Brad Silberling (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2003).

[19]*City of Angels*, DVD, directed by Brad Silberling (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1998).

[20]*Ghost*, DVD, directed by Jerry Zucker (Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2005).

Ghost Dad[21] – Spirits, ghosts, state of the dead

Hercules[22] – Body/soul dualism, soul and spirit, state of the dead

It's a Wonderful Life[23] – Connecting with God, angels, state of the dead

The Lion King[24] – State of the dead, spirits

The Matrix[25] – Spiritual awareness, reality

Pocahontas[26] – Pantheism, spiritual guidance

The Preacher's Wife[27] – Angels

The Sixth Sense[28] – State of the dead, mediums

What Dreams May Come[29] – Hell and hellfire

Other movies were considered but rejected because I felt they were inappropriate for the church sanctuary where the meetings were held, or for an Adventist audience. Some of these were *The Others*[30], *Deconstructing Harry*[31], and *Michael.*[32] Horror movies were

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[21]*Ghost Dad*, DVD, directed by Sidney Poitier (Los Angeles: MCA Universal, 2005).

[22]*Hercules*, DVD, directed by Ron Clements and John Musker (Burbank, CA: Walt Disney, 2003).

[23]*It's a Wonderful Life*, DVD, directed by Frank Capra (1946; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2006).

[24]*The Lion King*, DVD, directed by Rogers Allers and Rob Minkoff (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2003).

[25]*The Matrix*, DVD, directed by Andy and Lana Wachowsky (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1999).

[26]*Pocahontas*, DVD, directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2005).

[27]*The Preacher's Wife*, DVD, directed by Penny Marshall (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2002).

[28]*The Sixth Sense*, DVD, directed by M. Night Shyamalan (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2003).

[29]*What Dreams May Come*, DVD, directed by Vincent Ward (Los Angeles: MCA Universal, 2005).

[30]*The Others*, DVD, directed by Alejandro AmenÃibar (New York: Dimension Films, 2001).

[31]*Deconstructing Harry*, DVD, directed by Woody Allen (Los Angeles: New Line Home Video, 1998).

[32]*Michael*, DVD, directed by Nora Ephron (Atlanta: Turner Home Entertainment, 1997).

rejected outright due to the disturbing and distracting content in spite of what lessons they might have taught.

I recognized that some could object to the showing of movie clips, saying we might inadvertently advertise for the movie. I developed a threefold response: (1) The movie clips were for a postmodern person who would likely have seen the movie anyway; (2) they were older movies that had already seeped into popular culture, and therefore, would have been watched already, even by many Adventists; and (3) if individuals actually did watch the movie because of my showing a clip of it, they would do so with a critical eye—an eye made critical by my seminar.

The First Seminar

In Mission, BC, we called the first seminar Angels, Souls, and the Spirit World: Simplifying the Supernatural Step by Step. The topics advertised were: Four Common Views of the Spirit World; Five Reasons for Including the Bible; Angels and Spirits; Spirits and Ghosts (Parts one and two); What Is the Soul? (Parts one and two); Here and the Hereafter; Hell, Hellfire, and Peace of Mind; and Piecing It All Together.

In preparing our church ahead of time, I preached from the pulpit that we should mingle with the visitors when they come. I asked the church members to pray like never before because we were invading Satan's territory.

The seminar attracted more new people than the Mission church had seen for many years. Twenty to 25 new faces walked through the door between February 1 and February 23 of 2002. We began with a total of 46, including 9 non-Adventist visitors. We ended with a total of 38, with 8 of them visitors. The average attendance was 33, including 9 visitors. This average included the repeat sessions. Some came to both

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presentations on the same subject. Many did not. The Mission church considered the experiment a success. It served to be a seed-planting series rather than a reaping series.

The non-Adventists who came had varied backgrounds, consisting mostly of nominal or fringe Christians from other denominations. A dozen non-Adventist teens visited one night and never came back. One woman came with hopes that we would perform an exorcism on her to rid her of "troublesome spirits." While connections were made, there were no baptisms. Six came to the follow-up Wednesday prayer meetings, where we discussed Israel in Bible prophecy.

In retrospect, the classes were still very doctrinal and theoretical. Some church members were uncomfortable with the lack of music and with Hollywood video clips being shown in the sanctuary. But they were respectful of the experimental aspect of the meetings and supported them through attendance, mostly on the weekend. The novelty drew them as well. Overall, the members were very appreciative of the opportunity to reinforce their own beliefs. For them, it turned into a training seminar on how to teach the state of the dead to their postmodern friends.

I also recognized that I did not attract many postmoderns. Nor did I attract atheists. If I were to place the visitors on the 18-month timeline that it took me to convert, I would have placed them around the 12-month mark. In other words, those who came were well along the social–spiritual–doctrinal pathway.

The fact that we held the lectures in our church facility was probably a barrier. We chose to do that for three reasons: (1) I had read that postmoderns were not bothered by attending meetings in a church, (2) it was more comfortable for the members, and (3) it was less expensive.

The Second Seminar

I held the seminar again in my second church, Maple Ridge, in the fall of 2002. This time we paid more attention to Leonard Sweet's EPIC model.[33] We added three elements: (1) a presentation on how to experience God, (2) a social element, and (3) a questions-and-answers night.

We implemented the "experiential" part of EPIC represented by the letter E by introducing the "how-to-experience-God" theme into our presentations. After showing the biblical view of the state of the dead, I asked: Since, according to the Bible, it is not God who communicates to us through mediums, psychics, and witches, etc., how then does God communicate to humans? My intent was to send them home with ideas on the devotional life that they could experiment with. This would be experiential and subjective—very postmodern.

We implemented the "C" part of EPIC, "connectedness," by having a social time after each meeting when we served juice and cookies in the foyer. Many stayed by to socialize. Thus, we were paying more attention to the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. Not only did I encourage the members to socialize with the visitors, we were now more intentional in providing a venue in which to do so.

We implemented the "P" part of EPIC, "participatory," by scheduling a time for questions and answers after each presentation. This also took into account Adult Learning Theory, which respects the fact that the student has knowledge too. Although risky, I decided to take questions and comments from the floor each night after the presentation. Also, one night a week was entirely devoted to summary and discussion. Through this we

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[33]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, xxi, 30.

got to know each other better. They came back each night, perhaps because I was honest with what I did not know and gave them the respect that I could learn from them. I also learned where their minds were at so I could tailor my next presentation, or next series, to incorporate "answers to objections" as James Sire suggested.[34] This listening component contributed greatly to a sense of authentic community.

One negative element came from this discussion time, however. Visitors who were staunch evangelicals spoke very dogmatically during the question and answers time, thus discouraging a New Age yoga teacher and an atheist who were also present. Allowing for open discussion opened us also to the risks of "atmosphere dampers."

Eleven visitors came each night, with an average attendance of thirty five. Even though they were getting propositional truth, they kept coming back to the meetings, perhaps because they were not getting dogma. They may also have come back because we took White's admonition to mingle with the people[35] seriously. They were part of a new community.

However, the main event—the PowerPoint presentation plus the discussion period—was still very dialogical. And even though we felt this was better than the traditional monological approach, it was still largely propositional. I needed to work on ways to make it more experiential. For the most part, I had to admit my seminar reached the head but not the heart. It still needed work. Theology did not effect life change. I gave one presentation that dealt with connecting with God. Perhaps I could build on that for the next time.

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[34]Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 70.

[35]White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

As in Mission, the Maple Ridge seminar was not a reaping series. The only atheist in the audience commented that he least liked it when I started to explain the Bible "too much." He came with his Christian wife, who was a friend of a member. Four or five non-Seventh-day Adventists came to Friday follow-up meetings on the book of Daniel. These meetings dissipated when Christmas came. One visitor, a woman in her forties, continued on with video Bible studies in a member's home. There were no baptisms. I moved away soon afterwards. It began to dawn on me that perhaps I was a teacher rather than an evangelist.

<center>Moving to Sidney, BC</center>

I moved to the Rest Haven church in Sidney, BC, in May 2003, where I presented the seminar twice more. The demographic context of the Sidney area is presented here.

British Columbia is the only Canadian province that lists "No religious affiliation" as its most frequent response to questions regarding religious affiliation. Notice, in the graph below, that 17 percent of Canadians registered "No religious affiliation" in 2001, the last census for which there is religious data, whereas 35 percent of British Columbians registered similarly, up from 30 percent in 1991. While the number of those reporting "no religious affiliation" has increased, those reporting Protestant affiliation have decreased from 42 percent to 31 percent.

