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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE
EXPERIENCING THE JOY PROGRAM IN ATTRACTING
AND CONNECTING WITH POSTMODERNS IN
THE RICHMOND HILL SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

David H. Baker

Adviser: Jeff Potts

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE *EXPERIENCING THE JOY* PROGRAM IN ATTRACTING AND CONNECTING WITH POSTMODERNS IN THE RICHMOND HILL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: David H. Baker

Name and degree of adviser: Jeff Potts, DMin

Date completed: April 2011

Problem

The Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been successful in attracting post-modern young adults. Pastoral observation suggests that a potential contributing factor is that doctrinal study guides are not effective for reaching young adults. Post-moderns are very visually oriented and place an emphasis on the need for experiential learning. In order to be effective, Bible studies targeting post-modern young adults need to focus on a combination of experiential discussions, relationships and individuality. These three areas are the focus of a new video Bible study series that specifically targets post-modern young adults entitled, *Experiencing the Joy*.

Method

The method used to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Experiencing the Joy* program in attracting and connecting with post-modern young adults was through a project conducted in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church comparing one lesson of the *Experiencing the Joy* study with one lesson of Search for Certainty study and documenting the results. The second part of the method was to implement the *Experiencing the Joy* program into the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church with a group of young adults and document the results. The third part was to request pastors of area churches to implement the *Experiencing the Joy* program into their ministry and document the results.

Results

The result showed that the *Experiencing the Joy* program was an effective tool for attracting and connecting with young adults. This tool was proven more effective at attracting and connecting with young adults than the traditional Bible study during the project conducted at Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The program was successfully implemented into the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The *Experiencing the Joy* program was successfully implemented into the College Park Elementary School with the grade 8 students and additional high school students; the young adult group meeting at the Harmony Seventh-day Adventist Church; the young adults meeting at the Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church; the Kitchener-Waterloo Seventh-day Adventist Church; and the Kingsway College students.

Conclusions

The Experiencing the Joy program is an effective tool for reaching postmodern young adults. The churches that have implemented these studies provide positive feedback in their ongoing use of the Experiencing the Joy program.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

David H. Baker

April 2011

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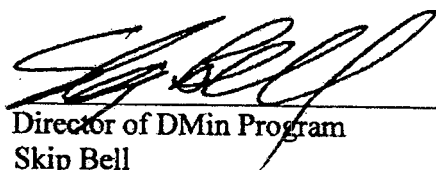
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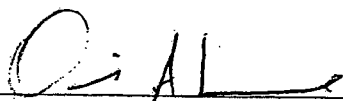
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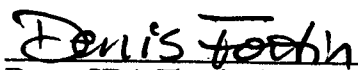
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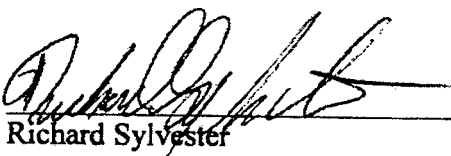
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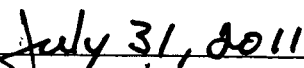
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The *Experiencing the Joy* video clips and workbook are an effective alternative to traditional printed Bible studies. In this series, the Gospel is conveyed through a doctrinal understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to today's young adults. This series is a complete understanding of the Gospel, speaking specifically to their culture, perspectives, ideologies, issues, alternative realities and philosophies. As we move from the modern era to the postmodern era, there is shift in how information is communicated. Robert Webber, in his book, *Ancient Future of Faith: Re-thinking Evangelism for a Postmodern World*, writes, "These shifts are resulting in a whole new culture and raise new questions about the way biblical Christianity is to be understood and communicated" (Webber, 2000, p. 15). Today's young adults long for experience. They need to understand how the Gospel impacts their present reality.

The video series, *Experiencing the Joy* was designed by the Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies. The Centre for secular and Postmodern Studies is an arm of Global Missions. Global Missions was voted at the 1990 General Conference Session as a special initiative to reach people in the so-called 10/40 Window with the Gospel. The Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies is one of many study centres around the world. It was established in order to research various people groups and belief systems in order that Seventh-day Adventist beliefs might be shared. The Centre for Secular and

Postmodern Studies has designed a program that incorporates the needs of young adults into a doctrinal study through media.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters: Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 examines the theological foundation for the use of this media presentation. Chapter 3 is a review of the current literature on how media fits into Christ's method in reaching postmodern young adults. Chapter 4 describes the methodology. This includes a profile of the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church; a description of the purpose and content of the *Experiencing the Joy* material and process of its implementation. Chapter 5 describes outcomes and evaluations. The results of *Experiencing the Joy* are compared with the use of a traditional series of written Bible studies. The strengths and weaknesses of the *Experiencing the Joy* program are summarized. Finally, Chapter 6 gives a summary, recommendations and conclusion.

Purpose of the Project

The environment is saturated by media. Most young adults are influenced by media. My desire is to see young adults influenced to have an understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and ultimately a relationship with Christ through the use of media. The Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies at the General Conference Office of Adventist Missions has developed an outreach resource aimed at delivering our doctrines through contextualized evangelism. The *Experiencing the Joy* program will be tested at the Richmond Hill Adventist Church to determine its effectiveness with young adults. Will this be more effective than traditional written material? During my pastoral assignment in the Richmond Hill district, I saw the potential of using the outreach

resource, *Experiencing the Joy*. The purpose of this project was to implement and evaluate *Experiencing the Joy*.

Justification of the Project

There are several reasons for conducting the project. First, I am not aware of any other program available which uses media to teach doctrines in a way that is sensitive to the needs of postmodern young adults. It is my desire to reach postmoderns with the Gospel. Until I came across *Experiencing the Joy*, I had not found an outreach resource that taught doctrine through media, while providing aspects such as experience and relationship that appeal to postmoderns.

Second, I believe that the approach of Jesus and Paul must be adopted by contextualizing the Gospel. The Gospel needs to be made relevant to people's lives. The circumstances surrounding their lives cannot be written off as "worldliness" any longer. My experience in the church has always been that every effort must be made to separate ourselves at every level from outside influences. Young adults are disappearing from the church and the many outside the church are not being reached with the Gospel. I believe we must embellish the passion of Christ, Paul and Ellen White in our efforts. We must dive in and get our hands dirty. There can be no other option outside of total immersion in their world in order to reach them, utilizing every tool at our disposal for God's glory.

Third, I believe that the *Experiencing the Joy* series is compatible with Christ's method for reaching people, described in the book *Ministry of Healing* by Ellen White.

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." (White, 1942, p. 143)

The *Experiencing the Joy* video clips and workbook incorporate His method of mingling with people; showing sympathy for their needs; ministering to them; and winning their confidence.

Finally, this edition of *Experiencing the Joy* has just been released at the 2010 General Conference session in Atlanta, Georgia. The information from this study would prove valuable to other pastors contemplating its implementation in their local churches.

Definition of Terms

It is important to understand three terms that will appear throughout the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. The terms will be used, at times together, and at times interchangeably. The terms are *postmodern*, *young adult* and *unchurched*.

Postmodern

A postmodern is a person whose values are shaped by pluralism, democracy, religious freedom, consumerism, mobility, and increasing access to news and entertainment. Postmoderns share in a belief that reality is no longer fixed or determined. They have a distrust of organized religion and attempt to find a new and more truthful version of the world. Finally, a postmodern is anyone born during the period between the end of WWII and the present.

Young Adult

A young adult is defined as someone between the ages of 20 and 35 years of age. All young adults are post-modern by virtue of having been born during the postmodern era.

Unchurched

Unchurched refers to someone who is not associated with a church or someone who has not attended a church other than at Christmas and or at Easter. This person may be secular or religious, atheist or agnostic.

Limitations of the Project

This project will focus on the young adults who are connected with the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The scope of the project will be limited by the number of young adults available and willing to volunteer in the project or become part of a small group in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. There is not enough time to assess the results of all 42 Bible Talks in the *Experiencing the Joy* series within the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, therefore, a sample will be given to assess the viability of its use and the potential this series has to be an effective means to carry the Gospel to a group of individuals within the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church and other neighbouring districts within the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Methodology

The *Experiencing the Joy* video series and workbook lessons were conducted in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church between September 2010 and November 2010. Two groups of young adults were taken through a Bible study series. One group utilized traditional Bible studies and the other utilized the *Experiencing the Joy* video series. At the conclusion of each series, the participants were asked to fill out a survey that determined the effectiveness of the approach in connecting with the target

audience and connecting them to Christ. The questionnaires were analyzed to determine if one of the approaches connected better with the participants and connected them better to Christ. The standard group was taken through the *Experiencing the Joy* video series. The control group was taken through traditional Bible studies.

The tool used for the evaluation is found in Chapter 5. A more detailed account of the project and its results and conclusions are found in Chapter 4—Methodology, Chapter 5—Outcome and Evaluation, and Chapter 6—Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

The second phase will be the implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy* video series in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The series is planned to begin on November 27, 2010 with a small group of youth and young adults. The group will meet between 1 pm and 2:30 pm. Soup and buns will be provided at the beginning of the meeting. The group will continue meeting for the entire 42 sessions. Group members will continue to invite other youth and young adults to join in.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

After arriving at the Vancouver airport, I collected my luggage and headed for the public transportation which would connect me to the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal and later, Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island. It was while I was waiting for the bus that I encountered Peter. Peter had just arrived from Germany. He was a young man in his twenties. He was friendly, and after he lit up a cigarette, our conversation began with his questions about how to get to Nanaimo. Since I was heading for the same place, I told him to stay with me and we could get there together. During our three-hour journey, our conversation took us in many different directions. He asked me if I knew where he could “get hammered,” and maybe find a companion as well. I tried to hide my shock at his question and told him I did not know since I had a wife and family. He told me he did too. However, their marriage had become distant. It was then that I began to wonder, “How many of my church members would be able and willing to relate to this man? How many had really lost touch with the young adults in our community?”

As he shared more of his life, he finally got around to asking me about the type of work I did. In times past, I had covered the truth a little about my role as a pastor, afraid that the conversation would end abruptly. I found that so many individuals had been abused spiritually, that the disclosure of my profession could potentially lead to

uncomfortable and painful experiences. At other times, I found myself being stereotyped into a role that did not accurately reflect my ministry. He persisted in his questioning and I disclosed that I was a pastor of a church.

After we had said our good-byes and went our separate ways, I came to the conclusion that I really did not know how to provide the answers he needed. I was unprepared to minister to the millions of postmodern people outside the walls of our church. I was living in my own world. Being a fifth generation Adventist, I did not know how to live inside this man's world. The sad reality is that the majority of Christians have become irrelevant to the larger society. Kinnaman (2007) writes, "People's attitudes drive their action. For instance our firm (The Barna Group) has done community based research for hundreds of churches. Many congregations are perceived in the same negative terms: judgmental, boring, insincere, arrogant, irrelevant and so forth" (p. 37). My belief is that we are not reaching secular young adults with the Gospel. Doing the same things in the same ways will bring the same results. If we are to bring new results, we must seek a fresh approach. We must understand their culture, their diversity, their issues, their perspectives, ideologies, alternate realities and philosophies.

The apostle Paul was so fervent in his efforts to reach people where they were with the Gospel that he writes, "I became like a person weak in faith to win those who are weak in faith. I have become everything to everyone in order to save at least some of them" (1 Cor 9:22, God's Word Translation).

The life and ministry of Jesus and Paul exemplify how to contextualize the Gospel, often using what some would consider radical methodology. Oxford defines the

word *contextualize* as, “place or study in context: some Christians fail to contextualize the word of Jesus” (Stevenson, 2003). This dictionary defines the word as placing or studying, for example, the words of Jesus in context. By placing the Gospel in context, they were able to make the Gospel fresh, alive, and individual. This chapter will explore the contextualization of the Gospel in the teachings of Christ, the apostle Paul and Ellen White.

Jesus and Contextualizing the Gospel

The Incarnation of Jesus

Paul writes in Phil 2:5-8,

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (NKJV)

The life and mission of Jesus Christ are the ultimate embodiment of the contextualization of the Gospel. The message of the Gospel in the New Testament was not determined by the audience. The content of the Gospel was unchanging but was preached differently based on ethnicity, culture, and religious background. In Acts 17:30, Paul preached that “God commands all men everywhere to repent” (NKJV). However, to attempt to ignore the history, religion, and worldview would be a great tragedy which would lose the identity of the individual. Kraft (1991) refers to the incarnation as the proper model for all Christian cross-cultural communication. Starting with the gaps that exist between God and humans and then, among humans themselves, Kraft tells us that God communicated by bridging the gap in a person, the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ

modeled that bridge and became the source of communication between God and man.

Kraft writes,

Rather, God identifies personally with his receptors. As a person God interacts with and becomes vulnerable to his receptors. Finally, *God becomes the message*. When God sends, he sends persons. When God comes, he comes as a person. Incarnation—personal participation in the lives of his receptors—is his constant method. And as in all life-changing communication, the person (whether God himself in Christ or another person as God’s representative) is the major component of the message conveyed. (1991, p. 17; emphasis added)

With the Incarnation as the model, Kraft stresses the responsibility of the communicator to do the difficult work of understanding the frame of reference of the hearer and putting the message in that hearer’s frame of reference rather than requiring the hearer to do the difficult work of learning the communicator’s frame of reference in order to understand the message. The best Scriptural reference of this, found in Phil 2:5-11, begins with an exhortation from the apostle Paul: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (NKJV). Contextualization must be employed if we are to reach every knee and every tongue with the good news of Jesus Christ.

New Wine Calls for New Wineskins

In Mark 2:22, Jesus states, “And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins” (NIV). A more contemporary paraphrase closes the passage with these words, “New wine calls for new wineskins” (NLT). The key is to avoid mixture, for mixture causes damage and a lack of ability to sustain or hold the new. This analogy can be applied to the delivery of the Gospel. Jesus commands His disciples in Matt 28 to go out into the entire world and preach the Gospel to every creature. However, He did not say how to do it.

The old wineskin would not survive the vitality of the new wine. The Gospel has to be served with new vitality. Jesus brought a new vision of God that the old wine skins could not hold. His message and His mission burst through the old wineskins. The Gospel had broken out of its Jewish wine skins. The Gospel had to break out, find new jars of clay in which the treasures of the Gospel, hidden through the ages, could be revealed and sniffed as a new scent, a new fragrance among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

God Can Only Be Known Through the Heart

In Mark 7:7, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13: “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do” (NKJV). The passage in Isaiah speaks about the condition that existed prior to and during the time of Jesus. Jesus taught that the things of God cannot be understood without heart, much less taught to others. Matthew Henry writes, “When work was to be done for God, which required the heart, that (the heart) was sent out of the way on purpose, with the fools eyes, into the ends of the earth” (1998, p. 1132). Henry writes that man not only attempted to do work for God without heart, but even purposely sent his heart away. Therefore the Pharisees were not spreading the true teaching about God, because their hearts were far from Him. In Mark 7:6, Jesus says, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me and in vain they worship me teaching as doctrine the commandments of men” (NKJV). In His comments leading up to this passage, He speaks of God’s knowledge of the heart. God knows the heart and cannot be deceived by religious performances. In 1 Samuel, the story is told of

how God chose a king to replace Saul. He sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to pick one of Jesse's sons. Samuel wanted to choose the first-born son, but God told him, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"(NKJV). In the New King James Version the word "heart" is directly mentioned 926 times. How could any work for God be done when there was no "heart" connection to God? How could someone be introduced to a person unless he himself had a prior relationship with that person? Up until this point, people appropriated for themselves their understanding of God as they interpreted it through their customs, traditions and individual peculiarities. Jesus ministered to the hearts of people.

Christ's Method Alone

Jesus preached the Gospel in such a way that it penetrated the heart. Jesus entered into the lives of individuals who had been spiritually abused and neglected. Individuals had tried to live up to the expectations of Judaism. Any religion, such as Judaism, is an interpretation of an expectation that God requires. It was an attempt to meet that expectation that met with failure. Jesus was able to articulate the Gospel to specific people groups in a culturally specific way. Therefore, He was able to speak both with lawyers and Sadducees, as well as with prostitutes and beggars. Jesus modeled cultural creativity and contextualization by sharing the Gospel in different ways depending upon both the situation and the person He was interacting with. Jesus was able to minister to an individual's core values. John 10:27 suggests an intimate relationship that Christ has with His followers when He states, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (NKJV). He sought innovative ways to reach people. Each individual

processes deep character traits that define him and rarely change over time. Some individuals might politely respond on an exterior, superficial level, but Jesus was able to penetrate the surface to bring lasting changes to an individual's core values. Ellen White (1942) shares that each individual can be a catalyst through which God operates to change our world for the better. In *Ministry of Healing*, she writes that hearts are crying out for something that the world cannot offer. Christ reached out to people, bringing physical, mental, spiritual and emotional healing. Christ's loving initiative towards people changes the human heart. We find

Christ's method alone will give true success when reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good, He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to them to their needs, won their confidence. Then He bade them follow me. (p. 143)

There were five steps that Jesus utilized to burst the Gospel out of its Jewish wineskins. Jesus mingled with men. He showed His sympathy for them. He ministered to their needs. He won their confidence. He asked them to follow Him. The following biblical narratives lay a foundation for the contextualization of the message.

