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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

BIBLE STUDY GROUPS AS A MEANS OF CHRISTIAN
NURTURE IN THE BRAZILIAN CULTURE

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Horne P. Silva

December 1974

Approval

Arnold Kurtz

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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this report to present the findings of the author's study with respect to possible adaptations of certain principles and procedures of group Bible study to Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church members as a means of Christian nurture.

The Need and Purpose of the Study

Seventh-day Adventist Church growth in Brazil is impressive. However, there is (simultaneously with quantitative growth) a need for consolidation through Christian nurture. In this project we have explored the possible values of face-to-face group Bible study for Christian nurture in the Brazilian culture. Group life, and group study would appear to be important in establishing Christians in the faith. The term group designates any number of persons who are in dynamic relationship with one another, have some significant commonality, and assume some responsibility for one another. This definition is certainly applicable to mutual ministry in the Church. Purposive service to one another arises from the fundamental fact that we belong to one another. Jesus said: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."¹ True love for one another will express

¹John 13:34-35.

itself positively in a desire to build one another up. This will include instructing, comforting and encouraging one another.

We meet together to edify one another by an interchange of thoughts and feelings, and to gather strength, and light, and courage by becoming acquainted with one another's hopes and aspirations; and by our earnest, heartfelt prayers, offered up in faith, we receive refreshment and vigor from the Source of our strength.¹

Small groups in the church provide the conditions within which firsthand meetings between God, others and self, can take place--where persons can learn to come to terms with themselves and God and interact with other human beings in a safe atmosphere. In group fellowship, togetherness is the accent; concern for individual need is the atmosphere; taking time for two-way communication is the mode. Time can be set aside for in-depth sharing and exchange. There is time for studying and for experiencing things together and then for participants to discuss their meeting. There can be enough flexibility to allow for a study of the Bible and for experience to evolve and take new directions. It can facilitate a deep interchange between one's self and his God and his fellow group members.

The group that patterns itself after the biblical koinonia, is powerful. Such groups move beyond fellowship to enable persons to work newly aroused social concerns through to positive and constructive action. Appropriately, Ellen G. White affirms: "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has presented to me by one who cannot err."²

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1902), Vol. 2, p. 578.

²Ibid., Vol. 7, pp. 22, 23.

Current emphasis upon small Bible study groups is focussing upon the home as the center of such activity. A congregation which emphasizes small Bible study groups in homes often has renewed interest in church spiritual activities. In an age of despersonalization it is imperative that the congregation keep its emphasis upon the individual. Why? No house of worship, no matter how attractive, can take the place of love and fellowship. Win C. Arn suggests that, "the church needs small groups as the loaf needs the yeast. In small groups there can be strength, power and outreach to change and move the church--to change and move the community and the world."¹

Jesus gave the promise for those in the setting of a small group: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."²

Definition of Terms Used

Bible Study Group. It is a small number of persons which meets regularly every week for the purpose of studying the Bible and to help members come into a primary personal relationship with God, with others, and with themselves.

Christian Nurture. The phrase is generally used synonymously with religious education. In this report the term is used to mean that

¹Donald A. McGavran and Win C. Arn, How to Grow a Church (Glendale, California: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1973), p. 103.

²Matt. 18:20.

Christian education, training, and fostering care which issue from the church as a believing community vitalized by the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament comparison of the church to the human body suggests a line of thought which is pertinent. Nurture is an action of the church performed upon its members.

The human body may exercise in its entirety as a single unity, or it may exercise particular parts to keep the body healthy, to correct the effects of disease or injury. But the action we speak of moves beyond this. It is more qualitative than this, involving changes in quality and essence; it is neither just a maintenance of what is nor a correction of deficiency. Christian nurture in the church is an action upon individuals so involving internal relationships that by it members are not just quantitatively or statistically added or quantitatively maintained in external relationship; they are made to have the kind of being that Christ has made possible to them and to become qualitatively more and more a part of His body.