Seventeen percent of the British Columbia's approximately four million people are Roman Catholics, the lowest percentage among the ten provinces of Canada. Roman Catholics and Protestants together constitute 48 percent of British Columbia's population.

Table 1. Religious Affiliation in British Columbia, Canada

	1991 BC %	2001 BC %	2001 Canada %
Total population	100% of 3,400,000	100% of 3,900,000	100% of 29,600,000
No religious affiliation	30	35	17
Protestant	42	31	29
Catholic	18	17	44
Christian Orthodox	1	1	2
Christian Other	3	5	3
Sikh	2	4	6
Buddhist	1	2	1
Muslim	1	2	2
Hindu	1	1	1
Jewish	1	1	1
Eastern religions		<1	<1
Other religions		<1	<1

Source: Absolute Astronomy: Exploring the Universe of Knowledge, s.v. "British Columbia," http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/British_Columbia (accessed August 31, 2010).

When other Christians are included, the figure swells to 54 percent, leaving 46 percent of British Columbia decidedly not Christian—a major field for creative evangelistic outreach. In contrast to Christianity's decline, British Columbia's non-Christian religions grew throughout the 1990s. Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs have grown significantly.

The Adventist church in Sidney, on Vancouver Island, BC, is named the Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is associated with the Rest Haven Lodge, a 73-bed care home operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When I arrived in May

2003, the book membership stood at 137 members with an average attendance of 110. Before I left in September 2010, the book membership had increased to 176, largely transfer growth, while the average attendance, which had initially increased, had actually decreased to 105. The most interested regular visitors were active retirees. There were very few youth. There were a few young adults with children.

The Rest Haven church has a professional-looking brick church building in this retirement community. Sidney is one of thirteen municipal districts associated in the Capital Regional District of Victoria. The working catch area of the Rest Haven church took in three of these municipalities (see table 2). Approximately half of the membership

Table 2. The Three Municipalities That Comprise the Catch Area of the Rest Haven SDA Church, 2006

North Saanich:	Approx 10,800[36]
Sidney:	Approx 11,300[37]
Central Saanich:	Approx 15,700[38]
Total:	Approx 37,800

[36]Statistics Canada, "North Saanich, British Columbia (Code5917010)," Table, 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE, Ottawa, Released March 13, 2007, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo= CSD&Code1=5917005&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=north%20saanich&SearchType =Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom= (accessed December 28, 2010).

[37]Statistics Canada, "Sidney, British Columbia (Code5917010)," Table, 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE, Ottawa, Released March 13, 2007, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1= CSD&Code1=5917010&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Sidney&SearchType=Begins& SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom= (accessed December 28, 2010).

[38]Statistics Canada, "Central Saanich, British Columbia (Code5917010)," Table, 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE, Ottawa, Released March 13, 2007, http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1 =CSD&Code1=5917015&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=central%20saanich&Search Type=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom= (accessed December 28, 2010).

from the Sidney area and half of the membership came from the other 12 municipalities.

Table 3, drawn from CRD Regional Planning Services, shows statistics for the greater Victoria area. Notice again, the highest reported single religious affiliation is "no religion."

Table 3. Capital Regional District, 2001

	Total Population	321,000	%
	No Religion	119,000	37
	Roman Catholic	49,000	15
	Anglican	45,000	14
	United Church	34,000	11
	Christian	13,000	4
	Baptist	9,000	3
	Lutheran	6,000	2
	Protestant	7,000	2
	Presbyterian	5,000	1
	Buddhist	3,500	1
	Pentecostal	3,000	1
	Sikh	3,500	1

Source: CRD Regional Planning Services: Municipal Profiles," 2001 Census of Canada, in *Capital Regional District*, http://www.crd.bc.ca/regionalplanning/publications/ customprofile/documents/ReligionMobilityStatus_000 .pdf (accessed December 28, 2010).

The Capital Regional District, including Victoria and Sidney, enveloped 321,000 people in 2001. The Seventh-day Adventist population, drawn from the four area churches, Victoria SDA Church, Victoria Filipino SDA Church, Sooke SDA Church, and Rest Haven SDA Church in Sidney, was approximately 480.

It is significant that, according to the 2006 Canadian Census, the town of Sidney

has one of the oldest populations in Canada. The median age for the whole province of

British Columbia is 41.8, whereas the median age of just Sidney is 55.0. British

Columbia's median age for males is 40.0, whereas Sidney's is 42.2. British Columbia's

median age for females is 41.5, whereas the median age for females in Sidney is 57.4. A

full 35.4 percent of Sidney's 11,300 residents are 65 years old or older.[39]

On average, people who reported they had no religion tended to be younger than

the general population. Almost 40 percent of those who reported "no religion" were aged

24 or under, compared with 33 percent of the total population. Their median age was 31

years, below the overall median age of 37 for the general population. Males were more

likely to report no religion than were females. An unusually high female-to-male ratio

may be due to the fact that Victoria attracts retirees, making for a disproportionate

number of seniors, of whom women have the greater longevity.

A casual stroll though the quaint little tourist town of Sidney would inform the

visitor that Sidney is built for the leisure lifestyle of the retiree, boasting many bookstores

and art galleries. Seniors' homes and care homes proliferate.

It was in this environment that I conducted most of our experiments in

postmodern evangelism.

The Third Seminar

Here, in the Sidney church, I did the seminar twice more, once in the sanctuary in

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[39]BC Stats, *Sidney T*, Summary Version, 2006 Census Profile, http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/
data/cen06/profiles/detailed/59017010.pdf (accessed December 28, 2010).

January/February of 2004,[40] and once in the fellowship hall, with participants sitting around tables, in February/March of 2005. This time I entitled it The Supernatural Made Simple, as this phrase more easily rolled off the tongue.

The title on our advertisements was The Supernatural Made Simple: How to Understand and Experience God.[41] It listed five broad categories that I felt would be of interest to postmoderns. The introduction of me as the speaker went like this: "Seminar presenter, Ern Brake, a former atheist, shares his spiritual journey and knowledge as participants draw their own conclusions about the supernatural world. Ern uses PowerPoint presentations and Hollywood video clips to make researched information entertaining and easy to understand."

On the advertising handbill, we listed five subjects on the front: (1) Evidence that God is speaking through Bible prophecy; (2) How to receive communication from God—seven signs to look for, and 15 tips; (3) How do angels, spirits, and the hereafter in popular media compare to the Bible? (4) A simple way to visualize the difference between the soul and the spirit; and (5) Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code[42]: separating fact from fiction.

Inside the brochure, we listed *all* the classes and their dates, rather than list only the first six nights as is done so often in traditional evangelistic handbills. We did this to be completely transparent with what we were presenting, as postmoderns desire authenticity. They can smell a hook a mile away. I decided to open my fourth seminar

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[40]See appendix B for a sample handbill.

[41]See appendix C.

[42]Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).

with my testimony because it served as an introduction to the topic of the supernatural and because postmoderns like stories. It was the least propositional and most experiential presentation I had given to date.

At the bottom of the handout,[43] we listed each lecture title as follows:

Sat, Feb 26: Discovery of the Supernatural World: My Story. Plus introduction to a 30-day experiment with God leading to Easter

Sun, Feb 27: Hollywood and the Hereafter: Four Common Views of the Spirit World

Tues, Mar 1: Summary and Discussion

Fri, Mar 4: "Hi, We're Angels"

Sat, Mar 5: Spirits and Ghosts

Sun, Mar 6: Cracking the *Da Vinci Code*

Tues, Mar 8: Summary and Discussion

Fri, Mar 11: What is the Soul?

Sat, Mar 12: Here & the Hereafter

Sun, Mar 13: Bible Prophecy 101

Tues, Mar 15: Summary and Discussion

Fri, Mar 18: Signs You Can't Ignore

Sat, Mar 19: Evidence that God is Behind it All

Sun, Mar 20: Four Different Views on Hell

Tues, Mar 22: Summary and Discussion

Good Friday, Mar 25: Piecing it All Together

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[43]See appendix D.