Evidence of Jesus' Outreach Strategies

The Woman at the Well

John 4 records the story of an encounter between Jesus and a woman at a well. No one knows the true name of the woman at the well. The Scriptures tell us that she was a Samaritan. The Jews of that time treated the Samaritans like outcasts. They even called them dogs. For Jesus to talk to a woman was considered improper in itself. Since she was a Samaritan, it compounded the offense. Yet, Jesus chose to mingle with this woman. Today men and women often mingle, but in the culture of Jesus' day, it was

forbidden. Jesus took the time to listen to the woman and showed her sympathy and respect.

In addition, crossing cultural boundaries, He taught individuals, building upon what they already understood. He sought to embrace the individual's ideals and uplift that person at every opportunity. In John 4:12, the woman says, "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and livestock?" (NKJV). In the Samaritan woman's dialogue with Christ, He did not condemn her beliefs but built upon them. His reply followed in the next few verses. "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life'" (NKJV).

When Jesus asked the woman to go and call her husband, the woman was being deceptive by telling Jesus she had no husband. In verse 4, "The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.'" Jesus looked through the pain of her previous broken relationships and into her current living conditions. The Lord could have answered, "Don't lie to me. You have had five men in your life and the latest relationship you have isn't really what God originally intended." Instead, the Lord picks up her deceptive comment positively. Jesus gently challenged her to acknowledge her past and her need of a Saviour. Jesus was seeking to free her and move her beyond the physical limitations that she had placed upon her own life, yet, at the same time, show her respect for the journey that she had taken thus far. Through a series of questions, Jesus was able to teach and facilitate a transformation in her life. He knew her temptation and so He knew

how to sympathize with her. Through the questions Christ posed, she was brought face to face with her present realities. She was limited to her earthbound physical perception but Jesus was able to open her eyes to the spiritual freedom that He came to bring. Jesus spoke in a non-threatening manner. He uses the words of the Samaritan woman as a catalyst to deliberately turn the conversation into a spiritual challenge aimed at confronting her with her need for spiritual life. Jesus turned the conversation away from physical water to spiritual water.

The physical reality of my traveling companion in the introductory story was a broken family. The man resorted to getting drunk and seeking a female companion because he wanted to provide temporary comfort for his pain. He did not want to face his situation. Jesus' would have listened to the man's story. He would not have condemned or judged. He simply would have accepted the fact that the man's attempt to relieve his pain was his best effort at providing comfort for his physical reality. Jesus would have respected this man and at the right opportunity, might have challenged him to face his past, accept God's grace, and launch out from his understanding of the physical to an introduction of the spiritual and the freedom it can offer. Jesus would have found an opportunity to display love, acceptance and encouragement.

Media is also a tool that can act as a channel to convey God's mercy. If Jesus had had media at His disposal, He might have used it in the same way that He used parables, stories, or nature to illustrate God's saving grace. He would have used tools that people can identify with. He would have understood this captivating physical reality that is used by individuals to escape from their present circumstances. Media can be countercultural, meaning that it can bridge race, gender and economic status. Media can be used as a

launching point to usher in a spiritual reality that can offer more than temporary freedom. Media could be a non-threatening means of conveying the good news of God's grace.

Jesus ministered to the needs of this woman by treating her like a person, somebody worthy of being saved. Women had not been treated this way. According to Barclay (1960), "a rabbi might not even speak to his own wife or daughter or sister in public" (p. 142). Josephus writes, "The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man" (Josephus, n.d., Section 25). According to Issacs (2008), women are categorized in the repeated rabbinical formula: "women, slaves and minors" (p. 133).

A woman, like a Gentile slave and a minor child, was under the authority of a man and had limited participation in religious activities. Josephus (*Against Apion*) says that it was bad enough that she was a woman, but she also had a notorious character, as witnessed by her five husbands. She was currently living with a man who was not her husband and she was also a Samaritan. According to Barclay, "The Jewish-Samaritan quarrel was more than 400 years old" (1960, 1:142).

By ministering to her, Jesus was breaking down barriers. Paulien (1995) clarifies this when he writes, "No longer are ethnicity and geography a barrier to God" (p. 106). Jesus' new way of ministry to her would burst the wineskin that had no room for differences in gender, ethnicity, geography, or character. This woman had a need that was buried in pride, self-pity, anger, and resentment. Jesus probed deep, until she came to realize her need of a Saviour. Jesus won her confidence. Jesus revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman by His intimate knowledge of her life. At the end of their conversation, she concluded that this was the Messiah. Jesus had proven Himself to be the Lord of her life.

In John 4, we read that she immediately left her water pot and ran to share Jesus with others. The woman had come to the well unprepared to address her needs but Jesus was able to engage her in conversation by appealing to the best in her. Jesus appealed to her kindness by requesting that she draw water for Him. Jesus appealed to this woman's kinder instincts, thus eroding the cultural wall between them. The woman, with tension and contempt in her voice, responded, "How is it that you, a Jew [which she could identify by his clothing and manner of speech], asks a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?" (v. 9). She is taken aback, but intrigued. "Who is this stranger who is willing to address me?" Jesus continues to move the conversation to a higher level. He introduces things that are meant to engage her by stimulating her interest. Captured by Jesus' words and presence, her original mission of collecting water was now too mundane to commit herself to. According to v. 29, she left her water pot and ran to the town proclaiming "Come see a man who told me all things that I have ever done" (NKJV). The story tells us that she became a witness for Jesus to people she would not have spoken to before.

The Crippled Man at the Pool of Bethesda

In John 5, Jesus confronted a crippled man at the pool of Bethesda. The New wine that Jesus poured would not have been held by the old wineskins. Jesus used the same outreach method here as with the previous story to support the contextualization of the Gospel. Jesus mingled with men. He showed His sympathy for them. He ministered to their needs. He won their confidence. He asked them to follow Him. In John 5:6 He simply asked the man a leading question, "Do you want to be made well?" (NKJV). The man believed the water contained healing properties. After listening to the man's excuse for not being able to get to the "healing water," Jesus instructed him to rise and take up

his bed and walk. Jesus did not try to expound upon the man's belief that he could find healing in the pool of Bethesda.

Jesus did not seek to question how there could be any healing attributes in the pool of water; He simply taught the man a lesson by meeting his immediate needs. I think it is interesting to note that the solution to the man's problem was Jesus, but he could not see it. The initial dialogue found in John 5:6, 7 states, "He said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me'" (NKJV). He was intent on getting to the pool. He brought human reasoning to a spiritual question. He wanted to use Jesus to help him get to the pool. He was not looking to Jesus for healing. This was another instance where Jesus did not argue or condemn his beliefs but built upon them a clearer understanding. I had a professor in college named Tennyson Samraj whose favourite statement in his Ethics class was, "Point out what is right, and what is wrong will be self-evident." Jesus often taught what was right and left the individual to determine what was wrong.

Just like in the Samaritan's dialogue with Christ that was spoken of earlier, He did not condemn the belief that she held but sought to move her to a greater understanding. Jesus never condemned a currently-held belief. He respected the journey of the individual that had led to that particular place in his/her life. When Jesus interacted with individuals, He emptied Himself into everyone He encountered. He acted in an entirely non-judgmental way. He allowed that person to make the decision and then respected that decision. He respected whatever situation He found the individual in and attended to

their specific needs. This can be referred to as *the humanity of the situation*. Jesus was able to offer both care and respect.

Context can be defined by a variety of boundaries, regionality, nationality, culture, language, ethnicity, social and economic status, political structures, education, gender, age, religious or theological tradition, worldview, or values. The Gospel story portrays Jesus as crossing all these boundaries. Most importantly, Jesus contextualized the Gospel through His sensitivity to His surroundings. In the book, *Christ's Object Lessons*, Ellen White says that Jesus used His natural surroundings to illustrate His messages. Christ would illustrate an individual's need to place his faith in God and not worry about the needs of the future by pointing to the lilies that were surrounding Him. Christ said in Matt 6:28, 29, "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Ellen White writes that in the multitude were individuals who were "full of worries and perplexities, and sore with disappointment and sorrow" (1900, p. 19). This illustrates how Jesus connected His teaching to the needs of His hearers.

Wedding Feast of Cana

The festivities of the wedding feast of Cana in John 2, were well underway. In the Middle East, hospitality was a sacred responsibility. Everyone had had more than enough to drink, but the situation was about the newly wedded couple. For one very special week, all the focus was on them. This wedding was their occasion. The reality was that when the wine had run out, the party was over. Jesus was not as much concerned with the needs of the guests at the wedding as He was with the embarrassment

of the newlyweds. According to Barclay, “It was to save a humble Galilean family from hurt and humiliation that Jesus put forth His power” (1960a, 86). Jesus was sympathetic to the embarrassment of the host when the wine ran out. He went along with the humanity of the situation to teach a lesson to those who had observed. In fact, His action coincides with an earlier truth of His efforts to sympathize with people.

Meeting Needs at Every Opportunity

Another story is found in John 18. A large group of men was coming to arrest Jesus. During Peter’s time with Christ, he had witnessed continual demonstrations of non-violent acts and apparently had concealed a knife in his garment. Against innumerable odds, Peter courageously drew his weapon against those who sought to take Jesus. Jesus did not look for an opportunity to chastise Peter’s weakness for carrying the knife. However, after Peter had used his knife, Jesus taught a lesson by healing instead of murdering one of the men who had come to arrest Him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus voluntarily surrendered His life for the sake of preventing bloodshed, re-iterating His unselfishness and providing for the needs of His friends above His own. Once again, Jesus went along with the humanity of a situation in order to teach a higher principle.

It seems that Christ was always trying to meet people’s needs. John recounts the story of the man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. Jesus began by providing for his physical needs. After meeting him where he was and attending to his physical needs, Jesus led him to a deeper relationship with God. Jesus also provided for the man’s eternal well-being. Jesus later found the man in the temple and said, “‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.’ The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well” (John 5:14, 15, NKJV). Jesus

provided for his physical healing and then later, at the temple, provided for his spiritual healing. The man responded to an invitation to a personal relationship with God versus the moral failure that he had experienced for the past 38 years.

Contextualization of the Gospel Versus Tradition

The way Jesus presented the Gospel was a radical departure from the traditional ways men had previously come to know God and was a source of controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day. Matt 15:1, 2 says, “Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ‘Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread’” (NKJV). Knight (1994) explains that the Jewish leaders were asking why Jesus was teaching his disciples to disregard tradition. He writes, “Rather, they (the Jewish leaders) are implying that He approves of His disciples doing so (breaking the tradition) and He must have therefore taught them to take the tradition lightly” (1994, p. 158).

Jesus was simply contextualizing the Gospel. He was pouring new wine into new wine skins. Knight goes on to say, “Jesus does not dissappoint the suspicions of his accusers. He has definitely taught a different position from theirs, and He does not deny it” (1994, p. 158). The simple Gospel had been packaged up tightly inside rules and traditions. Christ had come to bring freedom and simplicity. He came to restore the law of God, the law of love, which had been violated by the traditions of men. It is ironic that these very traditions or rules were established to protect people from breaking the Ten Commandments, yet they made it impossible to keep the law of God. Traditions had clouded the love of God but Jesus proclaimed the Gospel with His words and actions. He gave the Gospel a new interest and a new vitality.

There were other images that Jesus used to state that the techniques that had been used before the ministry of Jesus had failed. One image that comes to mind is Matt 7:15-20:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (NKJV)

Jesus taught that a person can know the law and have an outward show of piety, but be wicked inwardly. The emphasis here is on behaviour, rather than on having a right belief. There is a difference between what one professes and what one does. This teaching seems to be tied to what Jesus said in Matt 23:25: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence" (NKJV). The emphasis is placed on the condition of the inner life as opposed to a previous emphasis on external things.

Jesus Taught How to Experience God

In the law, there was a sense of confusion and ambiguity. The simplicity of God's love had become shrouded in tradition. Jesus brought man closer to God by teaching them how to experience God. Thus, as Jesus continued His message in the book of Matthew, He took it upon Himself to explain how one could experience God through the Law. He taught that a man can experience God by going beyond its previously held requirements. Keeping the minimum requirements of the word of God brings only a superficial level of understanding. By taking His listeners beyond the minimum requirements with respect to murder and adultery and loving an enemy, Jesus illustrated

the depth of the love of God for man. Jesus contextualized the message through the use of images and illustrations that would have been familiar to His audience.

Jesus used everyday illustrations to usher His listeners beyond a preoccupation with the ordinary and into an experience with God. Jesus had a particular style of teaching that appealed to His audience. He found a correlation between life experience and learning experience. Jesus built upon experience and what is understood in the law.

John Dewey contended that human experience is an essential factor in the learning process and without that human experience; learning becomes nothing more than drudgery. Long before Dewey, Jesus contextualized the Gospel through the human experience, and left in its place, an experience with God.

Paul and Contextualizing the Gospel

All Things to All Men

The strategy of Paul's ministry was to become all things to all men. Paul knew that people are shaped by their culture, education, their family life, and their religious beliefs. Thus, Paul adapted himself to the thinking of the people he encountered in order for them to hear the Gospel. A passage which is central to the need to contextualize the Gospel is 1 Cor 9:19-23 which states,

¹⁹For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; ²¹to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; ²²to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that even though they had certain privileges in Christ, love

demanded that they be willing to forsake their privileges, become as slaves in order to win others to Christ.

There are two outreach methods that the apostle seeks to emphasize. First, we must identify with the background of the people we are trying to reach with the Gospel. In other words, Paul is stating that if we are to lead a mechanic to Christ, we must be able to communicate with him. That means knowing something about his trade, tools, and challenges. If we are to lead a carpenter to Christ, we must be able to communicate with him and know about his trade, tools and challenges. We must be able to relate to anyone, regardless of culture, occupation, age, race, economic status, opinions, beliefs, gender, or even sexual orientation.

Paul was a Jew and a Roman citizen. Because being a Roman citizen was a title not enjoyed by the other apostles, it assisted him at times in his promotion of the Gospel. This title even assisted him on more than one occasion to escape persecution. However, there were also numerous times when Paul willingly forsook his rights so that he would not put an obstacle in the way of the individuals receiving the Gospel. In 1 Cor 9:12, “If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the Gospel of Christ.”

As stated in the previous 1 Cor 9 passage, Paul writes, “I became all things to all people that by all means I might save some. I do it for the sake of the Gospel that I may share with them in its blessings” (NKJV). I thought about Peter whom I referred to in my introduction. How could I become all things to Peter that I might save him? Was I willing to find opportunities to contextualize for the Gospel’s sake?

Contextualization Through Sensitivity

The second point that Paul emphasizes is that we must remove any obstacle that is in the way of people receiving the Gospel. There are many things that become obstacles to people receiving the Gospel. The obstacles may vary depending upon the individual or situation. Often, secular, materialistic, individualistic culture gets in the way. Sometimes it is insensitivity to other people and subcultures that obstructs the good news. According to Paul, one obstacle can be engaging in something that may be a stumbling block to another. In 1 Cor 8:9, he writes, "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak" (NKJV). Paul expands upon his point in vv. 10-12.

For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. (NKJV)

A person can be caused to stumble by another person doing something or encouraging the first person to do something he believes is wrong. A common concern in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the wearing of jewellery, specifically earrings and necklaces. There have been instances where people wearing large earrings have spoken from the pulpit. People in the congregation have witnessed this and have verbally expressed that the standards of the church have fallen and that they could not see themselves becoming members of a church that allows leadership to wear jewellery. The Bible does not state specifically that earrings and necklaces are not to be worn in the church. The Bible teaches that we are to be modest in our apparel. In Rom 12:1, 2, Paul writes that we need to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, acceptable to God. We are not

are not to conform to the world but rather, be transformed to the perfect will of God. The Bible allows for discretion, because the more important principle is to not be conformed to the world, but transformed to the perfect will of God. This is also the work of a lifetime. If I were to apply Paul's passage to jewellery, I would need to conclude that the wearing of jewellery by a church leader may be a stumbling block to weaker members in the congregation who feel it is wrong.

Another instance where liberty is given away for the sake of the Gospel is found in Acts 16:1-5. This time, Timothy was planning on doing ministry with Paul and Silas. His mother was Jewish but his father was Greek. Paul had Timothy circumcised because the Jews to whom they would be ministering knew his father was Greek. Verse 3 tells us that Timothy was circumcised "because of the Jews" (NKJV). The purpose behind this circumcision was to remove obstacles to their ministry. In this case, it was removing a stumbling block that might harden the hearts of the Jews towards Timothy. Timothy had every right to refuse to do this, but his desire to be used of God was greater than his desire for personal comfort.

Timothy became like a Jew to win the Jews. To the pagans, the Jewish religion was a heavy burden to be borne. The religion of the Jews did not have wings to bring freedom; it became a burden that brought added weight.

Paul and the Law

In 1 Cor 9:3, Paul speaks of the rights he gave up in order to make the Gospel known. He says he gave up the right to food and drink. In chapter 8, he had been talking about food or meat that was offered to idols. Paul had no problem with meat offered to idols, but he cared so deeply for the people for whom Jesus died, that he waited for them

and he strived with them, until they matured in their Christian experience.