The objective of the church is not only to propagate a faith, its objective is also to enable persons to promote growth toward Christlikeness.

Procedures

The study has been organized under two divisions. Part one attempts to provide a succinct background of Bible study groups. A study of contemporary literature on the subject forms a background for an in-ministry project. Part two reports the writer's experience in testing out certain aspects of his research with a group of first generation Brazilian Christians in Chicago, Illinois.

Chapters within each division are as follows: Chapter I presents briefly the theological and historical background of Bible study groups. Chapter II is devoted to the approaches and methods that can be used as stimulating variations for Bible study groups. Chapter III discusses Brazilian culture with implications for group work involving the church. In Chapter IV we attempt to delineate our experiment with first generation Brazilian Christians in a Chicago church. It is the writer's conviction that the responses of this group to the innovations which he introduced were typical of a Seventh-day Adventist group in his homeland. There is a brief description of Brazilian people, locale and physical setting, problems related to the group, the leader's role followed by an outline of twelve group sessions. In Chapter V we present some results of our Bible study group and a statement of conclusions. In the appendices the writer prepared in Portuguese, his native tongue, a synthesis of pertinent aspects of his research findings in group dynamics. This material may seem commonplace to some but all of it is important to the writer who lives in a country where this material is not available.

Limitations

In our study we were dependent in great part upon the experience of others. It would be foolish to imagine that we have experimented with every type of Bible study group. This study will continue, and our insights into the needs of Bible study groups will deepen with time and experience.

PART I.

BACKGROUND PERSPECTIVES ON BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

In this chapter we wish to present a rationale for the face-to-face Bible study group such as the writer would present as background material to a class of ministerial students in his work. The procedure will be to present a brief theological statement followed by a survey of the Biblical and historical antecedents of the small group movement.

The Church and Community

The Old Testament furnishes us with a record of the origin of the church in recounting God's relationship to Israel. The primary factor in this relationship between God and Israel is that God called Israel as His chosen community. It is clear that in the Old Testament God's concern is for a community. This is evidenced first by God's call not only to Abraham but also to his descendants who were to become a community (Gen. 12:2). God's concern from the beginning was not just for the individual person, though it included this, it was also for the nation. God's concern for the community of Israel is evidenced in leading Israel out of bondage, the establishment of the law, in the establishment of corporate worship and even the national kingdom itself.

However, the importance of the church as a community is even more clearly indicated in the New Testament. From the very first, to be Christian meant to belong to a community. No Christian is contemplated as living in isolation, spiritually united to Christ but holding himself aloof from other members. In the New Testament a Christian believer is not otherwise thought of than as a member of some local group. From the beginning the church existed as a community with local units appropriately organized, with officers and ordinances, but without regimentation---there was a corporate freedom.

There are numerous references in the Bible, and especially in the Pauline Epistles¹ to the church as being the body of Christ. The concepts of "body" and "members" indeed explain the inseparable belonging of the faithful to Christ; they also illuminate the laws of commonality and mutuality among the members.

One of the characteristic words of Paul is "communion" (koinonia), a word which is difficult to explain, because it always carries with it a twofold meaning. Christians have communion with Christ and also with one another, and these two kinds of fellowship are bound together, and are ultimately the same. The very meaning of the church, as Paul understands it, is that it is a union of the brethren through which we enter into union with Christ Himself.

Paul believes that every Christian has a personal fellowship with Christ and is thus set free from all authority of men. Yet he

¹Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; and Eph. 4.

holds that this personal fellowship is mediated by the Christian community.

According to Paul the people of Christ became a community. Wherever he went, in the course of his missionary labors, his object was to form a community. Wherever he made a convert his first care was to associate him with a community.