Sat, Mar 26: Resurrection

While in Mission, I had developed a two-hour training seminar called The Art of Small Talk.[44] Starting with Jesus' method of asking questions or making requests in order to engage people in private conversation, I gave tips on how to socialize with guests. I now used this seminar in Rest Haven as well. Later, I presented Willow Creek's Becoming a Contagious Christian seminar based upon the book of the same name.[45] A handful of people showed up for each of these training seminars.

We had a chance to try out our socializing skills. I asked that we organize a social time after each meeting. We budgeted $600 for food and refreshments. We understood that because we did not register our guests, we had to get their names the natural way— by engaging them in friendly conversation. We needed refreshments to do it.

After each presentation, I invited the participants into the fellowship hall for refreshments. Most came. This afforded a wonderful visiting time for all, as well as a time for personal questions to be addressed privately in the social setting. We were very intentional in our socializing as Jesus was. We looked for opportunities to turn small talk into "big" talk, namely, the subject of the presentation that night. I mingled with the guests with a glass of water or juice in my hand. Sometimes I engaged them in small talk. Many times it led to "big" talk. Most of our church members did the same. I was proud of them. We formed relationships. We created community. It felt good.

We reserved Tuesday evenings for summary of the last three classes and discussion. We invited guests to come to our Sabbath church service to learn more. Most

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[44]See appendix H.

[45]Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel, and Bill Hybels, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

of those who accepted the invitation had a previous relationship with an Adventist member. While we built relationships with new people, no baptisms resulted directly from the seminar. One talkative postmodern who came as a result of the advertizing commented, "Your humility gives you credibility." I took that as one of the guiding principles in postmodern evangelism.

The Fourth Seminar

I did the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar a second time in the Rest Haven church, the fourth time overall. This time we held it in the fellowship hall of our church. Participants sat around tables. We had water and glasses on the tables.

Regarding the program itself, I included a nightly tip on how to experience God. This turned into ten points on a half of 8½ by 11 inch sheet of paper that could easily fit into a book or Bible.[46] We received over thirty guests altogether. We had similar results in this seminar as in the previous one.

Upon reflecting on all four seminars, I realized that, for the most part, I had taught a different audience than I had prepared for. I prepared my presentations for postmoderns, for non-Christians. But a large percentage of my audience was Christian. Most of those who showed up already held Christian presuppositions such as, (1) God exists, (2) Jesus is God, (3) Christianity is the right religion, and (4) the Bible is authoritative. Some of the church members in each of the four seminars were looking for more meat and less milk. I needed to remind them that we were not trying to reach Christians and that they were there not so much to learn as to mingle with the visitors,

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[46]See appendix I.

whom we now called "guests." Even though we made new friends, there were no baptisms. A few of them came to Sabbath services occasionally. They were the ones who had a relationship with a church member.

I held truncated forms of this seminar for two other churches in the British Columbia Conference as an adjunct to their evangelistic calendar. Each was modified to last for one weekend. At the seminar in Vernon, I noticed a greater attendance of teens and young people in their twenties at the presentations that sought to explain movies, such as the angel movies and *The Matrix*.[47] By contrast, the attendance of Adventists was lowest at the *Matrix* presentation. I also did the seminar at the British Columbia Conference camp meeting. Each rendition of the seminar became more and more articulate. After seven times, I was ready to do it one final time to test whether postmoderns would transition into a traditional series of meetings.

A New Awareness and Training Seminar

After these seven attempts, it became apparent that I needed to develop a special training seminar that would help Adventist members see the need to try something different in order to reach people in the majority mindset around us. Many Adventists did not understand the postmodern mind and why we needed to do anything differently to reach them. I wondered if this lessened Adventist attendance at outreach seminars.

I called the new training seminar Adventists in a Postmodern World[48] and did it in July of 2006 at Camp Hope in five one-and-a-half-hour sessions. Each session was

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[47]*The Matrix*, DVD, directed by Andy and Lana Wachowsky (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1999).

[48]See appendix E.

repeated for each of the five days. The Adventist attendees said it was refreshing, informative, and engaging. It made them more aware of our postmodern neighbors and how to engage them on a personal level. After several incarnations, I did this seminar for my own church and for Canadian pastors at the Canadian Ministries Convention held at Canadian University College, as well as for the Maritime Workers Meetings and a number of other churches in B.C. It is now a six- to eight-hour training seminar.

A Turning Point

While developing the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar for postmoderns and the training seminar for my fellow Adventists, I came up with more ideas of what I could do differently to reach postmoderns in a public series of meetings. I had to. Here is why.

We booked an Amazing Facts speaker to be our evangelist in November 2006. I hoped to use these meetings as an opportunity to test whether the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar would attract people who would then transition to these traditional evangelistic meetings. This would be the goal of my D.Min. project. This meant I had to convince my church leaders that we needed two series of meetings almost back to back. One would be the three-week introductory Supernatural Made Simple Seminar; the other would be the four-week Amazing Facts series. My church board felt this would not be supported enough to warrant the expense of time and funds, especially since they had seen the Supernatural Made Simple Seminar twice already. I had to agree. The novelty had worn off. I could not, and would not, ask church members to fund another Supernatural Made Simple Seminar for the sake of my having a writing project.

This caused me to question whether the fully developed Supernatural Made Simple Seminar could ever be properly tested. I had signed an agreement with the British

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Columbia Conference stating that my D.Min. project would not get in the way of my pastoral duties. I agreed that doing ministry and evangelism took priority over writing about doing ministry and evangelism. I wondered if I should abandon my D.Min. project.

This taught me an important lesson in reaching postmoderns through a public series of meetings. If you are going to hold a public series of meetings for postmoderns, you have to have something of interest to both Adventists and postmoderns. The church members form the atmosphere into which the postmodern is brought. Evangelism, especially evangelism to postmoderns, needs this. If Adventist members do not attend the meetings, there is nobody for the guests to befriend, thus short-circuiting the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. Therefore, the Adventist church members must be engaged in the program as well as postmoderns.

I was in a predicament. I could not see how I could do a Supernatural Made Simple Seminar again at Rest Haven, especially with a convenient follow-up evangelistic series. This essentially derailed my D.Min. project. However, necessity being the mother of invention, my predicament afforded me a new opportunity. The necessity to have an introductory seminar of interest to Adventists as well as postmoderns forced me to invent something new.

Based on comments made by White and other authors, I began with the question: What did Adventists have in common with postmoderns? The desire for success came to me as something that we had in common with postmoderns. Convinced that the greatest principles of success were actually biblical principles, we held a one-day Success Through Spirituality seminar. I invited five experts in various fields of success to speak at this seminar. Each expert was an Adventist church member except for one, who would

later become an Adventist after the evangelistic meetings. The five experts were a

millionaire inventor/businessman, an Olympic athlete, a Sociology professor, a dietician,

and a nursing administrator. Each expert offered various principles of success in their

stories. Their photos and descriptions were included in the advertising. Our goal was to

teach postmoderns the spiritual lessons behind every principle of success. Then we would

invite them to the Amazing Facts series to explore more spiritual principles. See appendix

F for the details of this one-day seminar.

Results from This Seminar

Based on the concept that people value what they pay for, we decided to charge

$30.00 for this as a business organization would charge a business seminar. We rented a

local hall for October 2006 with the intention of inspiring participants to transfer to our

traditional Amazing Facts meetings in November.

A few postmoderns showed up and transferred to the meetings afterward. Those

people who stayed with us already had relationships with Adventist members and

probably would have come to the Amazing Facts meetings anyway. Overall, the seminars

worked more for fringe Christians, including Adventists, who were perhaps influenced by

postmodern thinking, than for pure postmoderns. Although we baptized formerly

churched or seeking Christians from other denominations, no baptisms resulted from

postmoderns.

Community Outreach Seminars

We also held traditional forms of evangelism in 2007 and 2008 with mild success.

During this time—more specifically, during the first half of 2006, 2007, 2008, and

2009—we introduced community outreach seminars that were uplifting, but not spiritual.

These two-hour seminars included a wide variety of topics, such as Earthquake Preparedness, Dementia, Bicycle Maintenance, Why Children Misbehave, Live Birds of Prey, PowerPoint for Beginners, Financial Intelligence, Watercolor Painting, Osteoporosis, Being a Champion, Optimal Health, Lessons from an Olympic Basketball Player, and How to Save the Environment. Guest professionals in the respective fields presented most of these seminars.