Bible scholars still argue over whether Paul believed in the Mosaic laws or not. All we have are his writings and conclusions are drawn from those. In Rom 10:4, Paul says, "Christ is the end of the Law." Andrew S. Kulikovsky writes, "The word translated 'end' (NIV) is *telios*, and could also be rendered as 'goal' or possibly 'fulfilment' and there has been much dispute in regard to how or in what way Christ is the end/goal/fulfilment of the Law" (Kulikovsky, 1999). He observed all the feast days. His writings indicate that Paul knew very well he was not under the law of Moses. However, if winning people under the law meant that he observed their days, feasts, and other practices, he would do it. He says in verse 20, "I myself am not under the law. But I put myself under it. I give up my liberty if by doing that I can win those under the law to Christ" (NKJV).

Contextualization at Mars Hill

In Acts 17:22-34, we find the story of Paul preaching at Mars Hill. In his sermon, Paul respects and admonishes his hearers' faith journey. Verse 22 states, "Men of Athens I perceive that in all things you are very religious" (NKJV). Paul built his appeal on the foundation that was already established. Through Paul's attention to detail that he had observed on his expedition, He was able to share his faith with the men of Athens. His message was not judgemental or critical. He introduced them to the love and mercy of the true God. He gave them hope because of the risen Christ.

Anything Short of Sinning

Paul's central message in 1 Cor 9:19-23 is that he would do anything short of

sinning to win a woman or a man to Jesus Christ. That was his passion. He readily gave up his apostolic privileges. First Corinthians 9 and Acts 17 suggest that Paul gave up his privileges as part of his cultural sensitivity. Paul's only priority was to win people, and to make the Gospel attractive. He was obligated by the law of Christ to lay aside his own personal preferences so that he could serve others. He used his freedom in Christ to be a slave, to adapt his behaviour to the context. His main goal was not to uphold tradition or to fight tradition, nor to side with one ethnic group or another, but to preach Christ and Him crucified.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Contextualization of the Gospel

Ellen White and the Mingling Christ

Earlier in this chapter, I quoted a passage from *Ministry of Healing* (p. 143) which says that Christ's method alone brings true success to the communication of the Gospel. The word "contextualization" was not commonly used during Ellen White's time, although her writings expressed the need for adhesion to its principles. Her writings endorse the model of both Jesus and Paul. She emphasizes that Christ's method will only be employed when men and women develop His passion and His vision. This mindset can only be attained by giving up rights. Paul said that he did this in order to become "all things to all men." According to White, we are in need of individuals who will reach men and women with the passion and vision of Christ.

Christ mingled with men. White wrote that "Christian sociability is altogether too little cultivated by God's people" (1948, p. 172). She says that we are "not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others" (White, 1940, p. 152).

White (1879) also suggests that we need to take every opportunity to teach the things which concern eternal life.

We must be like Christ who was able to communicate through everyday experiences. She writes, “He (Christ) thus bound up His sacred lessons with the flowers, with the recurring seasons, with the rocks, the hills and the mountains, and with the everyday occurrences of life” (White, 1879, p. 209). She says that each person has a ministry and any efforts will be accepted and blessed by God to contribute to each person’s receiving the Gospel. In another article, White (1885) writes, “Each rivulet will help to swell the mountainside stream” (p. 495). She says each of us relates differently to every individual we encounter. There are “little duties” that need to be accomplished, unique tasks that each Christian is given according to the encounters that are laid upon us.

Ellen White and the Self-Emptying Christ

Ellen White instructs that the Christian life is not about gaining praise, but rather, it is about doing a self-emptying labour of love. No one with a proud heart will be able to accomplish it. Christ met each need. The article goes on to share that those He mingled with never left the same way they arrived. Christ relieved their sorrow. She writes, “He was acquainted with each heart, and knew how to minister to its needs. Loving words from His lips to comfort encourage and bless; and the great principles of the kingdom of heaven were set before the multitudes in words so simple as to be understood by all” (1885, p. 495).

The Church Must Be a Means to a Means

Jan Paulson (2006) writes, “We need to move into the future creatively and

without fear, knowing that every human being we encounter on the way is the object of God's saving love. At that time, we must admit that we don't know precisely what God requires in every culture and every situation in order to lift that human being from 'lostness' into salvation" (p. 19). Paulson, who was speaking on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, echoed the ministry of Christ and the teachings of both Paul and Ellen White. The Christian must be open to opportunities to work through situations to share the Gospel with each individual through words and actions. In this article, Paulson refers to the term *contextualization of Adventism*. He writes that the beliefs of Adventism are continually filtered through cultural prisms. There is an obligation to keep the beliefs pure, yet culturally appropriate. Adventism would be vain if it did not recognize that it is not the end, but simply a means by which to promote the Gospel. He writes, "Through our culture and our history we experience life, and this cannot, and should not, be shed. So, within proper limits, contextualization must happen" (Paulson, 2006, p. 20).

Contextualization Through Experiences

Earlier in the chapter we explored how Christ taught humans the way to experience God. As one reads through the material written on the needs of postmoderns, one main point rings true and is echoed through much of the current literature. Postmoderns hunger for experience. Leonard Sweet has written extensively on this very subject. He writes, "Moderns want to figure out what life's about. Post-moderns want to experience what life is, especially experience life for themselves. They want life to explode all around them" (2000, p. 33). The message should be shared gently and at a pace that can be handled by the people. In the book *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, White (1923) writes, "People of every culture 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, and so introduce the truth that may do them good. They must be able to understand and meet their wants” (p. 213).

It must be made unequivocally clear that the Christian desires peace and deeply cares for them as individuals. She admonishes Christians to seek to gain people’s confidence first because there is time for doctrine later. In the book *Evangelism* she writes,

You should *not* feel it *your* duty to introduce arguments upon the Sabbath question as you meet the people. If persons mention the subject, tell them that this is *not your burden* now. But when they surrender heart and mind and will to God, they are then prepared candidly to weigh evidence in regard to these solemn, testing truths. (White, 1946, p. 228.3, emphasis mine)

Ellen White clearly indicated her support for contextualization of the Gospel. She advocated the adaptation of ministry methods to reach various people groups.

Conclusion

A postmodern’s beliefs about the world cannot be compartmentalized. The perspectives that individuals carry about the world are not neat and tidy. Individuals want to know how the Gospel fits into their everyday lives. They are more relativistic than they are rigid, more relational than structured. The world is always shifting and there must be an adaptation to it. We know that Christ made the ultimate sacrifice: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, he made himself nothing” (Phil 2: 6-7, NIV). Christ gave up His privileges as part of His cultural sensitivity. Instead, He chose to relate to people through the natural world. He shifted and adapted to the people He was

ministering to. Jesus contextualized the Gospel through human experience, replacing moral failure with an invitation to a personal relationship with God.

If the methods Christ employed in His day were radical, why are we still seeking to pour new wine into old wine skins? Neither Christ nor Paul sought to condemn individuals or place certain restrictions in their path. As Professor Samraj said, “Point out what is right and what is wrong will be self-evident.” The Gospel must be proclaimed in a way that seeks to encourage, rather than condemn. Ellen White echoed these thoughts many times in her writings.

The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong. Even though the condemnation be just. . . . The work which Christ came to do in our world was not to erect barriers and constantly thrust upon the people the fact that they were wrong.

He who expects to enlighten a deceived people must come near to them and labour for them in love” (White, 1948, pp. 121, 122).

We need to continually reflect on and re-evaluate our methods. If we do not, there is a risk that we will repeat them without getting to the root of the problem. The interaction of both Jesus and Paul with their respective audiences makes one thing clear. The only way that answers can be provided for a searching generation is through creativity and vision that is both culturally sensitive and true to God’s Word.

CHAPTER 3

A REVIEW OF CURRENT RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

Postmodernism is a reaction to modernism. With modernism, knowledge is concerned with having an understanding of the facts. These facts are objective representations of reality. The facts are used to identify the universal laws which are the unifying forces of nature. Knowledge of science increased rapidly as unwavering laws, formulas and mechanics were applied to arrive at anticipated reactions. Testability against the facts was seen as the identifying feature of science. Postmodernism, however, has had its greatest impact in deflating the confidence previously held in selecting the best practice to arrive at a conclusive standard. There is no regularity in techniques for acquiring knowledge. To the postmodern, an over-reaching methodology is rendered impossible by the fragmented nature of discourse-based knowledge. Therefore, the truth is that there is no truth and the rules are that there are no rules.

Current literature and articles will be reviewed in each of the three sections of this chapter. This chapter will build onto the biblical foundation for contextualization of the Gospel in Chapter 2. The first section seeks to understand the currently held worldview of post moderns through the exploration of beliefs and values. The second section will examine ways to connect with young adults through current avenues within the church and lastly, following carefully the pattern of Christ's Method Alone, introduced by Ellen

White. The third section in this chapter will examine the various aspects of the power of visual media within postmodernism.

Worldview of Postmodern Young Adults

Beliefs of Postmodern Young Adults

The worldview of postmodern young adults can be broken down into two areas: beliefs and values. In this section on the beliefs of postmodern young adults, the following areas will be focused on: beliefs about Christians, beliefs about the Gospel, beliefs about the world, beliefs about relationship, beliefs about experience, and beliefs about doctrine.

Beliefs About Christians

Christianity is in a state of confusion. There are a large number of North Americans who profess a belief in God but live like atheists. There are many who say they are Christian, but have no concept of Christian beliefs or discipleship. A quick look around a bookstore will reveal something of the depth of the confusion with spirituality. Books on spirituality and religion can be found in any variety, shape or form. There is a great deal of confusion over how to distinguish between form and fact. However, there are also two distinct characteristics of Christianity which aid in the confusion, namely, Christians who believe in and practice absolute, objective truth, and those who consider themselves Christian and yet have compromised doctrine in order to embrace the postmodern fad of relativity. In the later part of the twentieth century, evangelicals began to notice that Christianity was losing its popularity with the North American population. In the year 1970, a pastor by the name of Bill Hybels modeled the Willow Creek church

after a seeker-sensitive paradigm. It became the fourth largest church in America with a congregation that swelled to 23,000 people. The mission statement is simply “to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.” In 2007 a survey conducted by the group “Reveal” found that mature believers are “expecting the church to feed them.” The survey revealed that mature believers were not being spiritually fed and needed to spend more time with their Bibles so that they could become “self-feeders.”

He went on to say that billions of dollars were spent on programs that they thought would be sought after, and were not, while, “stuff that we didn’t put any money into people were crying out for.” In a 2008 interview with Reveal point leader Bill Hawkins, Hybels states after 30 years of ministering that his congregation has changed from individuals who did not want to participate to more mature believers who seek to explore and who are comfortable engaging in frank religious discussions.

Because of the popularity of this church, many churches copied their particular “seeker” style of worship to attract individuals. Gary Johnson writes that Hybels felt that he could rescue Christian belief and so he applied a business model such as you would find with Disneyworld in order for the church to sell itself and the Gospel. Christianity became just another product and the congregation became the consumers. He writes,

In no time at all, Christianity was dancing to the tune of Consumer desire, and the majority tragedy was Biblical truth. While 45 percent claim to be born again, only about 7 percent show even the most modest knowledge of the core essentials of a Biblical faith. (Gleason, 2008, p. 11)

With a lack of knowledge of biblical faith, a wide range of beliefs can enter the church. David Kinnaman writes that “young people, even in churches are reshaping moral and sexual rules” and that “many young believers are living out their Christian faith with enormous moral laxity” (Lyons, 2008, p. 54). Rather than tackle the idea that

all truth is relative, many churches are joining hands with culture and, in an effort to reach out to postmodernity, are embracing their views. An effort to reach out to the postmodern mind can actually result in confusion over Christianity and its boundaries.

The second characteristic that aids in the confusion is the Christian who both practices absolute truth and exerts that absolute truth on others. They believe in a biblical-doctrinal model. According to Johnson, even though they feel they are relating to the Scriptures both accurately and objectively, many times they are actually relating out of their denominational or religious traditions. It is possible that more damage is done by those who think they have absolute truth than by those who say that truth is relative to a situation. Johnson, who writes against Christianity's trend to conform, also writes that Christians do not have a right to control the truth through our judgments. He writes that our judgments are always subjective and the truth precedes them. "We presuppose it, and we seek to correspond to it. The truth in its binding universality precedes our subjective judgments" (Gleason, 2008, p. 78).

A belief held by post moderns is that the church is both judgmental and negative. Dan Kimball shares experiences of postmoderns' interaction with Christians. In one particular story, he shares how these individuals hate to work on Sundays because that is when all the Christians come into their coffee shop. He says that they are the worst customers. They complain and they criticise others. How many Christians are aware of the impression they are making through their actions or inactions? If the postmoderns already share preconceived notions of God and Christians, does this only serve to further substantiate their claims? Kimball goes on to say that the world's perception is based on seeing Christians involved in protests on abortion, evolution in schools, and

homosexuality. He sees television evangelists telling people that natural disasters are none other than the wrath of God being poured out on sinners.

The church focuses so intensely on the negatives that “today, one of the first questions people new to our church ask, isn’t what denomination we belong to; instead it’s what are we doing for the poor? What are we doing in response to the AIDS epidemic?” (Kimball, 2007, p. 111). As Professor Samraj said, “If we point out what is right, what is wrong will be self-evident.”

In the New Testament we find the story of Zacchaeus, a man that was condemned by his community. Luke 19:7 tells us that everyone had called him a sinner. He was someone who was hated. He had taken handfuls of money at the expense of the poor. John MacArthur writes, “They had no concern for his spiritual welfare. Their self-righteous eyes could see only his sin. They could not understand and would not see that Jesus had come to seek and save sinners” (MacArthur, 1994, p. 101). Jesus refused to sit in judgment on this man but rather focused on the positive. Through his conversation with Zacchaeus inside his home, Jesus was able to give him a better life, both now and eternally. The belief held by postmoderns is that Christians do not foster a culture that contributes to the betterment of human life but rather choose to be intolerant, negative and critical of humanity, accomplished through their adherence to and proclamation of absolute truth.

Beliefs About the Gospel

Many postmoderns are largely unmoved by a presentation of the Gospel. During the enlightenment period, there was an assumption that all knowledge was good. Events of the twentieth century proved that some knowledge brought about evil consequences,

for example, splitting an atom produced the atomic bomb. Our modern tendency is to preach the Gospel as a doctrine to be accepted and believed as truth. Kimball writes, “They do not like to be approached by Christians who ask leading questions to witness to them, putting them on the defensive, and invading their privacy” (Kimball, 2007, p. 99). Postmoderns do not like to be preached at and simply believe. They believe knowledge is something, not necessarily subjective but also rationalized. Knowledge is not universal but specific to each individual. Stanley Grenz writes, “We are participants in our historical and cultural context, and all our intellectual endeavours are unavoidably conditioned by that participation” (1996, p. 166). He says that the Gospel is a story that is filtered through our experiences, our culture, our history and our ambitions. Each person will identify it in their own individual way and no two will have exactly the same encounter.

There are others who believe that the Gospel is presented in a way that distorts its message. The Gospel is reduced to a book of morals which encourages right behaviours. It does nothing more than emphasize rewards and freedom and guilt and shame. Randy Newman agrees with this picture when he writes, “But without the context of God’s holiness, the horror of our sinfulness, the need for repentance and the necessity of the Cross, instead of just a guidebook to better behaviour, we’ll terribly misrepresent the Gospel” (2004, p. 35). We are afraid to disclose that what we really need is for a supernatural God to make a supernatural change in our lives. There is a tendency to downplay the shock and awe of the Gospel in lieu of an agreement that Newman terms as a “benefits package.” That is one belief about the Gospel that seems to be in line with an

earlier stated position. The Gospel can lose its effectiveness in favour of an attempt to advocate moral laxity.

Still others have written that the postmodern believes the Gospel is not something to be engaged in on an individual basis. People do not live in a bubble. People live in a community. People arrive at knowledge of the Gospel within the framework of community. Grenz writes, “Individuals come to knowledge only by way of a cognitive framework mediated by the community in which they participate. Similarly the community of participation is crucial to identity formation” (1996, p. 168). Therefore, not only does the individual gain knowledge as he is shaped by his community, but he also gains knowledge of his community as he shapes his community. To the modern mindset, Jesus died for one; to the postmodern, Jesus died for the community. Chuck Colson comments that the early Christian church did not grow because of conducting evangelistic outreaches or crusades. He states, “The church grew because Christians were doing the Gospel and had a community—a local church where people really loved each other” (Lyons, 2008, p. 87).

The Gospel is holistic. We are not only called to be agents of a saving grace, but Colson also suggests that we must be agents of a sustaining grace. It is essential to lead someone to a knowledge and relationship with Christ, but we must also sustain life by taking a stand against abortion. We must sustain creation by our care for the environment. We must sustain families through our commitment to marriage. We must sustain the hungry and homeless through our care for the poor. We are not called out of our community. A right understanding of the Gospel means that we are called back into our community to labour for its betterment. A right understanding of the Gospel will

produce a Christianity that is known better for what it is, rather than what it is against.