These concepts are in keeping with modern findings that man cannot be human alone. If a man desires to be in the fullest sense himself, he does not attain this end by retiring into solitude. His common humanity is part of himself, by far the greater part of it, and he must exercise and develop it in association with his fellow men. By shutting himself off he does not gain in personality but only shrivels into an ego which is worthless to himself and to everybody. The Christian man, if he would possess an individual faith, must make himself one with the Christian fellowship. By separating himself he loses contact with Christ, who is present in him individually because He is present in the whole community of believers.

On one occasion Paul requires that an unworthy member should be excommunicated, and tells how this must be done at a special meeting, solemnly convened. He takes for granted that the man who is thus renounced by the community is in that moment "delivered over to Satan." He has lost his part in the Christian salvation and is thrown back to the prince of this world, who will only punish him

as a deserter, now recaptured.¹ We see then that for Paul the Christian religion is inseparable from the church. His letters are addressed to churches and deal for the most part with the principles of church conduct and teaching.

For these reasons the Christian church is usually defined as the communion of believers.²

The Example of Christ

When Jesus was looking ahead to His mission, He chose twelve men, and taught them to carry His message.³ He obviously spent several hours each week in intimate contact with His disciples. From His daily instruction, the apostles learned how to work for the elevation of humanity. Jesus gave high priority to those times when He could be alone with His disciples.⁴ There are frequent references to His drawing apart with His disciples.⁵ Jesus considered His own group (the twelve) as His family.⁶

It is helpful to note how Jesus worked with his chosen group. Following their discussions, Jesus sent the disciples out two by two

¹I Cor. 5:1-5.

²Antedating these theological formulations of course is the example of Christ who gathered about Him a small group as special disciples.

³Matt. 10:1-4.

⁴Mark 9:30-37.

⁵Mark 3:7.

⁶Matt. 12:46-50.

through the towns and villages. On returning from their missionary tour, "the apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught."¹ The record is very scant here, and there is no real indication of how the conversation went, but it is clear that they reassembled for an evaluation session. Jesus was interested to know their feelings about success and failure; He gave them a sense of group support.

Christ's method, we know now, was pedagogically sound. We know that the teaching-learning process is a cooperative venture in which not only the leader but also the group members must be involved as active participants if learning is to take place.

In the group of Jesus there was interaction, communication and feedback. One observes a variety of group processes being employed, such as brainstorming as when Jesus asked them, "Who do men say that I am?" A variety of answers came quickly to this general question: "Son of David," "John the Baptist," "Elijah."

On the other hand, the group was comfortable in putting direct questions to Jesus. "And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter."² The group had developed a level of openness to where they could discuss matters which they would be embarrassed to have Jesus overhear. When Christ and disciples were alone in the house, Jesus asked, "What were you discussing on the way?"³ The

¹Mark 8:27-38.

²Mark 10:10.

³Mark 9:33-37.

disciples, however, "were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest."

Certainly an important ingredient of the learning process experienced in this intimate relationship of master and disciples was the impact of His exemplary life. On the occasion of one of the last meetings with His disciples held in the upper room of a dwelling at Jerusalem, Christ desired to keep his feast alone with the twelve. He had much to tell them. But Jesus saw that they could not bear what He had to say. At this moment He did not enter into discussion with them regarding their difficulties. Instead He gave them an example which they could never forget washing their feet, in memorial of His humiliation,¹ expressing His love for them. For three years and a half the disciples met in a group under the leadership of the greatest teacher, Christ. They met on the mountain-side, sometimes beside the sea, on their journeys through country and cities, on the crowded streets, in the lonely desert, and in homes.

The Early Church

Christ's objective for His group was to prepare the twelve to go forth as His witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and learned working together with God for the saving of men.

After the death of Christ, the group were almost overcome by discouragement. However, before ascending to heaven, Christ remained

¹John 13:1-17.

on the earth, for forty days with them for encouraging them, and preparing them for the future. During these last sessions that Christ spent with them, the twelve gained a new experience. And when they met for the farewell group-meeting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples did not return with expressions of sorrow, confusion and defeat, but gladness, triumph, and hope.