In addition to uplifting humanity, as was part of the mission statement of the Rest Haven church, these outreach seminars were also designed to accomplish three goals: (1) to increase name recognition for our church, (2) to foster friendships between Adventists and people in the community so they would more likely come to a series of spiritual meetings when invited, and (3) to familiarize the local community with our facility so they would more likely come to a series of spiritual meetings when they saw an ad or handbill. The number of non-Adventist guests who attended these seminars ranged between five and forty five. While each of the three goals was accomplished, very few of the first-time guests transferred to other, more spiritual meetings. Those who did had a previous relationship with Adventist members.

Questions for God Seminar

By the fall of 2009, my church leaders were both weary and wary of public evangelism and asked me to do a series of meetings that was different. They were adamant, as was I, that this series of meetings would not sound like a sales pitch. I had accumulated such a wealth of material that I felt I could do a full-message evangelism series geared to postmodern seekers. I had six sources for this material: (1) my Supernatural Made Simple Seminar, (2) my Adventists in a Postmodern World seminar,

(3) books that I had read for the D.Min. project, (4) traditional evangelistic sermons, (5) my own personal experience of transitioning from postmodern atheism to Adventism, and (6) the Success Through Spirituality seminar.

After much discussion and prayer, we called our next series of meetings Questions for God.[49] Our stated goal was to address questions that unchurched people were asking. In an attempt to involve my church more in evangelism, and to let unchurched seekers set the agenda, I asked my church members to give me a list of questions their non-Christian friends were asking about God. I collected these questions, distilled them down to fourteen main questions, and prepared a 20-night series of meetings to answer them. The most popular question was, "How can a good God allow suffering?" Amazingly, many of the questions are subjects we typically address in public evangelism.

To attract interest, we printed this question on the front cover of the brochure:[50] "What would you ask God if you had his undivided attention for one hour? What others have said . . ." Inside, the questions were listed as follows: (1) Why is so much violence done in your name? (2) Why is the world so messed up? (3) Why don't you ever show up? (4) Why does it have to hurt so much? (5) How can I hear your voice? (6) If you created the universe, who created you? (7) How can you make me happier and more successful? (8) How can I raise my kids to be happy and well-adjusted? (9) How can you allow so much suffering? (10) What really happens when I die? (11) What does the future hold? (12) What evidence is there that the Bible is true? (13) If this life is all there is,

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[49]See appendix G for a sample Questions for God handbill.

[50]See appendix G.

what's the point of it? (14) What if I don't believe?

On the inside of the brochure, I printed these words: "It is my goal that, by the end of this seminar, you will have experienced God in some way and understood how the Bible explains the things in this world and in the next." On the back, we listed the title of each presentation.

At the suggestion of my conference president, Gordon Pifher, I held an information session in a public hall to introduce the seminar that would begin the next night in our church. We felt that this would give transparency to what we were doing. I gave time for questions, answering each one honestly, hiding nothing. Approximately forty people came to this session, twelve of whom were non-Adventist, six of whom attended the next night, which was really the opening night.

I began with the title, How to Hear God's Voice in 30 Days or Your Money Back. I introduced the 30-day experiment while sharing part of my testimony. Sparking or building faith was very important. By the end, I answered all of their stated questions while teaching most of the Adventist doctrines, including the mark of the beast. During my presentations I encouraged them to text me, and I would display their questions on a second screen.

Our doctrine of religious liberty became one of the connecting points between Adventism and postmoderns in our audience. Since postmoderns disdain institutions, I spoke of the "institutionalized church" and the love of power, rather than zero in on one church. The spirit of the mark of the beast is in every church, including our own, I said. I explained that the remnant church was a group of authentic Christians who wanted to remain true to the New Testament church and reject the institutionalization of the church.

What I did not say was that the Seventh-day Adventist church is the true church in the last days. But I did say that the Seventh-day Adventist message is given by people who desired authenticity and who wanted the power of love operating in their lives. Adventist doctrines of freedom of conscience and separation of church and state worked well in gaining credibility with postmoderns. Echoing McLaren's concern for gentle persuasion,[51] Adventism does not wish to intimidate people into truth or the church.

I gave evidence that, in spite of its confusing elements, the Bible contains wisdom for today, that it helps us interpret history and explain the universe. I showed that the Bible can offer an explanation of the serendipity in our personal lives. This dealt with personal signs from God. I also dealt with global signs from God. I incorporated elements of my previous seminars plus elements of the traditional evangelism seminars.

An average of ten non-Adventists attended. It was encouraging to see the non-Adventist attendance remaining steady every night. They were happy to participate in the refreshment time afterwards. Many stayed for the optional Questions-and-Answers after the refreshment time. One true postmodern was baptized as a result of this seminar. He had been invited by his Adventist fiancée. At the time of my writing this, one year later, at least five others have kept in contact with members of the Rest Haven church.

The Supernatural Made Simple Seminar, originally intended for postmoderns, had now morphed into an evangelistic series geared for postmodern-influenced seekers with Adventist friends.

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[51]McLaren, 73-81.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

I began my journey to reach postmoderns by using movie clips to teach a particular Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, the doctrine of the state of the dead, in a seminar called The Supernatural Made Simple. I ended with a full-fledged evangelism series geared toward postmodern seekers, called Questions For God. Here is a summary of what I did and what I learned along the way.

I have divided the lessons I learned into three categories: (1) Attracting the Audience, (2) Setting the Atmosphere, and (3) Packaging the Message. Following this are recommendations, thoughts for the church at large, and reflections.

Lesson Order by Categories

Attracting the Audience

What I Observed

We used newspaper advertising and brochures to invite people to a series of meetings on the nature of the supernatural world. I learned that postmoderns had to be well along on the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum before they would come to such a series of presentations. Rather than hard-core postmoderns, our guests were either postmodern-influenced seekers or fringe Christians seekers.

Preaching alone did not facilitate the necessary paradigm shift in a postmodern. Preaching became relevant only after the postmodern was bonded with an Adventist Christian. This fit perfectly with the theory explained in the Theological Foundations chapter: evangelism happens in stages.

Those who actually attended, however, were profoundly affected, as evidenced by their continual declarations of appreciation in the Questions-and-Answers session and social interactions.

We failed, however, to attract large numbers of postmoderns to the meetings. Looking back on our efforts, I realize that what I developed was how to teach postmoderns rather than how to reach postmoderns. That is to say, I could engage them once they were in my audience or in conversation, but I could not attract them en masse with advertisement even though the advertisement showcased subject matter supposedly of interest to postmoderns.

Guest attendance seemed to be a function of two characteristics: an interest in the subject plus a relationship with an Adventist. For postmoderns, both characteristics were essential, but generally, the prominence of one characteristic allowed for some de-emphasis of the other. The greater the interest in the subject, the less crucial it was for the seeker to have a relationship with an Adventist. The closer the relationship between the seeker and the Adventist, the lower the seeker's interest needed to be. Either way, however, the combined strength of these two factors apparently needed to reach a threshold before the postmodern would attend a series of meetings. To maximize attendance, we needed to develop relationships with friends and develop interest among strangers.

It is possible that the predominance of retirees in the town of Sidney affected the attendance at the meetings in a negative way. If these evangelistic experiments were done in a town with average demographics the results may have been different.

Things I Would Do Differently Next Time

To get more postmoderns out to the meetings, I would do four things:

1. Advertise on YouTube, Facebook, and Google.

2. Invite the public (through newspaper, Google, or Facebook advertisement) to contribute their questions by e-mail before the meetings began. In addition to advertising for the meetings, this would be a form of listening from which I could generate the lecture titles.

3. Hold the seminar in a neutral location as opposed to a church location.

4. Put an even greater emphasis on church members' inviting their friends.

Creating the Atmosphere

The term "audience" used in the previous section suggests a unidirectional approach to evangelism, namely, that the evangelist—the active party—captures, and holds the attention of a listener on the receiving end. However, the literature and personal experience suggested that such a unidirectional approach was not conducive to teaching postmoderns new truths, especially in the beginning stages of evangelism. So, I paid special attention to the atmosphere we set in the meeting place and sought to create a more holistic, multi-dimensional environment. Engaging the postmodern audience required fostering community, dialogue, participation, and an experience with God.