Beliefs About the World

Postmoderns believe that community is vital to everyday life. Community can take many forms. Once an individual purchases a motorcycle, he becomes part of a community of riders. Whenever the bike is ridden, a new world of community unfolds that is expressed through friendly gestures and waves. They seem to share a bond regardless of any prior knowledge of each other. Exclusivity is not appreciated by postmoderns. Postmoderns view denominations as being exclusive and out of touch. Kinnaman shares the following thoughts: “Half of all young outsiders said that Christianity seems like a club only certain people can join” (Lyons, 2008, p. 123). In the same book, another young person said, “Christians enjoy being in their own community. The more they seclude themselves, the less they can function in the real world” (p. 123). The perception is that Christians have little engagement with the world. They seem sheltered and boring. When that perception is contrasted with the reality that today’s young adults are driven by experimentation, it is like trying to mix oil and water.

Young adults are very much involved in community. Their days are spent with cell phones, texting, messaging, and blogging along with other forms of communication. Kinnaman writes, “Their lives consist of an electric patchwork of diversity, perspectives, friendships and passions” (Lyons, 2008, p. 125). How do we bridge the gap between the postmodern community and the Christian community? Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger describe an effort to reshape church and community in an effort to make it more appealing to post moderns. There is a new form of community which identifies itself as *The Emerging Church*. The emerging church recognizes that the traditional church has

lost its effectiveness in engaging the postmodern. Gibbs writes, “Emerging churches may not feel like legitimate forms of church to those that are not struggling with ideas of church practice” (Bolger, 2008, p. 95). Emerging churches can take many different forms. These churches are a community of believers who define themselves by their understanding of the Gospel as proclaimed by Jesus. Emphasis is placed on a people rather than on a building. A gathering place could be a nightclub, where each person is allowed to express himself or herself through hard or soft rock. A group could gather in a shopping mall. Attempts are made to justify this practice by using the argument that individuals are consumers and there is community in the consumption of goods and services. “Communal bonding occurs when individuals consume goods alongside one another. It is at the shopping mall where this connecting occurs, as shoppers buy similar products and share ‘fellowship’” (Bolger, 2008, p. 92).

The church cannot be confined to a building. The church is a movement. There is no boundary between spiritual and physical space. Rather than existing for a specified period of time, a believer identifies himself with Jesus seven days a week over a 24-hour period. This community of believers exists for the purpose of edifying Christ and edifying each other. Church is defined as a communal way of life. “Kenny Mitchell, DJ, and leader of the group, Tribe (New York) also understands church as a communal way of life, not a service per se. Tribe describe itself as being a community that looks out for one another. They don’t have a context for going to church because they are being church” (Bolger, 2008, p. 100).

In the emerging Church, both the Gospel and community are woven together. In fact, the entire Bible is about God’s interaction with community. Grenz writes, “We

must take seriously the discoveries of contemporary communitarians. They are echoing the great biblical themes that the goal of God's program is the establishment of community in the highest sense" (Grenz, 1996, p. 168). Jimmy Long tells us that we were created for community. Eve was created from Adam's side to live in equality and harmony with him. When they rebelled against community, God made the effort to bring restoration back to community. The ultimate scene is played out in the story of the Exodus, in which God leads His people out of bondage and back to Himself. Long writes, "The characteristics of the community consisted of the initiating activity of God followed by the response of the community in worshipping God as deliverer and sustainer. God initiated living among the Hebrews in the tabernacle" (1997, p. 89).

One of the characteristics of this Exodus community was that it was always moving. Therefore it was considered to be a movement rather than an institution. This community was always striving towards a better place with the final destination being the Promised Land.

Beliefs About Relationships

Relationships are essential to the postmodern. They are deliberate and must be rewarding to the individuals seeking them. One of the characteristics of the period of modernity was the elevation of the individual. The modern world was an individualistic world. Emphasis was placed on mission and everyone worked together to complete that mission. Today, many businesses have mission statements posted over their cash registers. Neil Cole writes, "Every leader had a personal mission statement. People were valued by how helpful they were to the mission" (2010, p. 28). Relationships among postmoderns are much more important than missions. The individual might say, "I don't

know what you're about but I want to spend time with you." The postmodern world places an emphasis on post-individualism. People come into knowledge through relationships. This characteristic of postmodernism is evident through the emphasis placed on social networking. Postmoderns connect with each other through blogging, Facebook, skyping, texting, Myspace, and twittering, to name a few.

Christian leaders are recognizing this growing trend and are introducing new ways to reproduce Christian followers by capitalizing on our need for relationships. Neil Cole, author of the book *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* writes, "Today one of the rising trends in the Western church is a move towards networks rather than single congregations or denominations" (2010, p. 93).

Cole describes a model of small house churches. Although he writes in his book that he never mandates small house churches, he says that there are many places that churches meet: parking lots, locker rooms, coffee shops, even strip clubs. He writes, "We do not mandate that the churches remain small. We seek that churches be healthy and reproduce. The reason our churches stay small is because of the dynamic life-changing property of a band of brothers and sisters who are actively on mission together (2005, p. 23). The average attendance is 16, but the application of Neil's message is not limited to organic simple house churches. His book *Church 3.0* puts forward a vision of a new future for existing churches that are seeking to make the transition in how they understand and structure themselves and how they do ministry today.

Cole says that the key to the future is not simply adjusting the church's existing operating system. The thing that is needed is a complete upgrade to an entirely new version of how we define our mission, engage in activities, and make disciples. He goes

on to say that the New Testament Jerusalem Church is the model to be strived for. He labels this as Church 1.0. He views this new style of networking as an extension of an established mainstream church which he labels as 2.0. Church is not a building but church is a relationship that is found when Christ is made common to everyone. He feels that churches are too top-heavy with unnecessary leaders, rules and regulations. In his book, *Organic Church*, he writes, “Unfortunately, in most churches in the western world, the presence of the pastor is more noticeable than the presence of Jesus” (2005, p. 57).

More and more individuals are recognizing and capitalizing on things that are already in existence. The world outside the doors of Christianity demonstrates a society doing business and staying connected to each other. People come into knowledge of Christ through relationships. Evangelistic series lasting for a month to six weeks are attempted; handbills are indiscriminately distributed in mail boxes, yet people who come into knowledge of Christ through a relationship are more likely to embrace Christianity and remain in the church. Cole says that when he is speaking to an audience about the importance of sharing the Gospel through relationships, he always asks a question which drives home his point. He asks those in attendance how many are there who came to Christ through hearing a televangelist speak or stumbled upon a Billy Graham crusade. Very few raise their hands. He comments, “Then I ask them to raise their hands if a close friend, relative, co-worker or classmate showed them the difference Christ can make in a life and showed the Gospel to them. Usually 95 percent of the room will raise a hand at this point. I then ask an important question: *Why is it that we, when we consider ways to reach out to the lost, always plan events rather than using the natural relationship God has already given to us?*” (Cole, 2010, p. 29).

Beliefs About Experience

The postmodern continually searches for new experiences. Developers capitalize on this desire to seize new experiences. Products and services continually change as producers seek to excite and engage consumers. Kinnaman writes, “Young people engage in a constant search for fresh experiences and new sources of motivation” (Lyons, 2008, p. 23). There is no black and white or fixed response. If there is an answer, it needs to be discovered through experience. For example, it is noticeable that young adults are less likely to cast a vote in a federal election. In an article by Anne Milan entitled “Willing to Participate, Political Engagement of Young Adults” in the 2005 journal, *Canadian Social Trends*, a study is described that was conducted of young adults between 22 and 29. Drawing from the results of the 2003 General Social Survey, it was determined that only 59 percent of young adults voted in a federal election as compared with 71 percent of adults between the ages of 30 to 44 year of age and 85 percent of adults over the age of 45. Milan gives a conclusion for the discrepancy between the young adults and the other ranges when she writes,

Some researchers have referred to young people as “engaged sceptics”—interested in political issues, but wary of politicians. (Henn, M., M and D. Wring. 2002. “A generation apart?” Youth and political participation in Britain” *British Journal of Politics and Intergenerational Relations* 4, 2: 167-192.) In other words, they are committed to the tenets of democracy, but tend to be more interested in participative political behaviour and issues which are immediately pertinent to their lives. (Milan, 2005, p. 3)

The article concludes that young adults are sceptical of institutions and leadership. They commit themselves through participation in issues that they find are relevant for their lives. Young people need to have an experience. They must somehow be engaged in the process. Kinnaman writes that “if they are not permitted to participate in the

process, they quickly move on to something that grabs them” (Lyons, 2008, p. 23). The research on vote casting indicates that young adults do not respond in the same way those other age groups do. Information is filtered through experience. The information is processed through community. If young adults feel that that the information is given in a way that does not engage them, they will abandon the process in favour of a new stimulus.

Beliefs About Doctrine

For the postmodern, an understanding of doctrine may come through personal experience. Many see doctrine as confining and restricting. The word doctrine may carry a great deal of baggage for some people. Some have attempted to practice Christianity without doctrine. In His book, *Postmodern*, Tony Jones writes that “many Christian youth workers will say, ‘All that matters is that you love and follow Jesus,’ but that statement itself is doctrine, and it’s a good doctrine!” (2001, p. 150). There are many who are not comfortable with the term “doctrine,” but in order to teach and defend our faith we must practice doctrine. He goes on to tell us that doctrine is a means by which we relate our experiences to each other. We are specifically told, “As we journey together down the faith road, doctrine and theology encompass the ways we talk to each other about what we are experiencing” (Jones, 2001, p. 150). Christians have been using this practice for 2,000 years. They equate doctrine with the language that would be used on the journey.

Values of Postmodern Young Adults

Changing Lifestyle Patterns

Today, many young adults live their lives differently from their parents. While their parents tended to get married in their 20s, a growing number of young adults tend to get married in their 30s. Many complete their education, find an occupation or travel prior to marriage. Many engage in an egocentric preoccupation with discovering themselves prior to allowing others into their lives. A 2005 article written in the journal, *Canadian Social Trends* states, "Both sexes would prefer to marry someone who earns more money and has more education than themselves, and they would be willing to consider someone who is more than 5 years older (age is highly correlated with income)" (Crompton, 2005, p. 3). The article is based on an American study asking what single Americans aged 19 through 35 would look for in a marriage partner. Another survey found that young adults are in no hurry to become adults. In most cultures, marriage was seen as an indicator of a young adult's transition to adulthood.

Census data was compiled between the year 1971 and the year 2001 and brought forward these conclusions: "Young adults are delaying longer their transition to becoming young adults. Young people are living with their parents longer, are more highly educated and attend school for more years than their parents did. The age at marriage has been rising, fertility rates have been falling and the age at which women have their first child has been increasing" (Clark, 2001, p. 13). To some, marriage is seen as unnecessary in a life that is already self-sufficient. In fact, marriage is seen to limit an individual's social involvement and set restrictions on their lives. Children are either not planned for or are brought into the picture much later in a couple's life.

Affiliated but Not Connected

How do we reach those who are not going to church? As indicated by the statistics on the town of Richmond Hill (Appendix C), 59.7 percent of the population of Richmond Hill claim that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination.

Demographer George Barna noted that across Christianity, “the most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twentysomethings—61% of today’s young adults—had been church-ed at one time during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying)” (2006). It is interesting that although they do not attend church, many claim affiliation, yet are ambivalent towards denominational religion. The fact that the majority of the population claim affiliation with Christianity would fall in line with the position of author, Reginald Bibby who notes in his book, *Restless Gods*, “Canadians have shown little inclination to abandon the dominant groups (Christian denominations)—even when those groups frequently given up on them. Psychologically and emotionally people across the country continue to cling, sometimes perilously, to the religious traditions of their youth” (2002, p. 32). Bibby tells us that individuals who were brought into a particular faith still feel a psychological or emotional attachment. The church may have stopped becoming relevant for them. The church may no longer be meeting their needs. The church may not have even realized that they are gone but those that have left still feel a sense of loyalty to them and affiliation with them. Therefore churches have an opportunity to reach out to young adults, gaining a sense of relevancy by providing for their needs.

How to Connect With Postmodern Young Adults

Introduction

A radical change in mindset will be needed for today's churches to reach a postmodern generation. It must be a church that structures itself intentionally around relationships (not programming and institutionalism). It must continually and deliberately place itself in a position that will optimize its effectiveness in connecting with young adults.

An article entitled *Reaching Out, Making a Difference with Young Adults* is a wake-up call for churches. Writer Allan Martin notes that they are disengaged, disenfranchised and disappearing from the church. The future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church depends on them. Martin quotes David Kinnaman of the Barna Group who notes,

The current state of ministry to twentysomethings is woefully inadequate to address the spiritual needs of millions of young adults. These individuals are making significant life choices and determining the patterns and preferences of their spiritual reality while churches wait, generally in vain, for them to return after college or when the kids come. (Barna, 2006)

This sad statement by Kinnaman identifies the church as abandoning young adults, consequently forcing them to navigate their way through life alone. Rather than become proactive in efforts to reach out, the church sits on its proverbial hands. All the efforts the church can muster amount to nothing more than waiting for young adults to return. Martin writes, "Why are young adults leaving? Although the responses may be as diverse and personal as each young adult, clearly the lack of mutually valued relationships that engender trust and shared support have left both parties, young adults and Seventh-day Adventism, at risk of going under" (Martin, 2008, p. 6). Young adults

are all about relationships. They need healthy role models and if they cannot find either in the church, they go looking elsewhere for them.

Connecting Through Small Groups

The greatest example of a small group leader is Jesus. Through this little community of disciples, He was able to build a relationship with them and model for them the way they were to minister to others. When the church ceased to be relevant, Jesus made efforts to restore the image of God through His establishment of community. Church growth consultant Russell Burrill notes, "To Jesus, the essence of church was involvement in community and he could not envision church in our Western individualistic understanding" (1997, p. 52). This point is shared by many postmodern young adults. How does church fit in to this generation?

As I mentioned earlier, large megachurches like Willow Creek recognized that though they were able to attract visitors, the church lacked the ability to retain them. Young adults will not stay attracted unless they are being fed and encouraged to become "self-feeders," that is, learning their Bibles. Small groups can be a setting where people can learn and grow together and hold each other to accountability for continued growth.

For Jesus, church was a journey. He called twelve unlikely people to be His starting community. To build community, they lived, worked, and served others together, following Jesus in His adventures through first-century Palestine. People were not introduced to church through Bible lessons. Their needs were met and they were introduced to a community of tightly-knit supporters. Postmodernism must be addressed through community. Small groups restructure church to meet the needs of postmodern young adults. Small groups have the potential of facilitating a magnification of the

importance of faith, listening to stories, teaching through unforced experience, and modeling concrete realities rather than abstract concepts. A small group is a place where people can put into practice what they are learning, both within their immediate group and outside.

Connecting Through Forward-thinking Leaders

Martin admonishes leaders who make up the Seventh-day Adventist Church to engage young adults and to deliberately seek them out and build relationships with them. He refers to this process by the term “bystanders no longer.” Leaders in the church have the ability to become heroes by recognizing the needs of the youth, the fate of the church, and consequently, turning the tide.

Leaders must be quick to model affirmation. They must show an appropriate level of humility in the face of religious arrogance and a healthy level of criticism to reflect careful consideration of teachings. A group setting can facilitate the unity of faith and knowledge. Jesus, Himself, through His relationship with His disciples, was quick to affirm, to be humble, and to challenge His disciples to consider what they heard carefully.

Connecting Through Clear Requirements

A change in mindset does not, however, mean a change in the understanding of doctrine. Needs can be met, and young adults can be attracted to Christ through an organization that interweaves a love for God and man, an understanding of doctrine; and carries the necessity of service to others. In a May 21, 2009 edition of the *Adventist Review* an article was written on young adult ministry. It states, “Youth and young adults

tend to be drawn to organizations that make clear and positive demands on their membership” (Hopkins, 2009, p. 17).

Connecting Through Radical Conservatism

Earlier in the chapter, an article was referred to entitled, *Modern Versus Postmodern Adventism: The Ultimate Divide?* Reinder Bruinsma, the author of the article, recognized that the church was comprised of these two groups. There is a need in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for both the modern and postmodern members of our church. A healthy understanding and dialogue must be maintained in order to “discover ways of reaching out to both the modern and the postmodern men and women around us” (Bruinsma, 2005, pp. 16-19). Jon Paulien recognizes that the church needs to broaden its approach to include an outreach to the postmodern as well as maintaining a solid walk with Christ. He writes that the Adventist must be both radical and conservative. He introduces the term “radical conservative.” These “radical conservatives have a very unique position. ‘Radical’ means, ‘to meet people where they are, spiritually, culturally, and linguistically’” (2008, p. 87). At the same time, the members must be conservative. “Be faithful to the mission to which God has called Adventists, to handle the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White with great respect” (Paulien 2008, p. 88). He uses the Apostle Paul’s counsel to support his call for Adventists to be radical. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Paul stressed the need to become all things to all people. Paulien tells us that this potentially places a person in a dangerous, but necessary, position in order to reach out to the secular person and whatever circumstances they find themselves trapped in. (Paulien, 2008, p. 88). This was Paul’s admonishment to the believer for the sake of the Gospel.

Connecting Through Christ's Method Alone

Introduction

In His encounters with people, Jesus was not afraid to come dangerously close to secular people and whatever circumstances they found themselves trapped in. The methods that Jesus employed for the purposes of outreach can be described best by Ellen White in her book *Ministry of Healing*.