When Christ stepped out from the group as the leader, any one in the group was in condition to take over. The record says that they met together to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus. Putting away all differences, all desires for the supremacy, they came close to one another in Christian fellowship. The Pentecostal outpouring brought them the heavenly illumination with the fullness that reached every heart when they were of "one accord, of one heart, and of one soul,"¹ together as a group engaged in prayer.

Immediately after Peter's sermon, the new converts formed many groups with the apostle's leadership. "They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."² The disciples had learned very well what Christ taught them not only by example, but also by precept.

The need for mutual encouragement in corporate fellowship was recognized by the author of the book of Hebrews: "Let us consider," he wrote, "how to stir up one another to love and good works, not

¹Acts 2:46; 4:32.

²Acts 2:42. (RSV)

neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. . . ."1

It is interesting to note that Aquila and Prisca opened their home for such a group. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul sent them a special message: "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus . . . greet also the church (group) in their house."2 (Author's inserting).

Paul, from the beginning of his work, used the same approach. Throughout his ministry he established many groups in homes for prayer, fellowship, study, and evangelism.

The more we study the New Testament Church the more we can identify key characteristics of these groups. John Casteel describes their significance as follows:

To be a Christian, in the New Testament, is to belong to a community of people who share their life fully and deeply. The first description we have of the church says that 'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:42). To be a Christian in Corinth, or Colossae, or Rome, might put you under temptations and demands peculiar to local conditions. . . . In Ephesus, you are one of the church that met in the house of Aquila and Priscilla; in Colossae, with the church in the house of Nympha; in Rome, as one of 'Caesar's household.' You belong to an intimate band of men and women, who knew they had been 'lifted right out of their old life' into a new life, and who met together to listen to the Scriptures, or the letters written to them by their leaders; to pray; and to eat together at the table of their Lord.³

¹Heb. 10:25. (RSV)

²Rom. 16:3, 5. (RSV)

³John L. Casteel, Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 21.

Later Examples

In every age, something of the group spirit and method characterizing the early church can be detected. The small group as we think of it has been suited for every generation. Scanning church history one finds that many religious movements had their roots in small groups. A dedicated leader attracting a small group of followers around a common vision has frequently developed into a renewal movement or revival in the church.

Among the examples of significant small groups in the history of Christianity, we have to mention, the class meetings of the early Methodism.

John Wesley began his great Methodism Movement with the Methodist meetings. He knew the power of a small group. In November, 1729, we find a small group of four young gentlemen of Oxford--John Wesley, his brother, Charles Wesley, Morgan and Kirkham, spending evenings together reading chiefly the Greek New Testament. Later George Whitefield met with them.¹

When John Wesley began his pastoral work, he felt that religion should be taken from the cold pulpit to the heart of the people in small groups. He describes the fundamental procedures of a group as follows:

This evening (May 1, 1738) our little society began, which afterward met in Fetter Lane. Our fundamental rules were as follows:

¹Richard M. Cameron, The Rise of Methodism a Source Book (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 59.

In obedience to the command of God by St. James, and by the advice of Peter Boehler, it is agreed by us,

1. That we will meet together once a week, to 'confess our faults one to another and pray one for another, that we may be healed.'
2. That the persons so meeting be divided into several bands, or little companies, none of them consisting of fewer than five, or more than ten persons.
3. That every one in order speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he can, the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances, since the last time of meeting.
4. That all the bands have a conference at eight every Wednesday evening, begun and ended with singing and prayer.¹

In the meetings themselves, much time was given to prayer and singing; while the reading and exposition of Scripture are scarcely mentioned in the descriptions, these activities may be taken for granted.