The Importance of the Congregation

If a pastor is going to hold a public series of meetings for postmoderns, he or she has to have something of interest to the Adventist congregation as well. This was a big lesson for me. Since the church members form the community into which the postmodern guest is brought, speakers need to have the church with them in order to provide the necessary community atmosphere. If Adventist members are not motivated to attend the meetings, there is nobody for the guests to befriend, thus short-circuiting the social–spiritual–doctrinal continuum. Therefore, the Adventist church members must be interested in the presentations.

An important factor was that Adventists needed to have postmodern friends. Those who transitioned to more spiritual meetings were those who either had relationships with Adventist members to begin with or had made friends during the introductory seminars.

I also found that the church members needed to trust the speaker before they would subject their friends to his or her influence. Therefore, while the speaker, clearly, is not the sole evangelist, the church members' confidence in the speaker is essential. In a sense, Adventists need to know beforehand what kind of atmosphere or environment the speaker will foster before they will feel their friends would be comfortable in it.

The Social Element

All my church leaders agreed that the refreshment time following the meeting was absolutely crucial to its effectiveness. This time of mingling contributed to community formation in a big way. It provided opportunities for natural visitation and serendipitous ministry of all kinds. We acquired the guests' names the natural way, by making friends

with them, rather than talking them into writing their names down. I would not try evangelism again without truly prioritizing the social element.

Because postmoderns value dialogue over monologue, we ensured that our seminar environment included opportunities for dialogue. But public dialogue can get out of control. The anal retentive Christians—most of whom were guests—occasionally ruined the atmosphere in the discussion time by being nitpicky on issues that were of minor importance to postmoderns. Our answer was to capitalize, next time, on the postmodern's familiarity with technology by having the attendee text me during my presentation. We put their comments or questions on a second screen. It was a type of dialogue that could be filtered.

Things I Would Do Next Time

The next time I plan outreach for postmoderns, I would conduct more intentional training of church members, teaching them how to mingle without speaking "Christianese," and to invite guests to follow-up events. I would train the church members to talk about being a blessing to others rather than talking about winning "lost people," because these people are listening to how we talk about them. I would identify atmosphere-creators in the congregation and specifically ask them to come to mingle.

During the meetings, I would have more testimonies as part of the presentations, such as a church member sharing a testimony from the front or a video of a testimony being played that illustrates the principle being taught that evening. I would also give guests homework such as watching a movie, YouTube video, or documentary that related to that night's or the next night's subject.

Packaging the Message

Throughout the series of experiments, I stumbled onto a new way to preach. I began to see myself as a coach who helps seekers connect with God. The theology was necessary only to buoy up the coaching. My role as a coach rather than a preacher altered the "packaging" of the message and, thus, its reception. Rather than merely preaching propositional truth claims, we helped guests experience Bible principles in their daily lives outside of the meetings. I considered this paramount when it came to giving credence to the reliability of the Scriptures.

Two principles of postmodern evangelism emerged: invitation and insertion. The principle of invitation involved inviting the seeker into a community and into a personal experiment with God. The principle of insertion involved inserting a truth into a life setting, or into a picture or diagram.

In order to be a blessing to our postmodern guests, we needed a modified set of evangelistic sermons that met seven criteria. They must (1) start with issues with which postmoderns can identify, (2) answer questions that postmoderns are asking, (3) address longings that postmoderns are feeling, (4) speak in the language that postmoderns understand, (5) paint pictures and tell stories that postmoderns want to be a part of, (6) develop community into which postmoderns are invited and feel welcome, (7) introduce an experiment that postmoderns can try.

Recommendations

My research and evangelistic experiments have taught me that how we view the whole concept of evangelism—how we see our role, how we view and approach those we are trying to reach, how we understand our evangelistic purpose—will vastly affect

receptivity and results. Furthermore, since our approach still has a long way to adapt in this way, the greater results remain to be seen. Based on my research and evangelistic experiments, I have distilled the lessons learned into the following recommendations:

1. We should conceptualize postmodern evangelism as an invitation to an experience or experiment rather than an explication of truth. We would do well to recognize the distinction between teaching an audience a truth about God and inviting an audience into an experience with God.

2. We must begin to see ourselves as seeking to be a blessing to the lost rather than a corrector of their wrong beliefs. It is better to win a friend than to win an argument.

3. We must recognize that individuals are not receptive to one level of need until a previous level has been satisfied. Seekers go through stages. Postmoderns are not responsive to many of the doctrines presented at a traditional Adventist series of meetings because there are more fundamental questions and needs that must be addressed. If our packaging of doctrines does not specifically correspond to their questions, we need only hint at them, rather than preach them at length.

4. We should recognize that questions of the heart are more important than questions of the intellect.

5. We should strive to have EPIC meetings: Experiential, Participatory, Image-rich, Connectedness.[1]

6. Combine the teaching of doctrine with the development of community. Since,

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[1]Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, xxi, 30.

as Adventists, we are already effective at explaining doctrine, we now need to focus on developing community in every evangelistic outreach.

<div align="center">Thoughts for the Church at Large</div>

Visual Media

In order for the postmodern generation to be impacted by Adventist truth, the Seventh-day Adventist Church might do well to produce a big-budget motion picture of the great controversy between good and evil. In order to depict the true character of God, the story could be told from God's perspective through a "Christ" character in the movie. I see this motion picture as a contemporary analogy into which Bible doctrines are inserted and which includes evangelistic links to Internet websites. It could be used as a springboard into evangelistic teaching and preaching. It could also be used in our educational system as the basis for the Bible curriculum.

On a simpler yet more pervasive scale, we could post doctrinal truths packaged for postmoderns on YouTube.

Update the 28 Fundamental Beliefs
for a Postmodern Readership

I recommend that we insert into each of the 28 fundamental beliefs a statement that says how that doctrine may be experienced. Given the postmodern and Adventist pleas for tolerance and freedom of conscience, I recommend that we make courtesy and respect the subject of the 29th fundamental belief.

Educate SDA Membership

I recommend that we hold a training event on the Hope Channel that will help Adventists understand and connect with postmoderns.

Reflections

Traditionally, we have come to see ourselves as a people distinguished by propositional truths. Our very name tells the world we prioritize distinguishing propositional truth. Shall we now abandon the "evangelistic series," the quintessential propositional truth disseminator, in deference to the non-cognitive mindset of postmodernity? No. The Bible still speaks of truth and so must we, in spite of the postmodern aversion to it. God's Spirit is still striving with hearts in Babylon, and we must continue to call people out. We merely need to do it with a postmodern ring.

APPENDIX A

WHY WE CHOSE THESE MOVIES

Angels in the Outfield[1]

In this story, a boy receives assistance from an angel to help his favorite baseball team win the pennant. This provided an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast biblical angels with Hollywood angels. We also discussed the job description of angels.

Bruce Almighty[2]

I use a clip from this movie in the third rendition of the seminar. In this movie the main character fails to see God's obvious presence surrounding him. This provided an excellent analogy as to how God works around us today.

Casper[3]

This is a story of a friendly ghost who longs to be human so he can have human companionship. It provided an excellent launching pad into a discussion on ghosts in contrast to angels.

City of Angels[4]

This story begins with a woman who goes through the horror of losing her child on an emergency operating table while an invisible angel is calmly watching. But the angel longs to be human so he can experience human joys and pleasures. A fellow angel remarks, "we were never human," leading the viewer to inquire about the nature of angels.

Ghost[5]

At the beginning of this Academy Award winning movie, a man is murdered and, from the spirit world, tries to save his fiancée from the same fate. The movie depicts a

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[1]*Angels in the Outfield*, DVD, directed by William Dear (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2003).

[2]*Bruce Almighty*, DVD, directed by Tom Shadyac (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2003).

[3]*Casper*, DVD, directed by Brad Silberling (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2003).

[4]*City of Angels*, DVD, directed by Brad Silberling (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1998).

[5]*Ghost*, DVD, directed by Jerry Zucker (Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2005).

spirit being leaving the body at death and continuing a conscious living. He learns from another ghost how to communicate with the living and later does so through a medium. The one responsible for his murder is killed and is graphically shown being dragged by dark spirit beings into a dark place. This led to a discussion on the fate of the righteous verses that of the wicked, as well as the nature of humankind.

Ghost Dad[6]

In this movie, a father attempts to communicate with his family from the dead. An "expert" on the supernatural world says to him, "You are a spirit alright, but not a ghost. At least not yet." This scene was used to discuss *pneuma* in the Bible.