Christ's method alone will give true success when reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good, He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow me." (1942, p. 143)

From this statement, there are four areas of focus in the efforts to reach postmodern young adults that will be discussed. These areas are mingling, compassion, meeting needs and winning confidence.

Mingling

Making the time to mingle

Making time for others is still a choice despite the time restraints placed on life. The book *The Friendship Crisis* focuses the spotlight on Karen who works 50 hours a week for her company. During busy times, she may work 70 hours with a two-hour daily commute. However, regardless of the work, she still finds time to mingle with her friends a few days a week. She says, "What keeps me sane, what keeps my job in perspective, are the friends in life" (Paul, 2004, p. 20). As individuals are deliberate in their efforts to set aside time for mingling with the lives of others, their lives, in turn, become richer.

Jesus knew the difference mingling would make in the lives of the recipients and

the residual benefits it would make in the lives of those willing to invest their time.

Richard Swenson refers to the term *spontaneous living* in his book *Margin*. He makes this statement: “Christ’s teaching, His serving and His loving were usually spontaneous. The person standing in front of Him was the opportunity He accepted. If He chose spontaneous living, isn’t that a signal to us?” (1992, p. 160).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that we must always be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. People who need our attention continually move in and out of our lives. Swenson’s whole point is that we need to allow margins in our lives, because margins exist so that we can attend to the needs of God’s kingdom. The needs of God’s kingdom are a relationship between us and God, others and God, and us and others.

How to mingle

Again, Marla Paul, in her book *The Friendship Crisis*, provides some idea that might enhance our relationships with people. She writes that one has to pay attention to significant events in the lives of those we seek to mingle with. We need to be willing to make a phone call, to schedule in a visit. We need to be willing to listen and gain their confidence. Someone must be willing to compliment indiscriminately. People are starving for compliments. Performing unexpected acts of kindness will enhance the experience. We need to share significant events with people. If a firm handshake and good eye contact is offered, they will be appreciated. Remembering a name will go even further. People enjoy the experience if the person is positive and free of complaints.

Becoming a change agent through mingling

Jesus was a change agent. *The Barron’s Business Guides: Dictionary of Terms*

defines a change agent as, “a person, whose presence or thought process causes a change from the traditional way of handling or thinking about a problem.” (Friedman, 2000, p. 99). However, I think there is more that can be added to this definition. A change agent lives in the future, not the present. Regardless of what is going on today, a change agent has a vision of what could or should be and uses that as the governing sense of action. To a certain extent, a change agent is dissatisfied with what they see around them, in favour of a much better vision of the future. Without this future drive, the change agent can lose his way. Jesus never lost His way, He was the way. He mingled with people because He loved them and wanted them to experience joy in their journey. In order to effect any lasting change in a person’s life, one must be prepared to lay aside a comfort level, agenda, beliefs, preferences and personal feelings. A change agent will be criticized because of the choices he makes. Paulien writes, “The change agent must be prepared for a great amount of criticism from people not operating at the same level of analytical thinking. Change agents will have to be as patient with fellow believers as we must be with postmodern and modern secular people” (2008, pp. 115, 116). Jesus mingled with tax collectors, met with prostitutes, other sinners and even the despised Samaritans because of their possibilities and eating and drinking with them was one of His means of approaching them and winning them to His fellowship.

During the period of the First and Second Great Awakenings, all of frontier America became a church as ministers of various Christian denominations went out spreading the Word of God. Of these denominations, the Methodists particularly excelled in the practice of circuit riding, as it was called, and it became identified with them more than with any other church. They would not hesitate to go into taverns and

saloons to mingle and even sang hymns using the “whiskey drinking” music of the day. Since the piano players in those taverns did not know any other tunes, these early preachers put God’s words to the drinking songs and saved sinners.

Compassion

Mingling with people is a good beginning, but does not go far enough. If mingling with others does nothing more than establish weather patterns or confirm superficial niceties, it does not model Christ’s methods for outreach. Sympathy is an important aspect of Christian love. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves, and sympathy is a manifestation of such a love. To be able to sympathize is to show true love from the heart. Steve Sjogren has written a book entitled *Conspiracy of Kindness*. He uses the story of the Good Samaritan to make an important point about what he calls beginning to care. He writes, “We can decide to allow our hearts to become sensitive again to the pain of others. God has shaped our hearts to notice the needs that grieve Him” (1993, p. 91). He continues to say that our hearts become hardened towards human suffering over time. God must be sought after to give us His heart toward those we encounter. The heart of the Samaritan was moved over the plight of what he witnessed on the side of the road. His sympathy brought about an immediate response to this man’s suffering. Sjogren continues, “The Samaritan’s heart was sensitive to noticing the pain of others. We would be mistaken to think that the Good Samaritan was just going through life looking for someone to help” (1993, p. 91). Once God has instilled us with compassion, it motivates us to action. Otherwise, sympathy is not sympathy at all. Sympathy always leads to action. If we genuinely feel for another, we act as we would if we were in the same situation. The apostle Paul writes that we “rejoice with those who

rejoice,” celebrating as if it were our victory. We “mourn with those who mourn,” and most importantly, do what we can to remedy the source of pain.

Meeting the Needs of Young Adults

There is a difference between what we think people need and what people genuinely need. If churches do venture out from their sheltered existence, they attempt to minister to the community according to their own agenda. Many people are not receiving help where they need it. Paulien writes that “postmoderns, unfortunately, have proven quite disinterested in our traditional agenda for their souls. They don’t feel that the answers we provide are addressing the questions that matter to their lives” (2008, p. 125).

Ed Dickerson’s book *Grounds for Belief* is a story written from the perspective of one of the characters. The book is set in a coffee shop where young adults get together and talk. The conversations begin from a philosophical angle and then turn spiritual. The reader eavesdrops on the conversations. In one chapter, the distinction is made between how the church views outreach and how the coffee shop views outreach. The church is characterized by the opinion of Sam Snyder, senior pastor of a local church. He is described as not always being able to “distinguish between his opinion and what God might be thinking” (2007, p. 41). His character is cynical and suspicious of the coffee shop. He has heard things about the coffee shop and questions what is being taught there. The main character responds, “It’s not a matter of teaching these people. This is a place where people can feel safe, have some fun and talk about whatever they want to. Safely” (Dickerson, 2007, p. 41). One of the fundamental needs of postmoderns is to feel safe. When people feel safe, they are able to express themselves without feeling judged or criticized. Jesus was able to make people feel safe. He chose to spend the majority of

His time ministering in a way that made people feel safe. It is essential to mingle with people, and when they feel safe they will expose an entry point for ministry. Reginald Bibbey writes that Jesus was able to find an entry point. Jesus was able to respond to “highly diversified needs: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, showing men where to fish, raising the dead, teaching people how to maximize life, making sure there was enough wine at a wedding, telling one person what he needed to experience a rebirth” (Bibby, 2004, p. 72). When Jesus found these entry points, some people chose to follow Him. If the church could model this, it would be more convincing and thus, more effective.

Winning the Confidence of a Young Adult

Confidence is vital to a young adult. A lack of confidence can destroy and an abundance of confidence can empower. It is something that is developed and built upon with time and experience. Unfortunately, it is also a fragile element. Bad experiences can shake a person’s confidence. Many Christians have not contributed to the confidence of young adults; in fact, they have been responsible for their lack of confidence. Dan Kimball shares a story in his book about the day that he ripped pages from his Bible. He shares the experience of having coffee with a young adult at a coffee shop. The man asked him for a Bible. He was so happy that he ran home to get one. Upon returning he leafed through the bible before he gave it to the young man. He says that he was shocked by what he found. Along with certain Scriptures was a commentary. In one place, the commentary stated that sex before marriage was wrong. The man was living with his girlfriend at the time, but that was not the question he was asking about when he asked

e life of Jesus to get to know Jesus’

story and His heart” (Kimball, 2007, p. 102). To get to know Jesus and establish a relationship with Him is the most important step a person can make. To begin with negativity without establishing a relationship with Jesus can lead to a lack of confidence. Kimball continues, “I wish the editors of this new believers’ Bible would have highlighted the joys and first steps of following Jesus. I am all for telling people about sin. But we should do it the right way and at the right time” (2007, p. 103). Jesus came to bring restoration to people beaten down by the world. When an individual experiences God, his level of self-esteem increases. As a relationship with Christ increases in intensity and consistency, he is reassured, soothed, made confident, and made to feel secure because of His closeness.

Young adults can be given hope, because hope builds confidence. Jimmy Long, in his book *Generating Hope, A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation*, writes, “To reach generation X and coming postmodern generations we need to, ‘live in the present from a future perspective.’ We need to live in the present and meet people where they are in the midst of their pain and suffering” (1997, p. 116).

Visual Media

The Impact of Visual Media

The moving picture machine has become a preacher, and its sermons are most effective because they are addressed to the eye rather than to the ear. K. S. Hover, 1911 quoted in the *Silence of Gods* (Joselit, 2009, p. 21).

It was director, Cecil B. DeMille who brought the Bible to life through cinema. He devoted much of his career into translating the Bible into film. His movies were marked by their epic style, big budgets and biblical themes. In an article entitled, “How

Cinema Was the Future of Religious Education,” Jenna Joseit refers to DeMille in this way, “Not only did he devote much of his career to translating the Bible, especially the Old Testament, into film—it was DeMille who directed not one but two extravagant, eye-popping films about the Ten Commandments—but he also extolled the motion picture as the most efficient and effective medium of religious instruction” (Joselit, 2009, p. 21).

The Gospel still seems to be conveyed in many today, though there has been less emphasis placed on the re-creation of Biblical stories and a greater emphasis placed on calling in to question our limited perspectives of reality. Films like *The Truman Show* have caused the audience to question what reality actually is. The film is shot from the perspective of its main character that lives his life not realizing that it is actually a television series being watched by an audience. All of his friends and relatives are actually characters in the script. The viewers watch as he becomes suspicious that things in his life are not actually what they appear. He suffers intense emotion as his artificial world is shattered by reality. Although this film had a great impact upon a significant number of viewers, it did not attract young audiences. Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor wrote, “Peter Weir’s *Truman Show* questioned our limited perception of reality yet inspired far less enthusiasm and obsession from younger audiences” (2007, p. 168). A later-produced film entitled *The Matrix* also questioned one’s limited perception of reality, but in a less obvious way. The emphasis is placed on how reality is questioned rather than what is questioned. The film asks two questions. First, “What is reality?” The second question is, “Do you really want to know reality?” The viewer is asked to look beyond technology and distrust what they have come to know because what is seen is not always real. The main character, *Neo*, is a type of saviour who attempts to save the

viewers from technology and computers. Detweiler and Taylor write, “The Matrix dares viewers to adopt Neo’s enlightened perception. To ensure our future survival, we all must learn to ‘look closer’” (2007, p. 169).

Often combined with the questioning of reality is an intense struggle between the forces of good and evil, ultimately with the forces of good prevailing. Epic films like *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* keeps the viewer both mesmerized and hopeful that a world immersed in darkness and overshadowed by evil will one day be liberated.

One thing is clear. Visual media carries a belief in the transcendent, the unexplainable, and the unknown. Media challenges the viewers to search out life’s deeper meanings. Detweiler and Taylor refer to the year 1999 as “the most spiritually charged era in Hollywood history” (2007, p. 167). An attempt is made to answer theological questions about man’s existence.

Escape From Reality

It’s interesting that during the recession when people were cutting back spending, Cineplex movie attendance was actually increasing. Gene Rodenberry’s *Star Trek* always included the catch phrase, “To go where no man has gone before.” People are anxious to leave their lives behind and escape reality, even if it is only for a short period of time. In an article for CNN, John Sutter wrote, “Observers say struggling people are looking for a \$10, two-hour escape. Box offices saw their best January in history this year, with more than \$1 billion in gross sales” (2009). Young adults make up the greatest portion of movie goers. According to an article by Sharon Dortch, “Adults aged 18 to 24 are significantly more likely than average to go to the movies at least once a month, at 34 percent, compared with 20 percent for all adults” (1996). This article stated that although

movie attendance was highest among young adults, future economic instability would see a decrease in attendance. The earlier article in CNN contradicted this position, and gave evidence to support an increase in over-all attendance. Grenz tells us that the film industry has been the most popular development with postmoderns. He writes, “Filmmaking technology fits the postmodern ethos in that its product—films—gives the illusion of being what they are not” (1996, p. 31).

Positive Impact of Visual Media

Some organizations feel that the media can make a positive impact on young adults. The magazine entitled *What Young People Are Saying*, published by UNICEF, is devoted to the opinions of young people. There is a website entitled *Voices of Youth* which has been in existence since 1985. Youth are invited to access the website and leave comments about how the media has impacted their lives. One comment was left by a 16-year-old male from the United Kingdom. He says that of the 800 youth in his school, 200 to 300 read comic books on a regular basis. There are 800 who watch television, but there are only 50 that watch the news. He asks the question, “What is it that makes young people not want to hear about real life?” (UNICEF, 2006). Based on the responses, the writers of the article observe that the media has a way of influencing young adults to the realities of the world and preparing people for life. Further to that, the article states, “Young people point out that the media can unlock a gateway to social mobility, economic improvement, prosperity and creativity” (UNICEF, 2006).

The Negative Impact of Visual Media

The media has the ability to both awaken young adults to the reality of life and

lull them into a false sense of reality, projecting stereotypes and artificial norms and values. Although the media has the ability to cause young adults to question reality, it can also have a negative impact on their lives. On the website *Voices of Youth*, the following comment was left by a 19-year-old girl in answer to the question, “*How does the media impact your life?*” Media is the most influential thing in our lives. It tells us how we should look, dress, act, etc. Media has become a ‘how to live our life guide.’ It’s like our modernized Bible. Everything we see, read or hear we follow” (UNICEF, 2006). Young adults are not fully developed. They are on their way to becoming something else, something finished. The influence of the Media can greatly impact young adults while they are in this developmental stage. Media has been instrumental in shaping a young adult’s attitudes and beliefs about tobacco, his proper weight, dress, violence and social norms. The media has been responsible for defining gender roles and gender construction. David Buckingham and Sara Bragg write, “The media figure as sources of negative stereotypes and limiting images of masculinity and femininity imposed on young people” (2004, p. 71). They go on to say that young adults find their own identity based on their favourite television or movie characters. How these characters relate to particular issues, people and situations determine young people’s own masculinity or femininity. The media does not necessarily reinforce pre-existing gender identities but rather, determines them. Therefore, women will like romance and men will like action and shooting. Many programs and movies can push young adults into stereotypes by portraying men as womanizers and females as sensitive and romantic.

The media has also been blamed for contributing to violence among youth and young adults. An article entitled *The Impact of Electronic Media Violence: Scientific*

Theory and Research labels the impact of media violence as a health risk slightly less than the threat of cigarette smoking's contribution to cancer. The article states that research has been accumulating since the 1960s. Although the media is not being labelled as the single cause of aggression in youth and young adults, it is seen as a major contributor. The article is based on a compilation of other studies. L. Rowell Huesmann states,

The best single predictor of violent behavior in older adolescents, young adults, and even middle-aged adults is aggressive behavior when they were younger. Thus anything that promotes aggressive behavior in young children statistically is a risk factor for violent behavior in adults as well. (2007, p. S7)

He writes that the media creates virtual experiences for the viewers as they are continually being exposed to violent situations. The violent situations provide arousal. The viewer observes the stimulus and not only becomes excited, but develops patterns and beliefs which influence his future interactions in the real world. Media violence primes later, potential aggression. Aggressive and violent attacks are mimicked or copied as have already been demonstrated with school shootings and other violent crimes that appear in the news and television, and even in video games.

The media can also have a negative impact on the formative years. What is observed is long remembered afterwards. What is right and what is wrong become difficult to distinguish. Huesman writes, "As children mature further, normative beliefs about what social behaviors are appropriate become crystallized and begin to act as filters to limit inappropriate social behaviors" (2007, p. S8).

The media contributes to desensitization. Long term exposure to suffering and violence in virtual programs limits the emotional response to reality. He tells us that repeated exposure to gory and violent scenes decrease one's level of discomfort and

emotional responsiveness. He then concludes that “experiments unambiguously show that viewing violent videos, films, cartoons, or TV dramas or playing violent video games ‘cause’ the risk to go up that the observing child will behave seriously aggressively toward others immediately afterward. This is true of preschoolers, elementary school children, high school children, college students, and adults” (Huesman, 2007, p. S10).

At best, the media contributes to the promotion of idleness and the wandering of the mind without the processing of experiences. Today, conversations reflect the impact that media can make. Television episodes such as *Seinfeld*, characterized as the “show about nothing,” came to be loved by millions and consistently ranked as one of the best television shows in history. Music Television, or MTV, through its videos, encourages people to wander aimlessly. Jon Paulien uses the term “stream of consciousness” to describe a person’s ability to wander from experience to experience without any apparent direction. He writes, “Unless you give a conversation some direction most people today will wander all over the place and not even realize that the conversation is going nowhere” (2008, p. 149). People today need to be given a positive direction for their lives. He goes on to write that “the big concern of most young people today is that they do not know what to do with their lives” (2008, p. 141).