The class meeting became a weekly source of encouragement and reinforcement for Christian living. Men and women from differing walks of life joined together, although, the majority were either tradesmen or women. Among the men one might find a doctor, a business man, a haberdasher, a carpenter, and a distiller.²

According to John Wesley's account, the small group system developed originally from no plan, but sprang up spontaneously, without design or direction. As people were affected by his preaching the message of justification by faith they asked him to watch over their spiritual life. John responded to their wishes. He organized the people into large groups forming a "society." But the growing

¹Ibid., p. 169.

²Martin Schmidt, John Wesley A Theological Biography (New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), Vol. II, p. 24.

numbers were too great a responsibility. He could see no other solution than the division of his society into groups of ten to twelve people. These were the "classes." Men and women, old and young, without distinction met together in them.¹

As members of the classes came together a real encounter and true exchange was assured. People shared experiences with each other, bore the burdens and cares of a brother, spoke openly with each other. People prayed and sang with each other. But even the "society" and the "classes" were not enough. Many people desired a deeper fellowship through which they could strengthen their faith. Such a need gave rise to the "bands." In these, people were arranged according to age and sex. They met one evening a week. The leader acted as guide. They met with John Wesley every Wednesday evening for instruction and encouragement. Thus the groups provided for the nurture of the leaders as well as the members in mutual edification in faith.²

To increase group interaction Wesley advised:

Every one has an equal liberty of speaking, there being none greater or less than another. I could say freely to those when they were met together, 'Ye may all prophesy one by one' (taking that word in its lowest sense), 'that all may learn and all may be comforted.' And I often found the advantage of such a free conversation, and that 'in the multitude of consellers there is safety.' Any who is inclined so to do is likewise encouraged to pour out his soul to God.³

¹Nehemiah Curnock, The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), Vol. II, p. 528.

²John Telford, The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), Vol. II, pp. 300-301.

³Idem, p. 304.

The bands formed the smallest units, and therefore were an expression of the movement's very heart. It was essential to avoid constraint and inquisitiveness, to exclude fear and self-display, and at the same time to prevent them from becoming rigorously systematized, which would have transformed the whole proceeding into an empty formalism. Freedom and openness, naturalness and confidence, were the essential requirements for a fruitful development. For this reason Wesley selected the leaders of these groups with a very great sense of responsibility.¹ He himself examined the classes from time to time, demanding from himself courage and steadiness, and from the class leaders common sense and honesty.²

While at Oxford, he and his companions set out such a rigorous and methodical schedule for their activities that they were derisively referred to by some of their more worldly fellow students as "methodists." Referring to this fact, John Wesley said: "This gained me the harmless name of Methodist."³

For purposes of this study, reference will be made only to the influence of study and prayer groups in the early development of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

In December, 1844, Ellen Harmon was visiting Mrs. Haines, "a dear sister in Christ," in South Portland. There were three other young

¹Thomas Jackson (Ed.), The Works of the Rev. John Wesley (London: Wesley-Methodist Book-Room, 1831), Vol. VIII, pp. 255, 258.

²Curnock, Vol. III, pp. 284, 285.

³Cameron, p. 58.

women with them (" . . . five of us, all women."). Kneeling quietly at the group they prayed together for light and guidance. It was during this prayer group with some friends that Ellen Harmon was given her first vision.¹

The work of discovering and fitting together Seventh-day Adventist beliefs was not the work of one man but of a group of men led by the Lord. The unifying movement was largely accomplished by a series of sectional Sabbath conferences.

The first meeting was held in April, 1848, at the home of Albert Belden in Rock Hill, Connecticut. The group had fifteen members. Joseph Bates was the leader. The principal subject was the law of God, including the keeping of the Sabbath.²

In August, another Bible study group was held in the home of David Arnold, in Volney, New York. "About thirty-five were present." The Bible discussion was about the millennium, and the Lord's Supper. But there were discordant views--at first "hardly two agreed" as all expressed themselves "according to their opinion of Bible teaching." But the sessions closed in harmony.³

They continued with other "Sabbath Conferences," which could very well be called Bible study groups. In these meetings, certain definite doctrinal conclusions were formulated. The doctrines were

¹Ellen G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), p. 64.