Hercules[7]

This is a Disney animated movie in which the son of Zeus, the Christ figure, learns how to use his strength for heroic purposes while on earth. Its platonic view of the supernatural was coupled with gospel music theme songs in classic body/soul dualism. It clearly depicts a "soul" inhabiting and giving life to the body and leaving the body at death. I used this as an introduction to the biblical view of the nature of man and the difference between the soul and the spirit.

It's a Wonderful Life[8]

In this old Black and White Christmas classic, God answers the prayers of loved ones by sending an angel, Clarence, to help a man see that his simple life of self-sacrifice was very worthwhile. The traditional Christian understanding of communicating with the supernatural world provided a counterpoint to the teachings of the other, more contemporary movies. It also provided an opportunity to compare and contrast Hollywood angels with biblical angels. In this movie, angels are depicted as dead humans, whereas in *City of Angels* the teaching about angels was the opposite: "We were never humans." This afforded an opportunity to teach that Hollywood has either changed on how they view angels or is confused since movies disagree with each other on the nature of angels and the supernatural. By teaching the biblical view of angels, I was calling people out of the Babylonian confusion of Hollywood doctrines.

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[6]*Ghost Dad*, DVD, directed by Sidney Poitier (Los Angeles: MCA Universal, 2005).

[7]*Hercules*, DVD, directed by Ron Clements and John Musker (Burbank, CA: Walt Disney, 2003).

[8]*It's a Wonderful Life*, DVD, directed by Frank Capra (1946; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2006).

The Lion King[9]

In this popular movie, a lion returns from self-banishment to save his kingdom from his evil uncle. The lion's father speaks to him from beyond the grave, having taught his son that the spirits from kings past will guide him. This led us into a discussion on how to get guidance from the supernatural world, where one goes upon death, and whether the dead can communicate to the living.

The Matrix[10]

In this very popular movie, a computer hacker discovers the world is but a computer-generated illusion, "the matrix," planted in the minds of all humans to keep them sedated and distracted while their bodies lie dormant and are used as generators to fuel the real world of machines. This was a good illustration for showing the existence of an unseen supernatural reality that explains our natural reality. Deception and confusion over reality featured prominently. Truth was discovered when the main character awoke from his lifetime of sleep and unplugged himself from the matrix. This provided an excellent analogy of how we can have a spiritual awakening by unplugging from the matrix of deception around us, and plug into the reality of the supernatural world and the power of our creator.

Pocahontas[11]

In this movie, a native woman teaches a white man about her worldview, which is essentially pantheism. A talking tree takes the form of her grandmother and tells her, "Spirits are all around you, child. If you listen, they will guide you." This movie led us into a discussion on how to get guidance from the supernatural world.

The Preacher's Wife[12]

In this story an angel comes in the form of a human to help a stressed pastor. I used a clip from this movie along with other angel movies to discuss the biblical view of the nature and function of angels.

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[9]*The Lion King*, DVD, directed by Rogers Allers and Rob Minkoff (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2003).

[10]*The Matrix*, DVD, directed by Andy and Lana Wachowsky (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1999).

[11]*Pocahontas*, DVD, directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2005).

[12]*The Preacher's Wife*, DVD, directed by Penny Marshall (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2002).

The Sixth Sense[13]

       In this extremely popular movie, a psychiatrist helps a fearful boy who sees dead people only to discover that he, the psychiatrist himself, is a dead person. The boy receives messages from the dead and communicates these messages to the living. In the light of Isaiah 8:19, 20, this became an excellent launching pad into the biblical doctrine of the real state of the dead.

What Dreams May Come[14]

       This is a story about a man who looks for his wife in the underworld and makes a journey into hell and heaven similar to Dante's *Divine Comedy*[15]. This movie was integrated into a presentation on hell and hellfire.

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[13]*The Sixth Sense*, DVD, directed by M. Night Shyamalan (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista, 2003).

[14]*What Dreams May Come*, DVD, directed by Vincent Ward (Los Angeles: MCA Universal, 2005).

[15]Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy: Hell, Purgatory, Paradise*, trans. Longfellow (London: Arcturus Pub. Ltd., 2006).

HANDBILL JANUARY 17 – FEBRUARY 21, 2004

2004

Angels, Souls & the Spirit World
The Supernatural Made Simple

Seminar presenter, **Ern Brake**, a former atheist, will provide information to consider as participants draw their own conclusions about the supernatural world. Ern has pastored for 17 years in Seventh-day Adventist Christian Churches in Eastern Canada and B.C, and is working toward a doctorate degree from Andrews University, Michigan. Ern uses PowerPoint pictures and video clips to make researched information understandable and entertaining. The class (19 sessions - see below) includes a 30-day experiment that helps participants experience God. Time is given for questions and interaction. A book table will be available during most classes.

Sat, Jan 17
Hollywood & the Hereafter - Four Common views of the Spirit World *Using Hollywood pictures such as The Sixth Sense, The Others, Ghost, Casper, we will examine the major world views on the hereafter. A look at Fox's new TV programs on God.*

Sun, Jan 18
Pros & Cons: The Bible As a Credible Source Book on the Supernatural *Spirits and angels figure prominently in the Bible. While noting legitimate reasons for rejecting the Christian Bible, this presentation offers 4 reasons for accepting the Bible as an authority on the supernatural.*

Wed, Jan 21
Summary and Discussion

Fri, Jan 23
"We're Angels" *Productions such as City of Angels, Touched By An Angel, Angels in the Outfield offer different views of angels. How are they similar to Bible angels? How are they different? What is the history of angels?*

Sat, Jan 24
Spirits and Ghosts - Part 1 *How are Hollywood ghosts and spirits similar to Bible ghosts and spirits? Different viewpoints. How are they different?*

Sun, Jan 25
Spirits and Ghosts - Part 2 *- The dark side.*

Wed, Jan 28
Summary and Discussion

Sessions held at the Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays & Wednesdays, 7:30 PM, 9300 Willingdon Rd, Sidney, near the airport (Off McTavish Rd, off Pat Bay Highway.)

Child care available. Call ahead. For more information call 250-544-0720.

Fri, Jan 30
What is the Soul? - Part 1 *Does the soul differ from the spirit? Can dead souls communicate to the living? Different viewpoints. How do the Bible and other cultures the soul?*

Sat, Jan 31
What is the Soul? - Part 2

Sun, Feb 1
Here & the Hereafter *Is it the spirit that comes back from the dead? Or the soul? Or something else? Or nothing? Three views on what happens at death. Near-death experiences are discussed. The Bible is used as a textbook and casebook.*

Wed, Feb 4
Summary and Discussion

Fri, Feb 6
Signs - What Mel Gibson Doesn't Know *How to figure out when God is communicating to you. Learning from Serendipity, Signs, Joan of Arcadia, and from the Bible. Where do visions fit in?*

Sat, Feb 7
Evidence that God is Behind it All *- Guest Speaker: Murray McGill.*

Sun, Feb 8
4 Different Views on Hell *Is Woody Allen right? Is there a difference between hell and hellfire? Would God really torture you there for trillions of years for 80 years of badness? Movies discussed: What Dreams May Come, Hercules.*

Wed, Feb 11
Summary and Discussion

Sun, Feb 15
Bible Prophecy 101 *Keys to understanding prophecies and symbols in the Bible*
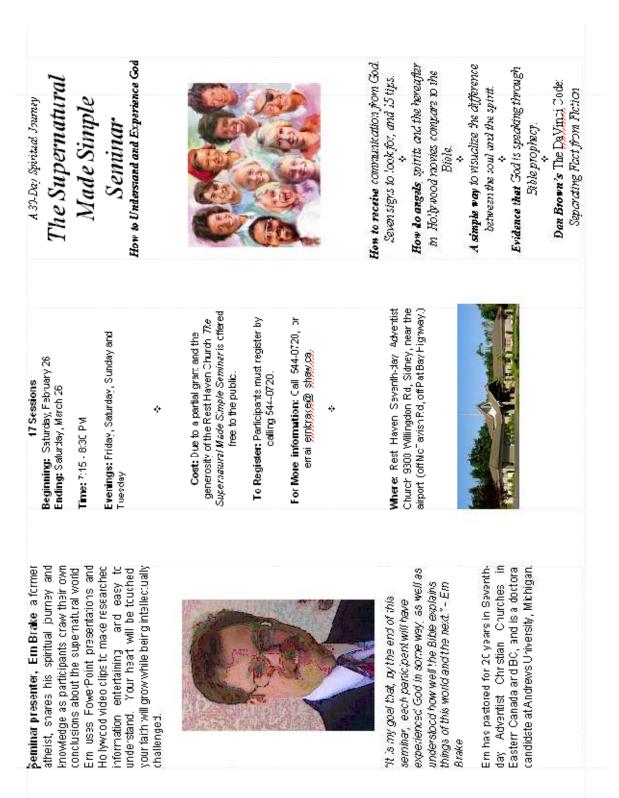
Wed, Feb 18
Summary and Discussion

Fri, Feb 20
The Bible on the Future *Can the Bible unlock any meaning in world affairs? This presentation explores the connection between the Bible and world trends.*

Sat, Feb 21
Piecing It All Together *Is there a big picture that makes sense of this world and the next? This session will argue yes. The movie, Matrix, is used.*

HANDBILL FEBRUARY 26 – MARCH 26 2005

A 30-Day Spiritual Journey

The Supernatural Made Simple Seminar

How to Understand and Experience God

How to receive communication from God. Seven signs to look for, and 15 tips.