The Gospel Can Reach the Postmodern Through Media

The *Oprah Winfrey Show* is a good example of postmodernism expressed through popular media. The influence of the *Oprah Winfrey Show* is hard to understate. Marcia Nelson has written a book entitled *The Gospel According to Oprah*. The book highlights certain characteristics that Oprah has which appeals to her postmodern

audience. Among these characteristics is Oprah's ability to listen to the needs of her guests and audience. She responds by addressing topics that appeal to the public like dieting or home makeovers.

She uses simple language that is easy to understand. Nelson tells us that her words are simple, backed by her experiences and her own reflections on that experience. She summarizes experiences and makes recommendations about things that will benefit others. Through her experiences, she becomes real and people feel that they can both trust her and relate to her. Nelson writes, "Oprah taps into nagging dissatisfactions. She offers to transform your own unhappiness into happiness. Her own failures and overcoming have made her successful" (2005, p. 2).

Oprah had the world's attention in 1996 when, after hearing about Mad Cow disease during a conversation with former cattle rancher Howard Lyman, she exclaimed, "It has just stopped me from eating another burger!" (Lyman transcript, 1996). Oprah was able to make a statement about lifestyle during a simple conversation.

Nelson tells us that Oprah continually challenged people to become better than they were through the use of her own experiences and visions of possibilities. Her conversational tone and penetrating questions convinced them that this vision could become reality. Nelson writes, "For many people this vision provides a reason to get up in the morning" (2005, p. xix).

The Gospel can be successfully conveyed through the imaginative use of the media. The media can be a means by which Christ is both portrayed and demonstrated. Both components are essential. Oprah has been effective at identifying and reaching people's needs through human kindness, but there is an absence of Christ. Therefore,

results can only be temporary. Christianity can go a step further with the portrayal of Christ and the demonstration of Him. Even though Christ cannot be touched or seen, He can still be demonstrated.

Oprah's model does affirm that in order to be an effective witness, Christ can be both demonstrated and portrayed through the media. There is simply no way to spread the good news of Christ without personally, locally and relationally demonstrating Him. The message needs to be simple, yet compelling. It needs to contain experience and recommendations about life. It needs to address nagging dissatisfactions about life. It needs to allow freedom to explore and develop. Jesus worked for the betterment of the human condition, both for the here and now and for eternity. Jesus made no assumptions or expectations, but provided a simple message that "provided a reason to get up in the morning."

Conclusion

The media can be used to make a positive impact upon an individual's life to awaken him to the realities of the temporal and provide direction for lifestyle changes. The Gospel cannot be watered down; it must be translated into the language that meets the needs of the postmoderns. The media is a powerful channel through which the Gospel can be presented. It must be recognized that popular film and television icons are successfully reaching postmodern secular audiences. The positive features that appeal to postmoderns need to be utilized.

Every human being has a natural aversion to the Gospel. Through the principles demonstrated by Oprah and others, trust can be gained and barriers can be broken down.

Would the apostle utilize the skills of modern media moguls? Paul writes, “Now this I do for the Gospel’s sake.”

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will consist of seven sections. The reader will first be given a profile of the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church with an emphasis on its past history and current condition. Secondly, the reader will be given a profile of the community of Richmond Hill with an emphasis on religion, age and income distribution. Thirdly, the lack of effectiveness in reaching out to young adults will be commented on along with a proposed solution. Fourthly, a description of the Experiencing the Joy program will be given. The fifth section will describe a comparative study that will be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks with a group of young adults. The sixth section will discuss how the Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks will be initiated within the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The seventh section will discuss how other pastors in neighbouring districts will implement the Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks.

A Profile of the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church

History

A brief history of the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church was provided by the current church clerk, Shirley Ernstberger. The first pastor, Lawton Lowe, held an

evangelistic effort at the Lions Hall on Centre Street in Richmond Hill from September 27, 1959 to November 29, 1959. On December 12, 1959, regular Sabbath Services were held in the afternoon at the Masonic Hall on Crosby Avenue in Richmond Hill.

The Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized on April 16, 1960 with 26 members. The Cornerstone Ceremony for the present church building took place on August 29, 1962 and in September 1962; services were transferred from the Masonic Hall to our present building. The membership had grown to 102 members. The church was dedicated on May 24, 1969 with a membership of 110 (increased to 112 by year's end).

The church has been led by 14 different pastors since its inception. The average term for a pastor is three and a half years.

Current

There are 90 members at the present time on the church books. The average attendance estimated over the last three months is 86. At least ten percent of that number is comprised of regular visitors, with approximately three percent being first-time visitors. The average age is 46 years. It is a multicultural congregation, represented by 50 percent Caucasian, 30 percent Jamaican or Trinidadian, and the other 20 percent made up of Chinese, European, East Indian, and so forth. Approximately 15 percent are young adults. Approximately 18 percent are children 12 years old or under. Approximately 14 percent are over the age of 60, with the remaining 53 percent of the congregation falling between the ages of 35 and 60.

Richmond Hill Demographics

As of a 2006 Census by Statistics Canada, The City of Richmond Hill has a population of 162,704 people. The Mother Tongue, which refers to the individual's first language at birth, is recorded in the first table of Appendix C. The majority tongue is English, representing 44 percent of the population. The next largest group is Cantonese, representing 10 percent of the population. Appendix C indicates the breakdown of self-reported ethnic populations as indicated by the Canada 2006 Census.

Religious Affiliation

The second table in appendix C shows the self-reported religious groups operating in Richmond Hill according to the 2006 Census data. The table indicates that only 19.1 percent of the population has reported that they have no religious affiliation and 59.7 percent of the population reported that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination. This does not mean that they currently attend church or necessarily will in the future. This does not mean that they do not attend church. The remainder of the population is affiliated with religions other than Christianity.

Age Demographic

According to Census Canada, 2006, the most recent report gave a breakdown of the population of Richmond Hill. Table 3 of Appendix C indicates that young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 years of age make up a little over one-fifth of the population of Richmond Hill. The table indicates that there are 14,585 males and 14,545 females. Both groups make a combined total of 29,130. The population of Richmond Hill as reported by Census Canada in 2006 is 161,695.

Income Distribution

Richmond Hill is often referred to as “Rich Man’s Hill.” According to Appendix C, table 4, the income distribution indicates that 42.62 percent of families living in Richmond Hill have incomes of 100,000 dollars or over. In 2005, the average full-time wage was indicated to be 63,225 dollars.

Lack of Effectiveness in Reaching and Retaining Young Adults

The Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been effective at reaching young adults with the Gospel. Over the last two and a half years, 90 percent of those coming into membership through baptism or profession of faith have been over the age of 35. Of those 10 percent, most are no longer attending the church. An e-mail was received from one of the young adults explaining why she and her husband are no longer attending. This twentysomething woman wrote,

Hi Pastor,

I have been thinking a lot about taking part in the church and I think at this time, I’m not able to juggle everything. There is too much going on in my life right now and unfortunately I cannot seem to make church a top priority. Things were going so well for me at one point but I have to admit that my connection to God is wavering. I would just like to say I’m sorry about having to give up on my duties and feel as though I am letting people down.

I’m also thinking about trying some other churches out. I have been at _____ for so many years and since coming back after graduation I do not feel a connection to the church as before. I guess it is also hard because there is not a good young adult’s group at the church. I’m just asking to have you pray for me so that I can find my way. It is also hard because my husband is not religious at all.

I would still like to keep in contact though. I hope we can keep e-mailing each other.

There are many more that have not written letters, but no doubt share the same sentiment. According to this letter, one of the concerns is that there is no

young adult group in the church. The church is in desperate need to develop a strategy to reach out to our young adults and keep them connected to Christ. A comparative study will be conducted in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church to determine if the program will be accepted or not. If the program is accepted, a young adult group, using the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* will be implemented in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks

The series is based on the idea that there exists a broken relationship, and God is trying to re-establish a relationship with us. *Experiencing the Joy* is designed to be used with small groups. There are individual media presentations along with a workbook. The combination of small group, media presentation and discussions make for a richer experience than the previous traditional Bible lessons. *Experiencing the Joy* is a series of 42 Bible talks. A combination of 42 media presentations or video clips is used. The accompanying workbook has its contents divided into 12 areas. They are about essentials; about sin and evil; about faith, love and salvation; about hope; about mankind; about the Holy Spirit; about management; about spirituality; about prediction; about new lifestyle; about church; and about community. These areas are further broken down into 42 written presentations. They correspond with the media presentations. The series was edited by Miroslav Pujic, Director of the Centre for Postmodern Studies and Sarah Asaftei, Assistant Director. There are 16 contributing authors. The introduction of the workbook describes the categories these contributing authors fall into.

People who have engaged in scholarly enterprise and research; people who have sought to integrate the whole of their belief system into twenty-first century living; people who have, through leadership, learned to reflect on the graceful application of

doctrine in addition to its veracity. (*Experiencing the Joy: 42 Bible Talks*, 2010)

The Bible talks have been reworked in order to address the needs, learning style and sensitivity of postmodern young adults. The contents of the talks correspond with the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The information has not changed, but the way the information is presented has changed. The information has been contextualized and presented in a framework that seeks to offer the participant a “journey through the Bible, revealing ancient principles that, if accepted and applied, have the power to immensely improve the quality of your daily living and enable you to lead a richer, fuller, more meaningful life and experience genuine joy” (*Experiencing the Joy: 42 Bible Talks*, 2010).

Both series will be conducted in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The population group will consist of both men and women age twenty through thirty-five, either attending or not attending church, either members or non-members.

Comparative Study of a Traditional Bible Study With the *Experiencing the Joy* Study

The Proposed Process of Implementation

The purpose of this project dissertation is to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Experiencing the Joy* video presentations at the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, in reaching postmodern young adults. Young adults and older adults will be taken through one lesson from each of two Bible study series. One will utilize traditional Bible studies and the other will use the *Experiencing the Joy* video series. One segment of the *Experiencing the Joy* video clip series and one segment of the traditional Bible study series will be completed by the participants. Both the *Experiencing the Joy* series

and the traditional Bible study series will contain the same doctrinal topics.

At the conclusion of each series, the participants will be asked to fill out a survey that determines the effectiveness of the approach in connecting with the target audience and connecting them to Christ. The questionnaires will be analyzed to determine if one of the approaches connects better with the participants and connects them better to Christ. Personal observations will also be made of each of the candidates as they participate in the series.

The standard group will go through the *Experiencing the Joy* series; the control group will go through traditional Bible studies. Postmoderns are very visually oriented and place an emphasis on the need for experiential learning. Thus, *Experiencing the Joy* series is expected to be more effective in connecting with postmodern young adults and connecting them to Christ than a traditional Bible study approach. It is hoped that this project may give pastors the knowledge of how effective the *Experiencing the Joy* program has been in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The subjects will be recruited by both personal invitation and in response to advertising placed in the church bulletin. The group will be invited to participate in two presentations. One set of presentations will be *Experiencing the Joy* series. The second set will be run as a control group. The second set of presentations will be guided Bible studies. After the presentations, the group will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. A comparison between the *Experiencing the Joy* video clip group and the control group will be made.

Description of the Actual Project Implementation

Sunday afternoon, September 12, 2010, was chosen for the date of the testing.

Participants were invited by advertizing in our church bulletin and word of mouth by members and non-members to participate in the evaluation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* and the traditional Bible study lesson. The evaluation began at 11 am and continued until 2 pm. The hall attached to the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church located at 210 Elgin Mills Road West in the City of Richmond Hill, Ontario, was used. There were a total of 27 individuals that attended to participate. During the three hours a lunch was provided.

There were two groups of individuals. The first group was comprised of 14 young adults between the ages of 20 and 35. The second group was comprised of 13 older adults between the ages of 36 and 74.

The purpose of extending an invitation for the second group of adults ages 36 to 74, was to ascertain whether these individuals would be supportive of the *Experiencing the Joy* program or not. This would be based on their responses to the statements on the survey. Since this group makes up the bulk of the membership for most churches, and represent the bulk of financial contributions, it is imperative that their support be established for the implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy* program.

Both groups began with the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talk* entitled, “*God’s Word to Me.*” After reading through the workbook and then watching a three minute video clip, both groups were further divided into small groups to discuss the lesson and video clip. After both groups complete their discussions, all participants will complete the surveys. The surveys were collected by the head elder.

Both groups of participants continued the project by completing the study entitled, “*How to Understand the Bible*” of the Bible Study Guides entitled, *Search for Certainty.*

Participants read the questions and corresponding Bible verses and fill in the blanks.

Participants from the young adult group ages, 20 to 35 took turns reading the corresponding Bible verses which provide the answer for each of the questions. At the conclusion of the lesson, each participant of both groups was given a survey to complete. The surveys were collected by the head elder.

After the completion and collection of the surveys the participants were thanked and dismissed. When leaving, I was given two brown envelopes containing the returned surveys that represented the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talk* and the *Search for Certainty* programs.

The Questionnaires

The questionnaires are the main tool for the collection and comparison between the two studies, namely, the *Experiencing the Joy* study, and the *Traditional Bible Study*. The questionnaire will be filled out by the participants after they have participated in the assigned study. The questionnaire is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation. There will be one presentation of each of the two studies for the participants in the groups. At the conclusion of each series, the participants will be asked to fill out a survey that determines the effectiveness of the approach in connecting with the target audience and connecting them to Christ. The questionnaires will be analyzed to determine if one of the approaches connects better with the participants and connects them better to Christ. Please see Chapter 5 for a reduplication of the Interview Questions.

**Implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*
in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church**

A young adult group was started on November 27, 2010 in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, meeting Sabbath afternoons from 1 pm until 2:30 pm. We begin with soup and buns that my wife prepares. We eat and fellowship and then begin by going through the lesson together from the hard cover lesson book. Once we have gone through the lesson, discussing any key thoughts, we watch the video clip. There is usually an accompanying question at the conclusion of the clip. We discuss it in the remaining time.

**Implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*
in Other Districts in the Ontario Conference**

Currently there are three districts besides Richmond Hill that are currently implementing the Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks. Pastor Moon is the pastor of the Kitchener Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kitchener, Ontario. He is implementing the talks with a young adult group at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo Ontario. Pastor Rob Zama is an associate pastor of the College Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oshawa, Ontario. He is implementing the Talks with the grade 8 students at College Park Elementary School. There are some high school students from neighbouring Kingsway College who are attending as well. Pastor Garth Dottin is an associate pastor with the Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Willowdale, Ontario. He is implementing the Talks with his young adult group. Refer to Appendix A for more information on current and future implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATIONS

Introduction

This chapter accomplishes four objectives. First, this chapter shares the results of the comparisons between the *Experiencing the Joy* survey and a Traditional Bible Study survey. Secondly, this chapter identifies the results of the implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* into the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thirdly, this chapter shares the results of the implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* into other neighbouring districts within the Ontario Conference. Fourthly, this chapter evaluates the two Bible study guides by listing the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally, the last section provides a summary.

Survey Results

Young Adults Ages 20-35

The Personal Assessment Questionnaire given to young adults was administered to determine which of the two studies, *Experiencing the Joy* or *Search for Certainty* was better received by the young adult participants. The purpose of administering the Personal Assessment Questionnaire to the older adults was to determine their supportiveness for the *Experiencing the Joy* program. Fifteen statements were listed in the Personal Assessment Questionnaire. An identical Questionnaire was administered

following each of the two presentations. Using the same questionnaire allows survey preference to be compared within the context of how young adults and older people think. Therefore direct comparisons are cast within the cognitive framework of the survey audience.

The Personal Assessment Questionnaire was administered in the following way. For each respondent the ranked response (1-5) for each question was counted, taking into account their status (1-4): status 1, member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; status 2, affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church; status 3, affiliation with another denomination; status 4, having no affiliation with any denomination. The Bible Study method used was also ranked, either Method 1 (*Experiencing the Joy*) or Method 2 (*Search for Certainty*). Below is a survey that the participant would have responded to.

Please Begin by circling the appropriate age category

20 – 35 36 – 45 46- 55 56 -65 66 – 74

Please circle one of the following statements that best reflects your status.

1. I am a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
2. I have an affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church
3. I have an affiliation with another denomination
4. I have no affiliation with any denomination

Please take a few moments to answer the questions below. Please circle the number that best reflects your response to the following statements.

1. My understanding of this doctrine of the church has become clearer.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I connected extremely well with the study.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. My relationship with Jesus has improved as a result of this study

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I find the study relevant and practical for my everyday life.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. My relationship with the church has improved as a result of this study.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I feel others would benefit as a result of this study.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I feel this study effectively launched into discussion.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. I feel this study would appeal to young adults not attending church.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I would feel comfortable inviting others to join this study.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. God has become more relevant to me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. I was very engaged during the study.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I feel the study was well formatted.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I would enjoy participating in future presentations in this series.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. I feel the group discussion contributes positively to the study.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. I would encourage the use of the series connected with this study as a means of outreach.