²Idem, pp. 110-111.

³Loc. cit.

re-studied and tested by Scriptural authority. It must be emphasized again that a beautiful system of truth came to the Seventh-day Adventist church through prayer and extensive Bible study in groups.

All of these examples point out how important and vital are small group meetings. T. Ed Barlow has this to say: "The sensitive churchman will recognize the universal appeal of the small group of committed persons meeting regularly for mutual strength, growth, and spiritual direction."¹

¹T. Ed Barlow, Small Group Ministry in the Contemporary Church (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1972), p. 42.

CHAPTER II

APPROACHES AND METHODS APPLICABLE TO A BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Those who have had considerable experience with Bible study groups offer some suggestions which we shall present in this chapter.

The term "study" must be rightly understood in this connection. It allows proper place for acquiring knowledge about the Bible and the understanding of its teachings, its modes of thought, and its history. Some groups regard themselves primarily in this learning sense. The term is usually interpreted to mean more than this, however. It stands for the immediate and personal engagement of the one studying with the message of the Bible and its claim and meaning for his own personal life. It asks how the Bible "finds" him, where it speaks to his heart, how it brings him face-to-face with God.

Essential to this and all that is undertaken by a group is the daily reading and thinking carried on by the members. The learning and preparation are done between the meetings of the group; at the meeting itself, members are ready to share with one another the outcome of their week's work. Willingness to do this work becomes a measure of the member's commitment to the whole venture which the group has undertaken together.

Cannot satisfying Bible study be achieved alone? Yes, to a degree. But joining with others in thought-provoking, soul-searching Bible study exercises a unique mental and emotional influence upon one. In a group, Bible study takes on a new dimension. As a person engages with others in Bible study, he profits from what others learn. Thus he gains more balanced points of view. He learns to evaluate his own ideas as he comes to respect the conflicting views of others. He becomes able to pick out more quickly just what is being said in the group. He finds himself reacting to others more quickly and more accurately. By studying with others, he thus gains increasing ability to see spiritual truth as it is.

Another deeper value of taking part in a Bible study group is that it helps a person understand himself better. He is influenced to use the Bible and think through his own problems as others in the class discuss theirs. This new concept of himself as a sincere, learning person, free and encouraged to grow, becomes a unifying, motivating power in his development. The warm fellowship that he finds in a Bible study group also aids his spiritual growth. New friends enrich his life. The old friends which he now comes to know better take on added significance for his life. Now, he understands people better.

To change, to grow spiritually, is one's goal as a member of the Bible study group. He can do this far better in a group of persons with like spiritual purpose than he can do it alone.

Different Approaches to the Group Format

The most natural and effective way to introduce Bible study in a group is through asking good questions. Questions should be asked which indicate to the members that we approach our Bible study with an honest exploring, open mind. Though all should have prepared well, they should not come with a prefabricated, predigested "message" or an inflexible interpretation of the Scripture passages. All have come to join with group members in discovering, with the Holy Spirit's aid, what Christ is saying to all through His Word.

At this point we suggest some useful techniques that we have gathered from a wide range of sources¹ such as:

1. Direct the question to the group as a whole first, then to a particular person in the group. This keeps the entire group thinking about the answer.
2. Ask easier questions first and more difficult questions later. This is particularly important for the more timid members of the group who need to be drawn into the discussion.
3. Let the question be asked with a view to gaining a good response.

¹Joseph M. Gettys, How to Teach the Bible (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1956), pp. 106-109; Tom Rees, Break-Through (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1970), pp. 22, 23; John Casteel, Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups (New York: Association Press, 1957), pp. 68-71; The General Conference Sabbath School Department, Teaching Teachers to Teach (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1964), pp. 217-252.