❖

How to angels, spirits and the hereafter in Hollywood movies compare to the Bible.

❖

A simple way to visualize the difference between the soul and the spirit.

❖

Evidence that God is speaking through Bible prophecy.

❖

Dan Brown's The DaVinci Code: Separating Fact from Fiction

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17 Sessions

Beginning: Saturday, February 26
Ending: Saturday, March 26

Time: 7:15 - 8:30 PM

Evenings: Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday

❖

Cost: Due to a partial grant and the generosity of the Rest Haven Church The Supernatural Made Simple Seminar is offered free to the public.

To Register: Participants must register by calling 544-0720.

For More Information: Call 544-0720, or email embrace@shaw.ca

❖

Where: Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church 9300 Willingdon Rd, Sidney, near the airport (off McTavish Rd, off Pat Bay Highway.)

Seminar presenter, Em Brake a former atheist, shares his spiritual journey and knowledge as participants draw their own conclusions about the supernatural world. Em uses PowerPoint presentations and Hollywood video clips to make researched information entertaining and easy to understand. Your heart will be touched your faith will grow while being intellectually challenged.

"It is my goal that, by the end of this seminar, each participant will have experienced God in some way, as well as understood how well the Bible explains things of this world and the next." - Em Brake

Em has pastored for 20 years in Seventh-day Adventist Christian Churches in Eastern Canada and BC, and is a doctoral candidate at Andrews University, Michigan.

FEBRUARY 26 – MARCH 26, 2005

The Supernatural Made Simple Seminar:
How to Understand and Experience God

Evidence that God is speaking through Bible prophecy.
How to receive communication from God. Seven signs to look for, and 15 tips.
How do angels, spirits, and the hereafter in popular media compare to the Bible.
A simple way to visualize the difference between the soul and the spirit.
Dan Brown's The DaVinci Code: Separating Fact from Fiction

17 presentations from Saturday, February 26 to Saturday, March 26
7:15-8:30pm every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday
Register by calling 544-0720, or email ernbrake@ shaw.ca.
For more info: www.tagnet.org/resthaven

Held at the Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church 9300 Willingdon Rd, Sidney, near airport (off McTavish Rd, off Pat Bay Highway).

Seminar presenter, Ern Brake, a former atheist, shares his spiritual journey and knowledge as participants draw conclusions about the supernatural world. Ern uses PowerPoint presentations and Hollywood video clips to make researched information entertaining and easy to understand. Ern, a doctoral candidate, is the chaplain at Rest Haven Lodge and pastors the Rest Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sidney.

Sat, Feb 26: Discovery of the Supernatural World: My Story. Plus introduction to a 30-day experiment with God leading to Easter
Sun, Feb 27: Hollywood & the Hereafter - Four Common views of the Spirit World
Tues, Mar 1: Summary and Discussion
Fri, Mar 4: "Hi, We're Angels"
Sat, Mar 5: Spirits and Ghosts
Sun, Mar 6: Cracking the DaVinci Code
Tues, Mar 8: Summary and Discussion
Fri, Mar 11: What is the Soul?
Sat, Mar 12: Here & the Hereafter

Sun, Mar 13: Bible Prophecy 101
Tues, Mar 15: Summary and Discussion
Fri, Mar 18: Signs You Can't Ignore
Sat, Mar 19: Evidence that God is Behind it All
Sun, Mar 20: Four Different Views on Hell
Tues, Mar 22: Summary and Discussion
Good Friday, Mar 25: Piecing it All Together
Sat, Mar 26: Resurrection

APPENDIX E

ADVENTISTS IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

Adventists in a Postmodern World

Illustrated using Keynote Presentations

1. The Church in Uncharted Waters (or Why the Fish Don't Bite Like They Used To) Understanding our postmodern neighbors and our own children. The death of "Truth" and the need for a new apologetic. Speaking to the shifting values of the emerging demographic.

2. Inside the Mind of a Postmodern Seeker Five surprising characteristics Adventists have in common with postmoderns - and five differences. Four steps that led a Postmodern to God. Why men and young adults hate going to church.

3. Evangelism, Ellen White, and the Liberal/Conservative Debate An approach to reaching postmoderns from Scriptures and Ellen White. Toward a postmodern soteriology. How well-meaning Christians evangelize for Satan.
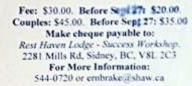

4. Seven Practical Things Adventists Can do to Connect With Postmoderns Evangelism in quick drawings anyone can do in a sound-bite world. The do*s* and don't*s* of postmodern evangelism. Things we've tried. 1. Draw a picture 2. Tell a story 3. Give a testimony 4. Build community 5. Do a community work and invite them to join you (There will time enough for doctrines) 6. Be passionate but not dogmatic 7. Insert a truth

SUCCESS THROUGH SPIRITUALITY WORKSHOP

2006

Rest Haven Lodge Chaplaincy Presents
Success Through Spirituality:
A Workshop to Energize Your Life & Work
Sunday, Oct 1, 2006, Mary Winspear Centre, Room 2, 2243 Beacon Ave, Sidney

10:00am -12:30pm:	Presentations
12:30 - 2:00pm:	Home-style vegetarian meal provided
2:00 - 5:30pm:	Presentations
5:30- 6:30pm:	Supper on your own
6:30-8:00pm:	Presentations

Topics:

1. World: *Understanding today's trends and the postmodern world: How your generation determines your values whether you are a Builder, Boomer, Buster, or Bridger. Trends that help us predict the future. What we can learn from an award-winning New York Times journalist.*

2. Relational: *The level of your happiness is proportional to the quality of your relationships. Learn four principals behind improving your relationships. Why children misbehave. The value of humour. How men's spirituality differs from women's spirituality. Why you are needed. Why your EQ is more important than your IQ.*

3. Business: *How spiritual values make corporations like Southwestern Airlines successful when others struggle to survive. Cultivating Synergy. Harvard Business School on success.*

4. Physical: *Proven ways to live and work with more energy. Introducing a useful acronym that will help you remember 8 irrefutable principles for maximizing health and healing. Vegetarian meal provided with 100% healthy ice cream!*

5. Mental: *The Power of a Purpose: The eighth characteristic of highly effective people. How to think outside the box and why you were born for it. Self test. What Bono and Bill Gates have in common.*

6. Spiritual: *Finding Faith. Identifying toxic spirituality. The spiritual contribution to world trends. How a spiritual world view works for me. The supernatural made simple. A 30-day experiment that changes lives. 10 things to look for to see if God is trying to communicate with you. And what to watch out for.*

Main Presenter: Ern Brake

Ern Brake, M.Div., is the chaplain at Rest Haven Lodge and pastor of Rest Haven Church in Sidney, BC. He is a doctoral candidate, and has lectured on succeeding through spiritual principles for over 10 years. He serves on the Chaplaincy Advisory Committee for the Saanich Peninsula Hospital, as well as VP for the Saanich Peninsula chapter of the Canadian Bible Society.

High Tech - High Touch:

Ern Brake integrates PowerPoint illustrations, guest experts, plywood props, Hollywood movies, keyboard, audience participation, and humour to teach success in life and work through spiritual principles.