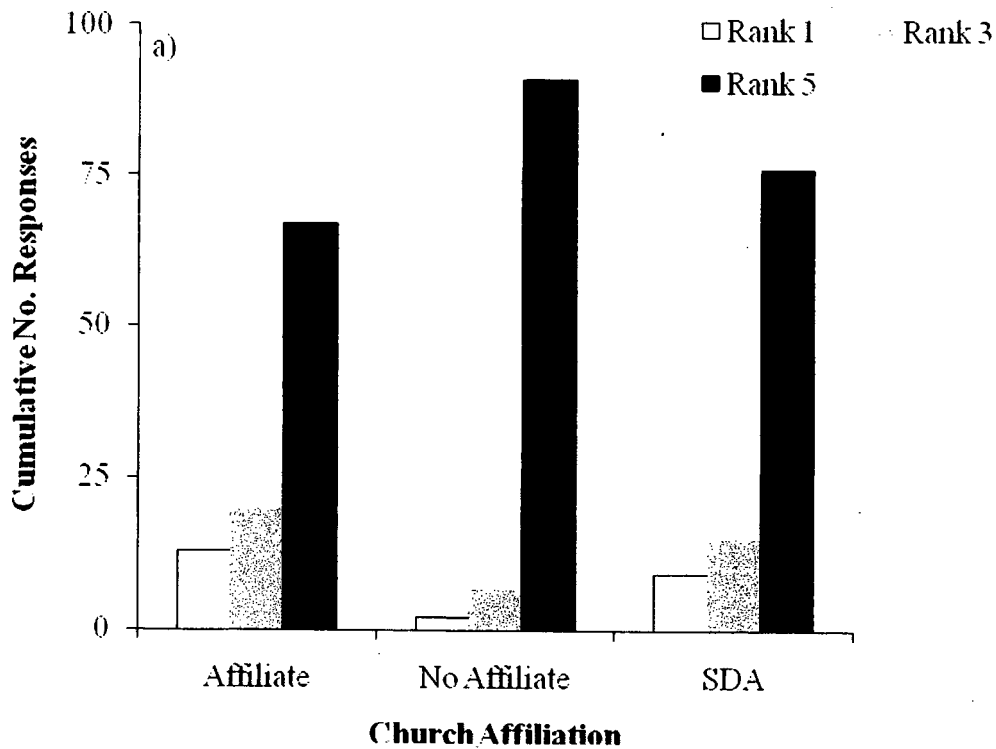
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

I used a chi-square analysis to compare counts of the number of young adult respondents that ranked (1, 3, 5) each question in relation to Bible study survey type and respondent status (1-4). A chi square analysis tests a hypothesis to determine how closely it fits reality. Once a hypothesis, or expected frequency is established, it is compared with the observed values. The observed values are the values, from the data collected that are gathered. The outcome of the chi-squared analysis is to determine the difference between the expected frequencies versus the observed frequencies. The result of this test is called frequency distribution. The outcome determines if the hypothesis fits reality or if the outcome is determined to be by chance. In chi-square analyses, young adults seemed to demonstrate Bible study preferences that were related to their level of church affiliation for the *Experiencing the Joy* and *Search for Certainty* Bible study methods in Figure 1 and Figure 2 as seen on pages 84 and 85.

There were no participants who selected status 2 (affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church) so I only used three columns. For the purposes of this analysis, I grouped disagree and strongly disagree together to correspond with the ranking of 1. The selection of "not sure" is equal to the ranking of 3. I grouped the selection of agree and strongly agree to correspond with the ranking of 5.

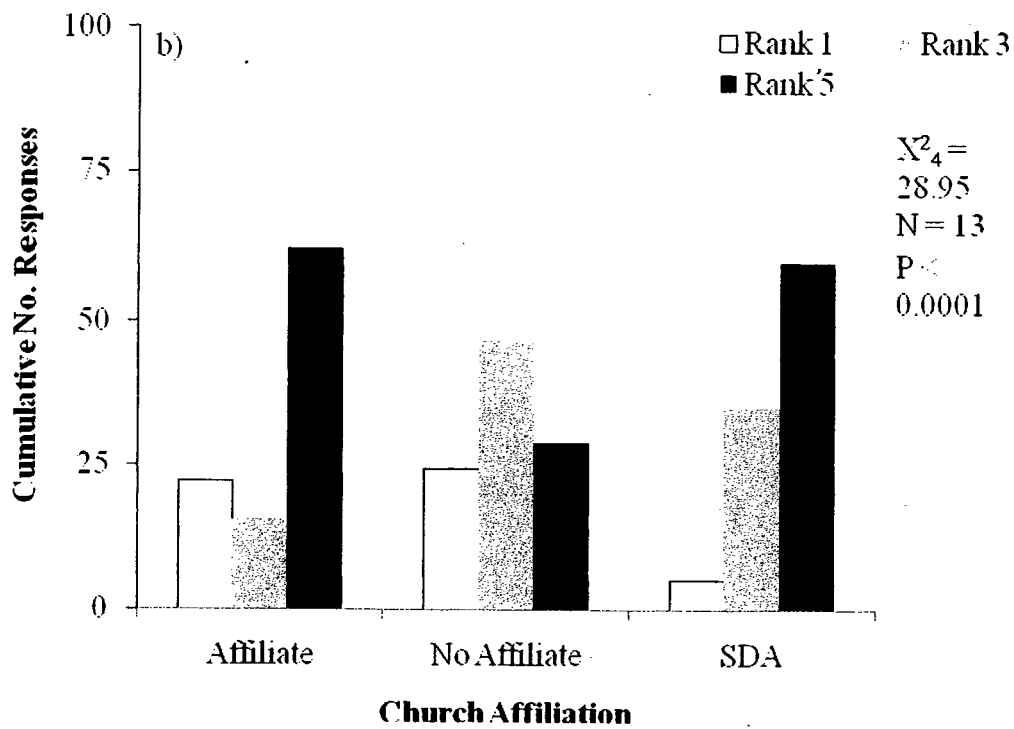
If respondents age 20-35 years old exhibit no preference for one particular Bible study method then the rankings of each method would not be significantly different from random. Young adults with no religious affiliation tended to prefer Method 1, *Experiencing the Joy* 91 percent of the time, although this difference was not statistically significant. Young adults with no religious affiliation seemed generally neutral towards Method 2, the *Search for Certainty* Bible study method (46.7%). In contrast, Seventh-

day Adventist youth ranked Method 1 and Method 2 with “5” in 75.8% and 60% of instances, suggesting this demographic did not have strong preferences between the two Bible study methods examined (Figure 1 and Figure 2). I recognize that these results are suggestive due to limited sample sizes.



	Affiliate	Non-Affiliate	SDA
Rank 1	13	2.2	9.2
Rank 3	20	6.7	15
Rank 5	67	91	75.8

Figure 1. Method #1: *Experiencing the Joy* study.



	Affiliate	Non-Affiliate	SDA
Rank 1	22.2	24.4	5
Rank 3	15.6	46.7	35
Rank 5	62.2	28.9	60

Figure 2. Method #2: *Search for Certainty* study.

The survey results suggest that the *Experiencing the Joy* study and the *Search for Certainty* study are equally preferred by Seventh-day Adventist young adults. The data suggests that young adults with no church affiliation generally prefer the *Experiencing the Joy* study over the *Search for Certainty* study.

Survey Response

The *Experiencing the Joy* Studies appear to be more acceptable to the participants with no religious affiliation with any denomination. In fact they answered agree or strongly agree twice as often on the survey attached to the *Experiencing the Joy* study than they did on the survey attached to the *Search for Certainty* survey. The Seventh-day Adventist young adults also answered strongly agree or agree more often to statements on the *Experiencing the Joy* survey as opposed to the *Search for Certainty* survey.

Older Adults Ages 36-74

Introduction

The focus of my research was to determine if the young adults in the project would respond more favourably to either the *Experiencing the Joy* study or the *Search for Certainty* study. The purpose of the presence of the older adult participants was simply to determine if they would respond favourably to the *Experiencing the Joy* series. Since individuals aged 36 and over are the financial supporters of the church, their agreement or disagreement with the *Experiencing the Joy* study would likely determine its implementation in the local church.

Results

I used a binomial test to compare the ranks of the two Bible study methods for the older adult (ages 36-74) age cohort. The binomial test compares two possible outcomes. In this case the test compared those who “liked” the test with those who “did not like” the test. All older adult participants were Seventh-day Adventist members. Results showed that older adults strongly preferred both methods. This means that older adults liked both

methods. Again, the categories Agree and Strongly Agree were compiled into the Strongly Agree category. The categories Disagree and Strongly Disagree were compiled into the category Strongly Disagree. So I analyzed the older adult data using a binomial test, comparing the number of respondents who ranked a given method as 1 (i.e., not like) or 5 (i.e., like a lot). There can only be two possible outcomes in a binomial test. Expected counts are compared with observed counts. For expected counts I used 0.50 (i.e., equal distribution of like/no like assuming random choice).

Method #1: observed successes = 169; total = 195; binomial $P < 0.0001$.

Conclusion: adult SDAs preferred method #1 more often than by chance alone.

Method #2: observed successes = 159; total = 195; binomial $P < 0.0001$.

Conclusion: adult SDAs preferred method #2 more often than by chance alone.

In Ministry

Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church

On November 24, 2010, the *Experiencing the Joy* Bible talks were implemented in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church with a young adult group consisting of four participants, with one non-member attending. However, the young adults enjoyed the approach so much that they invited their friends. One week later the group expanded to ten young adults, which included several non-Adventists.

As of this date, March 5, 2011, the numbers of young adults participating in the group have consistently above nine. The Ontario Conference has set this year aside as The Year of Youth Evangelism. The young adults are using the meetings as a form of evangelism to attract other young adults.

College Park Seventh-day Adventist Church

On December 16th, 2010 Pastor Zama reported that he is using the program with the Grade 8s at College Park Elementary School and a few high school students from Kingsway College. He began with two and now has 20 participating in the program. He finds the material very appropriate for the age group that he shares with. Rob Zama's full report is found in Appendix B.

Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church

Associate pastor Garth Dottin, implemented the Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks with his young adult group January 8th, 2011. There are currently over twenty young adults attending. Some are baptized and some are not. Garth Dottin's full report is found in Appendix B.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Experiencing the Joy Program

The *Experiencing the Joy* series is available from the Adventist Review and can be ordered through the Adventist Book Centre. There is a hardcover workbook which houses the 42 Bible Talks along with a 3-DVD set containing the vignettes accompanying the Bible Talks. The use of video clips to accent each of the 42 Bible presentations is the preeminent factor that distinguishes this Bible study series from others currently available. The video presentations are short, each being only a few minutes in length. The video presentations model social networking whereby three individuals, through their interaction, make a point coinciding with the message contained in the accompanying book. Often the point is made through a skit presented in

the video clip. The use of these clips leave a visual impression that enhances the “Bible Talk” contained in the pages of the accompanying book.

The material is relational. The *Experiencing the Joy* series works well with small groups. Each video clip is a catalyst that launches into discussion. Often a point is made or a question is asked at the end of the video clip which can be discussed by a group. The accompanying textbook also contains material that can be discussed within the context of a group.

The additional video and discussion engage the right hemisphere of the brain. The short term results engage the participant more fully and generate creativity and enthusiasm. This approach also widens the spectrum of individuals to which our evangelism appeals. The long term results is a foundation created for members who are more committed and engaged than members from previous generations. In the October 1991 edition of *Ministry Magazine*, Saustin Sampson Mfune wrote, “Generally, the Adventist style of worship and methods of public evangelism strongly reflect LB strengths (reality based and temporal). This leads me to wonder whether we haven’t narrowed the spectrum of people to whom our services appeal, thus making them less effective than they could be.” He continues and I quote, [It has] “encouraged the development of the predictable format of worship that has in turn resulted in the youth and perhaps the adults viewing the church as meaningless, lifeless, boring and lacking in warmth and fellowship” (Mfune, 1991, p. 28). Even more startling is his assertion that this left brain thinking has contributed in a “trend towards secularism” (Mfune, 1991, p. 28). The *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* are refreshing because they engage the right brain as well as the left and have the potential to contribute to producing a member that is

actively engaged in the all aspects of the church, including its development and growth.

The textbook contains information on a particular subject that gives sufficient background to the topic. The topic is presented in story form and the information is easily readable. Bible verses are presented fully within the text, eliminating the need to be embarrassed by trying to search for a passage of scripture that has been presented in support of a subject. Therefore, the information can be easily understood by an individual without a religious background.

The material is relevant for this culture. *Experiencing the Joy* makes it easier for an irreligious person to transition to a Christian lifestyle. The Gospel is made relevant by highlighting its relation to situation, lifestyle, history, culture and a host of other scenarios. For example, an entire section of the book, *Experiencing the Joy*, entitled “About New Lifestyle” addresses areas including, music, worship, dress, living arrangements, health choices and finances. Lifestyle is expanded upon to address current situations the individuals would encounter on a regular basis. The participant is shown how culture affects habit which in turn affects faith. In Chapter 3, author Stanley Grenz was quoted, “We are participants in our historical and cultural context, and all our intellectual endeavours are unavoidably conditioned by that participation” (Grenz, 1996, p. 166). One cannot spend time with the *Experiencing the Joy* presentations and not get a sense of something familiar. The series is structured in a way that encourages the participant to embrace their unique experiences filtered through an understanding of the Gospel. This series encapsulates the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was made available at the 2010 General Conference. It was designed by Dr. Miroslav Pujic and his team who work for the Centre for Secular and

Postmodern Studies, a branch of the Global Missions Office of the General Conference.

The following section contains specific perceived strengths that have been expressed by individuals following the introduction the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*. These perceived strengths do not necessarily reflect actual weaknesses but could possibly limit an individual's involvement with the program.

Some individuals have expressed that there is no laid out specific structure included with the *Experiencing the Joy* series. The facilitator has to decide how he wants to present the course to the group of individuals that he is working with. There is no included recipe for best results. Some individuals who need a 'how to manual' might find this missing component intimidating. One pastor, who has recently began using the material, has expressed his interest in seeing a facilitators edition and a student's edition developed.

The *Experiencing the Joy* lessons follow a different format than the *Search for Certainty* studies. Each lesson does not have statements and questions that the participant is sent to the scriptures to find the answer for. Some members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who enjoy traditional Bible study may find the *Experiencing the Joy* series approach too different. This feeling may make them hesitant to use the series as an outreach tool.

The accompanying book which houses the Bible Talks has a cost of \$27.49 (Canadian), along with a cost of \$27.49 for each series of video vignettes. Unless an individual were to photocopy the materials, each participant would need to pay \$27.49 for the book. For a group of 8 to 10 individuals this could add up to \$200 to \$250.00 per group plus the \$27.50 cost of the DVDs. Unless a church was willing to absorb that cost,

the individual would be responsible for it and possibly unable to pay it. This could be a possible deterrent to an investment in the program but it could also be strength, because the things that we invest in hold our attention.

Search for Certainty Bible Study

The *Search for Certainty Bible Study Guides* are available from *It Is Written*. They are available from the Adventist Book Centre and available online from the *It Is Written* website. There is no charge to access it from this site. There are 30 guides available. Each guide has a question along with an accompanying Bible verse or more that hold the answer for the question. There is a blank space where the answer for the question can be written. This type of Bible study encourages the individual involved in the study to continually refer to the Bible for answers. The questions do not allow for any other answer except the wording in the accompanying verse or verses. This can be seen as strength for an individual that that looks for structure and a black and white answer.

Each of the 30 Bible lesson studies contains an introductory story which gives an illustration for the point of each lesson. The introduction encourages the reader towards Bible study.

Members have expressed feeling comfortable with the familiarity of the *Search for Certainty Bible series*, with its continual reference to scripture and its academic virtues.

The *Search for Certainty Bible guides* are extremely structured. There is a question on a particular topic and then there is a text provided which gives the answer to
vity or originality. There is no

room for personal experience. The conclusions are absolute. These Bible study guides provide answers from the scriptures. However, postmodern young adults are asking questions which are not being asked in these lessons. Postmodern young adults ask questions like, “Why is this important to me?” Too many assumptions are made by the writer. As a result the reader cannot take ownership of the pre-defined conclusions. The information is relevant but the packaging does not lend itself to the postmodern mindset. The Bible study guides were generated by moderns to meet the needs of modernity. To my knowledge, with the exception of the *Experiencing the Joy* series, Seventh-day Adventist Bible guides have always made similar statements or had similar questions.

There are no open-ended questions in this study. An answer is either right or wrong. There can be limited discussion. Postmoderns learn well in a group where they can share their experiences and their thoughts on a particular topic. Individuals can feel ownership for their conclusions. Social networking is fundamental for postmoderns and there is limited space for social networking in this study. Postmoderns reject being told how to think and any information they receive needs to be processed and discussed.

The *Search for Certainty* Bible study guides are not geared to right brain thinkers. They are knowledge based. Knowledge is not enough to base a lesson on. Jesus used parables to make illustrations. Jesus engaged both the left and right side of the brain in his teaching. Fact based knowledge often lends itself to narrow-mindedness, which lends itself to criticism and a limited worldview. In the October 1991 edition of *Ministry Magazine*, Saustin Sampson Mfune wrote, “Accumulating evidence suggests that when we communicate in such a way as to be understood well only by those who primarily use one hemisphere, we “turn off” those who primarily use the other” (Mfune, 1991, p. 28).

He writes that the Left Brain is reality based and temporal. It is responsible for processing information. The right brain is creative, intuitive, imaginative, visual, feeling, fantasy-oriented and non-temporal. It is necessary to involve both hemispheres of the brain in Bible study and this Bible study does not accomplish that.