4. Ask questions which presuppose the member's possession of the biblical information which we want them to have.
5. Avoid simple "yes-no" questions, except on such occasions as when taking a survey of the members' biblical knowledge or opinions, setting the situation for thought questions immediately to follow.
6. Avoid directing a question of biblical fact or interpretation to a particular group member who might be unable to answer and thus be embarrassed.
7. Ask questions which require members to analyse biblical statements, to express approval or disapproval of the clear implications of Bible truth.
8. Ask questions to start with that go to the heart of the central truth of the passages. To allow for sufficient time to explore possible answers is not "wasting time."
9. Ask questions which involve members emotionally; for it is in this way that we draw the heart as well as the head into serious study of God's Word.
10. Avoid preaching questions. Questions should honestly seek information, call for interpretation, or give opportunity for genuine response as to the member's opinions or feelings. They should not be used to moralize.
11. Avoid "whipping" questions. If group members do not like to be preached at in the guise of questions, neither do they want to be chastened with questions.

12. Ask questions about what members can do now, not about what they should have done in some past failures.

Thinking of "now" and the future in obeying Christ is more spiritually profitable than dwelling on the depressing past.

13. Ask questions which lead members to think in constructive terms rather than in negative terms.

A set of questions which is particularly useful in helping a group to internalize Scriptural truth is suggested by Tom Rees:

What is the main truth of this passage?

What other Scripture can we find to illuminate this verse?

Is there any word or part of this verse which we do not understand?

Is there a good example to follow?

Is there a command, a word of advice, here to obey?

Is there a sin or mistake to avoid?

Is there a warning to heed?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there a prayer to echo?

How can we see our own experience reflected here?

How can we apply this Scripture to practical, everyday life?

How can we turn this verse into a prayer?¹

Writers urge that groups vary their approaches from meeting to meeting. This variation may not be a scientifically calculated

¹Rees, pp. 22, 23.

movement from one procedure to the next week by week, but it does suggest that in the course of a month more than one method of involving the group in Bible searching, reflection, discussion and decision making should have been employed.

This variety should not be for variety's sake alone; there should be good reasons for using particular methods during certain study sessions.

A survey of various approaches that have been suggested yields the following:¹

Group Conversation

This group study process is useful in the early history of a group because it helps members to get acquainted and establish a communication relationship with one another. When possible, the topic of informal conversation is chosen to have implications for the Bible study to follow and for the achieving of our aim. When members are talking with one another, move into more direct Bible study.²

Assignment--Report Forum

In this approach, the leader and the members of the group make an assignment to one or more members which requires work outside of meeting. It may require (1) study; (2) reflection; (3) interview; (4) an experiment or project in Christian living; or other similar

¹The writer has attempted to adapt some procedures not originally used with Bible study groups.

²Paul F. Douglas, The Group Workshop Way in the Church (New York: Association Press, 1956), p. 149.

activity.¹ The assignment is carried out and the findings reported including feelings and interpretations of their experiences.

Case Study Forum

This procedure is a basic approach, even though it obviously must be implemented by lecture, informal discussion, or filmstrip.²

The case may come from the actual experience of someone in the group from literature, from history, or elsewhere. The situation involved must be related both to the central truth of the Bible passages being studied and to class members' spiritual concerns. The case situation may include an unsolved problem to which some specific aspect of biblical truth might be addressed. An advantage of this approach is that we often can help members with spiritual problems without the risk of alienating them by being too personal.

The group itself, in using the case presented to it, needs to (1) identify the basic problem which the case presents, (2) relate that problem to the situation of the group or to the problem with which the group is dealing, (3) work out some solution for the case situation and compare it with the problem of the group; test the solution by reasoning and role-playing, if possible.³

Study Forum

In using the small-group forum, the suggestion is to divide the large group into smaller subgroups. This is to facilitate

¹Gettys, pp. 99-102.

²David J. Ernsberger, Educational For Renewal (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), pp. 107-109.