Guest Experts:

Francis Adu-Febiri, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Camosun College; Adjunct Professor at University of Victoria: *"World Trends and the Human Factor."* Dr. Adu-Febiri has published extensively on globalization and human factor development.

Gerald Kazanowski, B.A., Econ., Olympic Basketball Player: *"Reaching Goals".* "Kaz" represented Canada in the '84 & '88 Olympics. NBA MVP Steve Nash lists this Hall-of-Famer in his all-time best Canadian basketball dream team. Gerald is currently a Certified Financial Planner.

Heather Switak, RN, B.Sc. Director of Care, Rest Haven Lodge, *a 75-bed complex care home in Sidney, BC:* **"The Philosophy of Success Behind Rest Haven Lodge"**

Shirley Oakley, M.Sc., Registered Dietician for 40 years: *"How Food Quality Determines Health Quality"*

Tom Stamp, Chartered Engineer, F.I.Mech.E., Inventor: *"Personal Story of Success"* Tom turned his machinery inventions into exports to over 65 countries. He is the closest you will ever get to Thomas Edison!

Included:
7 ½ hours of presentations, workbook, handouts, vegetarian meal

Fee: $30.00. Before Sept 27: $20.00
Couples: $45.00. Before Sept 27: $35.00
Make cheque payable to:
Rest Haven Lodge - Success Workshop.
2281 Mills Rd, Sidney, BC, V8L 2C3
For More Information:
544-0720 or ernbrake@shaw.ca

QUESTIONS FOR GOD SEMINAR

Why?

1. Why is so much violence done in your name?
2. Why is the world so messed up?
3. Why don't you ever show up?
4. Why does it have to hurt so much?

How?

5. How can I hear your voice?
6. If you created the universe who created you?
7. How can you make me happier and more successful?
8. How can I raise my kids to be happy and well-adjusted?
9. How can you allow so much suffering?

What?

10. What really happens when I die?
11. What does the future hold?
12. What evidence is there that the Bible is true?
13. If this life is all there is, what's the point of it?
15. What if I don't believe?

Questions for God
Addressed by Ern Brake

Introductory Session
at the Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney
7:30PM, Thur. Nov 5, 2009

" It is my goal that, by the end of this seminar, you will have experienced God in some way, and understood how the Bible explains the things in this world and in the next. "

– Ern Brake

Seminar Presenter, Ern Brake, a former atheist, shares his spiritual journey and discoveries in a power-packed series of presentations. He uses Hollywood video clips to make researched information entertaining and easy to understand. He is currently chaplain at Rest Haven Lodge and pastor of the Rest Haven Church on Willingdon Road.

The Art of Small Talk
How Jesus engaged people when He first met them

Laugh and learn at the same time.

Ern Brake, pastor in Mission and Maple Ridge, an all around shy person, has had to learn "small talk" the hard way.

In a fun and light hearted way Pastor Brake will give a 2-hour seminar on how to build a conversation from small talk to genuine sharing and connecting. We will learn how Jesus initiated a conversation with individuals when He first met them, either by asking a question or making a request.

Learn how to use the FFORT method of conversing. FFORT stands for Familiar, Family, Occupation or hobbies, Relationships, and Testimony.

Learn what to say, what not say, and why women have an easier time of it than men.

There is even something for sanguines!

APPENDIX I

HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD HANDOUT

How to Hear the Voice of God

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Psalm 32:8

1. God's Word - Psalm 119:133, 105, 24; John 5:39

    A) Proverbs Experiment *(Begin by asking God to speak to from His Word. Keep reading Proverbs until one jumps out at you. That's God voice speaking to you. Don't read any further. Stop there on that verse. Read it again several times. Memorize it for the day. Make it your motto for that day. By doing what it says God is leading you.)*

    B) Red Letters *(Begin by asking God to speak to from His Word. Skipping all the black print, read just the red print in the gospels of a "Red Letter" edition of the Bible. Those are the words of Jesus. Then follow the instructions for the Proverbs above.)*

    C) Color Coding *(Buy pencil crayons and color code your Bible by underlining Bible verses in colors according to a theme. For example, underline with yellow all verses that give daily wisdom. Use red for all the verses that deal with salvation. Blue for prayer; green for prophecy, etc. The go back and read everything underlined in one color.)*

    D) Bible Marking *(Follow a Bible marking course writing in the margin of your Bible the next verse to find on that topic.)*

    E) Concordance Word Search *(A concordance has an alphabetic list of each word in the Bible and where it is found. Pick a word and read each Bible verse on it. Begin by asking God to speak to from His Word.)*

    2. Prayer *(If you pray as you read scripture God often speaks to you in the next verse. Praying for progress can be more focusing than praying for problems.)*

    3. Multitude of Counsellors - Proverb 11:14

    A) Get the thoughts of wise, humble servants of God before making the decision

    B) Small Group Discussion

    4. Impressions from the Holy Spirit - Isaiah 30:21

    A) Compassion *(What you feel compassionate about is often an impression from the Holy Spirit. If it is biblical, following your compassions is the same as following a leading from God.)*

    B) Conscience *(Ignoring your feelings, do what you know to be right. When it comes to*

making a decision pretend you are advising a stranger. This removes the emotional entanglement. Then apply the advice to yourself.)

5. Work hard at "what your hand finds to do" - Ecclesiastes 9:10 *(Whatever it is that you are doing, take the time to do it well and see where it leads you. Often this means refusing some things because you don't have the time to do it well. That is God's leading you.)*

6. Others' Needs - Matthew 25:31-46

7. Gifts and Talents - Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:4-8; 1Peter 4:10, 11; Ephesians 4:11-12 *(God would never give us abilities in the form of spiritual gifts and talents if He never intended us to use them. In the using of our talents for the benefit of mankind we will be put in places where we will hear the voice of God more clearly. Following God in this way is energizing rather than draining because you are tapping into supernatural power.)*

8. Providence - Not every coincidence is from God, but some are. *Desire of Ages, 382:* "Day by day God instructs His children. By the circumstances of the daily life He is preparing them to act their part upon that wider stage to which His providence has appointed them. It is the issue of the daily test that determines their victory or defeat in life's great crisis."

9. Read Inspiring Book: For example:
> *Desire of Ages*
> *Steps to Christ*
> *Pilgrim's Progress*
> Biographies of noble people (Martin Luther, John Wesley, William Carey, Florence Nightingale, Marie Currie, Ellen White)

10. Listen to, Play or Sing Inspiring Music

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VITA

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Ministry, Andrews University 2011
Master of Divinity, Andrews University 1992
Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Canadian Union College 1985

EXPERIENCE

Ministerial Director 09/2010-present
   British Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
   Children's Ministries, Health Ministries, Men's Ministries, Pastoral Support,
   Seniors' Ministries, Singles' Ministries
Pastor
   British Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 1997-2010
     Port Hardy, BC, 1997-2000
     Mission/Maple Ridge, BC, 2001-2003
     Sidney, BC, 2003-2010
   Newfoundland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 1985-1997
     Botwood/Cottrell's Cove, NF, 1985-1987
     Glovertown/Cape Freels, NF, 1987-1990
     Conception Bay South/Bay Roberts, NF, 1992-1197

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Positions
Regional Ministerial Coordinator, Vancouver Island 2009-2010
Vice-President, Sannich Peninsula Canadian Bible Society 2004-1010
Part-time Chaplain, Rest Haven Lodge (73-bed care home) 2003-2010
Temporary Teacher Certificate, BC Ministry of Education 1999-2003
Crisis Center Counselor 1999-2000
Committees
BC Conference Board of Directors 2005-present
Association of Peninsula Christian Churches 2003-2010
Pastoral Field Experience Mentor Training Committee, CUC 2008-2009
Chaplaincy Advisory, Sannich Peninsula Hospital 2003-2010
Vancouver Island Camp Meeting Planning Committee (Chair) 1998-2000
Seminars/Workshops Developed
The Supernatural Made Simple (10-hour evangelistic seminar)
Adventists in a Postmodern World (8-hour training Seminar)
Questions For God (20-hour evangelistic seminar for postmoderns)
Napkin Evangelism (2-hour Bible study training workshop)
Small Talk (2-hour training seminar)
Why Children Misbehave (1-hour training seminar)
PowerPoint for Beginners (2-hour training workshop)
Keynote for Beginners (2-hour training workshop)
The Magic of Small Groups (2-hour training Seminar)