Summary

In conclusion, I suggest that the project that was launched on September 12, 2010 in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church was instrumental in helping to determine that the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* were an acceptable outreach tool for future implementation. The results of the project suggested that both young adults and older adults felt positive about the material.

Colleagues see the need for reaching out to young people with the Gospel and our excited about what they see in the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*. When they were approached with the idea of implementing the program into their districts, some began using the material right away and others expressed future dates. Pastor Zama and Pastor Dottin have already reported successful results in their districts with this material.

Colleagues have shared that the addition of the media to an already attractive lesson study has launched discussions among their groups. They have expressed that participants have found the material contained relevant scenarios that has added depth to their understanding of scripture. The pastors that have implemented this material into their ministries have shared positive experiences thus far.

Overall it has been established that the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* is an attractive way of conveying the Gospel to postmodern young adults through the use of media and small group discussion. The *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* contain many

of the components which engage postmoderns, that is, a simple but compelling message, containing experiences about life.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter I will summarize my project and discuss what I have accomplished. The second section will address my limitations. The third section will list my recommendations. In the fourth section I will discuss future implementation. The fifth and final section will contain my conclusions.

Summary

Survey Results

I have provided an opportunity for 14 young adults to view two types of Bible studies. I asked them to fill out a survey indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements I provided. I did this at the completion of each of the two studies. I had 13 older adults fill out the same survey in the same way. The religious affiliation of the young adults was comprised of Seventh-day Adventist members, affiliates of another Christian denomination and individuals with no Christian denominational affiliation. The survey results suggested that the young adults that were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church connected equally well with the *Experiencing the Joy* and *Search for Certainty* program. The results also showed that the

young adults that had no religious affiliation connected better to the *Experiencing the Joy* program, as opposed to the *Search for Certainty* program. The young adults affiliated with a denomination other than Seventh-day Adventists equally connected with the *Search for Certainty* study and the *Experiencing the Joy* study.

The older adults were all Seventh-day Adventist, and were all regularly attending members of the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The older adults ranged in age from 36 years upward to 74 years. The survey results suggested that the adults connected equally well with both the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* and the *Search for Certainty* studies. The majority were in the age bracket, 46-55. This finding confirms an earlier finding by the North American Division listing the median age as 51. This range is an accurate reflection of where churches are in terms of the age of their members.

In Ministry

Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church

A young adult group using the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* has been successfully implemented in the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. The group, which began in November of 2010, has been in existence for three months. The group began with four and has since more than doubled in size. The group meets each Sabbath afternoon. The group has been instrumental in attracting young adults into the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. As of January 2011, there were three young adults holding membership in the local church with the remainder being made up of regular visiting Adventists and young adults with no prior affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist church. As of March 2011 the group had completed 10 of the 42 lessons.

College Park Seventh-day Adventist Church

Pastor Rob Zama was introduced to the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*. He began them with the entire Grade 8 class of College Park Elementary School. He began in October of 2010 and expects to continue through the remainder of the school year in 2011. There are 20 grade 8 students. He meets with them once a week. Pastor Zama also has 6 to 10 students from Kingsway College, a Seventh-day Adventist high school, that he meets with in a student's home once a week.

Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church

Pastor Garth Dottin was introduced to the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks*. Pastor Dottin began studying with a group of young adults in early January of 2011. He shares that there are about 20 or more young adults that attend the sessions. Some are Seventh-day Adventist and some are not. His leaders hope to get the count up since they would like to attract more of the youth ages 14-18. Pastor Dottin shared that he is having excellent participation from each of the young adults in his group.

Limitations

There are some distinct factors that limited the result. I recognize that there can be limitations when a comparison is made between only one lesson from *Experiencing the Joy* and one lesson from *Search for Certainty Bible Talks*. I attempted to find a lesson from each of the studies that shared the same topic. I also recognize that some lessons are engaging to some, but not all, of the participants. The level of interest might have influenced a participant's response. I also recognize that familiarity with the material might have also contributed to the findings. Personal opinion about the content

of the material may have contributed to a participant's response. In order to focus on the style of learning rather than the content of the lessons, material was selected that is acceptable to most Christian denominations.

Based upon the positive responses from the project at the Richmond Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, a small young adult group was started November 27, 2010. In addition, other pastors were sought out who were willing to implement the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* into their districts and share their experiences.

There was also a limitation of time. I need to complete my dissertation by the end of March 2011. However, production of the *Experiencing the Joy* material was delayed. I had hoped to obtain the material in October 2009, but the material was not released until the General Conference session in July 2010.

It should also be noted that my project was limited in scope by its Canadian context. Although *Experiencing the Joy* is working well for young adults in the Toronto, Canada area, the results may not be the same everywhere in the world.

Recommendations

The *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* can be used with any age group from a grade 8 student to any age beyond that. I started with the idea that the series should be used primarily with young adults, but then found a pastor whom I had introduced to the material, using it with Grade 8 and high school students.

I recommend the facilitator be very familiar with the material he is presenting and make the appropriate adjustments based on the age of his audience.

Because of the lack of a defined study, the facilitator must be more deliberate in how he chooses to present the material. He must know the material well enough to

anticipate questions related to the content of the workbook or the accompanying media presentation.

I recommend that the group size remain no more than 10 individuals so that there is good participation. In my own experience I have found that this material works best in a small group setting. If the group is too large, individuals may not feel comfortable sharing. The beauty of the lesson presented is that the group involvement enhances the experience. Postmodern young adults seem to enjoy learning together. Other pastors using the material have also expressed that having a small group setting has contributed positively to the overall success of the program.

I recommend that this material be used in place of traditional Bible studies with individuals who are unfamiliar with the Bible or individuals who have no church affiliation. There are many Bible study courses available for individuals who have established a relationship with Christ and are familiar with scripture. But then, what about the individual who has had no exposure to any faith or religion? One pastor shared that he had searched for material that he could be shared with individuals who had no Christian affiliations but had not been successful. He goes on to say that he was overjoyed to have been introduced to the *Experiencing the Joy* material.

I recommend that food be served. In our young adult group at Richmond Hill we have introduced food, either at the beginning or end of every meeting. The food could be as simple as soup and buns, or sandwiches, but is instrumental in promoting social interaction and group cohesion. It also helps to develop social interaction.

I recommend this program for churches that are struggling to maintain and attract young adults implement this program. The presence of young adults attracts more young

adults and the *Experiencing the Joy* program has been an effective means get young people connected to each other. This provides a forum where young adults can share from their own experiences and reach out to more young adults.

At least three pastors have commented to me that they would like to see supplemental material developed which provide instructions on how to use the material. I believe this has been a deterrent to implementation of the program in some cases. I would recommend that a supplemental instructor's manual be developed to assist facilitators with suggestions for use dependent upon the setting and group size. This additional item would enhance the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* for the participants and defuse any potential uncertainty for the facilitator.

Future Implementation

Kitchener-Waterloo Seventh-day Adventist Church

Pastor Jiwan Moon and his youth leaders have decided to use the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* on an ongoing basis for their campus ministries at the University of Waterloo. The leadership have been studying this material and have concluded that these materials are easily approachable and attractive to non-Christian individuals who are curious about the church. What Pastor Moon finds the most attractive about the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* is, "the visual presentations, their relevance, and the effect each presentation has on allowing people to open up." He enjoys the material because they are not traditional and are particularly attractive to people who have not been exposed to solid doctrinal studies.

Harmony Seventh-day Adventist Church

Pastor Frank D'Elbra was introduced to the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* in November of 2010. He shared that plans to implement the material later this year. He writes, "I have a few young adults that I think are open to Bible study and I will use this material." Currently Frank states that he has used much of the material in his sermons with his Italian group and has also used the video clips. Frank D'elbra's full report is found in Appendix A.

Conclusion

The young adults were my focus group. The testing suggests that young adults, not affiliated with any denomination are more drawn to the *Experiencing the Joy* series. This falls in line with a description that was earlier provided of the needs of postmodern young adults. This series is far more appealing to them than it would be to a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church. A member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would need to have a passion for outreach to non-members and a vision for what they might need. This would mean living outside the doors of the church, immersing themselves in their culture and meeting the unchurched at their level. A member would also need to be very secure in their beliefs. They would need to also be very forward thinking.

The group of adults between the ages of 36 and 74 hold the church's purse strings, and their support would make this endeavour financially viable. I feel members need to be made aware that the youth and young adults are disappearing from their ranks, and many churches are not attracting this age group. Most young adults are unchurched.

They are a mission field that are just outside our church doorsteps. I feel members of the church need to become open to ministering to postmodern young adults.

Now, more than ever before, the church must be vigorous in its efforts to reach out. If changes are ever going to happen evangelism can't be a onetime event, evangelism must be seen as a process and every member must claim their role as a minister. Evangelism must occur daily. It is the heartbeat of the church. We need to take evangelism on as an individual and make a deliberate effort to befriend another individual. I believe the implementation of the *Experiencing the Joy Bible Talks* is crucial to connecting Jesus Christ to the community outside its doors.

APPENDIX A

E-MAILS FROM PASTORS

Frank D'elbra, Pastor, Harmony Seventh-day Adventist Church

November 15th, 2010

Hi pastor David, got your message thanks! I've looked over the material.

I and one of my personal ministries people were able to use it. I don't have a steady bible study lined up yet, but I can give you what data I do have. I'll contact my personal ministries person to get some itemized thoughts on using the bible study material so far. Talk to you soon!

November 17th, 2010

I plan on using the Bible studies this year, and you can use my comments. I think there is strong potential in these Bible studies; I just need to be a little more "teacher friendly" in how to implement the material. Otherwise the material itself is very good. Let me know if I can be of more help.

Frank

January 2nd, 2011

Hi Pastor. I want to share some thoughts regarding the Experiencing the Joy material. I don't have a regular Bible study set up with it unfortunately, in the two months I've had the material I haven't had a study that could use it yet. But I can share a few thoughts from myself and one of my personal ministries directors about the use of it.

I found the materials to be clearly presented in a style that is different from most Bible studies. In fact I found the presentation on faith so clear that I used much of the information for a sermon for my Italian group and it was well received. The attempt I am seeing is to present the same Gospel, same truths, same biblical knowledge, in a different way. Rather than use question/answer format, which just presents doctrinal hard data, the truths are couched in story, narrative, application to daily life. I found it very useful. I have a few young adults that I think are open to Bible study shortly and will use this material. My personal ministries director said that he found it a "soft approach" but with the same scripture references.

Some constructive criticism as well, there is no instructions as to how to use the lessons. It simply starts with lesson 1 after a brief intro about the authors! Does one sit down with

the person and simply read it? The format does not seem to be designed well for group study or for dialog as much as I had hoped. It seems better for a single person, reading it. Also, and this may seem trivial, but I don't think it is: it's obviously produced and uses settings and cultural references of England. This could be a hindrance to people in Canada and the US who are used to a very North American-centric media. Anyway this is has been my experience thus far. I don't know what your timeline is like, but I remember you saying you didn't have much time for data. But if you do have more in the coming months, I'd be happy to share what my experiences are with the material as opportunities open up. Let me know. Thanks and God bless!

Frank

Garth Dottin, Associate Pastor, Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church

January 25th, 2011

We have started the program since early January.

The youth are receptive and have lots of questions.
We have more young adults attending.
Some are baptized and others are still searching.

I feel like some of the video clips could be more focused on a specific age group.
Example :(not all young adults are into talking teddy bears)

It would be good to have a little more questions added to the clips so that more discussion can be fostered.
I felt like the video only gives one or two questions and leave the rest up to the coordinator to foster discussion.

However, I love the fact that the joy program begins by introducing youth to a loving God who they can trust. It challenges them to put God to the test in times of trials. They will realize that God has always been there as a source of strength.

The program also leaves room for creativity so that it does not dictate to the facilitator to follow a certain pattern but can be used as a guide in helping youth to understand the core of Biblical teaching.

The youth have given their feedback and they have been positive so far.

Blessings
GD

January 31st, 2011

Hello again preacher

There are about 20 or more youth that attend the sessions.

Some are SDA but some are not.

We hope to get the count up since we have more young adults and would like to attract more of the youth ages 14-18.

Their comments are good because they ask hard questions about God and I give them the freedom to try to find the answers.

Last week there were deeper discussions about the bible and they are interested in knowing what the original language says compared to modern translations.

There is a deep desire developing to search God's word.

The sessions are good.

Please feel free to quote as you desire.

I will continue to give updates as we continue.

Pastor Garth Dottin

Rob Zama, Associate Pastor, College Park Seventh-day Adventist Church

March 7th, 2011

Hello,

My name is Robert Zama and I am an assistant Pastor at the College Park Church in Oshawa, Canada. Some months ago I was approached by fellow Pastor David Baker to use a series of studies entitled "Experiencing the Joy" with the young people that I'm involved with. I have been using this series with two different age groups. The first is a grade eight class of about 20 students at the elementary school. And the second is with a small Bible study group of about 10 from the high school. The grade eight class loves this series. They especially like the short videos that spark endless conversations. The older kids love the questions in the book as well as the easy to follow thought process in the book. What I am doing is using the book as a guide for the first part of our meetings, usually once a week, beginning with a question or two and then I follow up with the video for that lesson followed by a discussion. One area I have exercised caution in is that some of the videos are not suitable for the grade eight class due to the graphic mature content but there are ways around showing that particular video. And if I were to recommend one change in the book, it would be to have an easier outline to follow instead of long 3 pages of information. Maybe having a student lesson guide to take home and study to prepare for next weeks classes. All around I like this series and I will definitely use this for years to come.

Sincerely,
Robert Zama

APPENDIX B

ASSIGNED OBSERVER'S OBSERVATIONS

On Sunday September 12, 2010 Pastor Baker presented a 2 part seminar on how to share the Bible with others. *Traditional method verses postmodern method.*

I was asked to enlist the help of both young adults between the ages of 20-35, and adults between the ages of 36-70. Without Pastor Baker knowing who would be in attendance. That day there were approximately 30 people, 16 youth and 14 adults.

The sessions were broken down into 2 parts

1. Pre information was given as to the rules and regulations that needed to be followed

The first part was on a post modern approach to Bible study

Each person was given a work book, only the youth took part in reading out loud the material provided. Then everyone broke into groups to discuss what had been read and to come up with their conclusion of the pros and cons of this information. Lunch was served during this discussion.

When we came back a questionnaire was given to each person to answer, then they were collected by me, sealed in an envelope and given to Pastor Baker. (No names were used, each person was assigned a number which I was the only one who knew who received each number)

The second part was on Traditional Bible study

The format was the same.

At the end of the program we saw a short video, then a question time was available, and the youth were asked if they were interested in attending further seminars, several people signed up stating their desire to continue.

Summary: As an official observer I found the program was interesting and worthwhile, I noticed that all persons in attendance especially the youth were more than willing to take part in the seminar, and I believe that it was a benefit.

Of the 16 youth present $\frac{1}{2}$ were non S.D.A.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist

Janet Croce

APPENDIX C

STATISTICS CANADA 2006 CENSUS RICHMOND
HILL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 1

Mother Tongue

	Number	Percentage
English	71,100	43.97%
Cantonese	15,735	9.73%
Persian (Farsi)	10,865	6.72%
Chinese, n.o.s.**	10,565	6.53%
Russian	8,130	5.03%
Italian	7,505	4.64%
Korean	3,455	2.14%
Other languages	30,975	19.16%
Single responses	158,350	97.93%

Table 2

Religious Affiliation

	Number	Percentage
Christian – Catholic	39,845	30.3%
Christian – Protestant	25,270	19.3%
No Religious Affiliation	25,260	19.1%
Jewish	10,130	7.7%
Muslim	9,965	7.6%
Christian – Orthodox	7,700	5.9%
Christian (unspecified)	5,465	4.2%
Christian – Latter Day Saints	2,665	2.2%
Buddhist	2,640	2.0%
Hindu	2,470	1.9%
Eastern Religions	825	0.6%
Sikh	530	0.4%
Other religions	35	0.0%

Source: 2006 Canada Census: self-reported religious groups.

Table 3

Age Demographic

Richmond Hill	Male	Male %	Female	Female %
Total Population	79,200	100.00	82,495	100.00
0 to 4 years	5,095	6.43	4,465	5.41
10 to 14 years	5,805	7.33	5,805	7.04
20 to 24 years	5,530	6.98	4,965	6.02
30 to 34 years	4,970	6.28	5,530	6.70
40 to 44 years	7,495	9.46	8,150	9.88
50 to 54 years	5,680	7.17	6,240	7.56
60 to 64 years	3,005	3.79	3,215	3.90
70 to 74 years	2,030	2.56	2,120	2.57
80 to 84 years	755	0.95	1,270	1.54

Table 4

Income Distribution for Economic Families in Richmond Hill, 2005

\$100,000 and over	42.62%
\$90,000 to \$99,999	6.51%
\$80,000 to \$89,999	6.39%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	6.57%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	5.66%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	3.34%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	3.61%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	6.56%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	6.54%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	6.33%
Under \$10,000	5.85%

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VITA

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Name: David Howard Baker
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EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

Degrees Awarded: B. A. Religious Studies
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Date of Ordination: July, 2002
Employed: 13 years as a pastor with the British Columbia
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