³John W. Keltner, Group Discussion Processes (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p. 52.

closer attention to selected aspects of the biblical material or its implications. Each group might choose a discussion leader to keep the session moving and later to report to the larger body. After twelve to fifteen minutes of small-group study, the groups are called back to the larger circle, and reports are submitted for general group reactions.

Subject assignments for the small groups can vary widely, of course. They might be asked to search the Scripture passage for significant statements, or they might be asked to seek agreement on certain teachings in the passage, or analyze the biblical content. The group might attempt to agree upon what a group member can do in response to the teaching of God's Word on specific issues.

Role Playing

In role playing, members are lead in a spontaneous, impromptu acting out of a spiritual problem situation, often involving a conflict in human relationships. Then the group analyzes the feelings and attitudes portrayed and relates this experience to the biblical passage under study. Several forms of role playing help achieve stimulating Bible study.¹

Another approach is to role play some situation suggested by the passage under study.

¹For a thorough analysis of the role play as a learning device see, Allan F. Klein, How to Use Role Playing Effectively (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 15.

This is a simple playlet approach which might be used to explain a biblical situation, spiritual problem, or other life relationship which is important to a member's gaining of depth of insight into Biblical truth.

Here is an excellent example presented by Robert C. Leslie:

After the story has been read, the class forms into circles of not more than twelve, clasping hands and crowding together so that shoulders touch. One member absents himself from the group and becomes the prodigal son approaching a group of friends and asking their help. The circle is instructed not to let the supplicant in but to reject him in a direct and forthright fashion, using whatever language seems appropriate. The prodigal son attempts to force his way through the circle but is held out by force. He then turns away and leaves.

The prodigal son makes a second attempt at getting into the group. This time the group welcomes him warmly. . . .

After each member who cares to has had the experience, both of rejection and of acceptance, the group discusses the kinds of feelings they experienced.¹

The main point is that role playing is used to make a situation, problem, or incident real and thereby to make it possible for the group to understand it and to discuss or cope with it.

Klein has listed several values of the role play:

1. We can put ourselves into other people's shoes to see how they feel.
2. We devise our own situations, establish our own roles as we see them.

¹Robert C. Leslie, Sharing Groups in the Church (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 42, 43. Leslie see the role-play as a "more-than-verbal" method of communication: "To play a role is to act out situations rather than simply talk about them." pp. 175, 176.

3. We can observe and analyze objectively because it is a role that is being played.
4. We can learn by doing.
5. We can explore our own feelings and gain insight.
6. In role playing and subsequent discussion, the group teaches and helps itself.
7. It is almost a sure-fire way to obtain total participation of the members.¹

Test Forum

With proper advance understanding and agreement of the group, members are asked to take a written test based on important aspects of the passage for study. The papers may then be collected, mixed, and redistributed for reading aloud. Or the group may read all the answers. The rest of the session is spent discussing the best answers to the questions, in the light of the passage under study.

Colloquy

In this approach, it is suggested that one or more members be assigned the task of coming as well informed as possible about the meaning or implications of the Bible passages involved. These members become resource persons. The rest of the group is divided into two or more sections. Members of each group choose a discussion leader-spokesmen. Then they phrase from their advance study the

¹Klein, pp. 165-167.

two or three most significant questions which they feel are involved in the passage. After twelve or fifteen minutes of small-group discussion, spokesmen from the small groups would come before the group with their questions to sit as a panel half-facing the resource persons and the rest of the group. The leader serves as moderator.¹

First one group spokesman and then another puts a question to the panel of resource persons. The panel of spokesmen and the panel of resource persons first seek the best answer to each question. Then the leader and the rest of the group may come in on the discussion.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is described as another valuable approach in learning which might be employed in Bible study sessions. Members are invited to react creatively and honestly, and quickly to important yet difficult implications in the Bible passage. The call is for immediate response in thoughts and feelings of members. As the members respond, scribes write their statements without questioning on the chalkboard. When all responses have been accepted without criticism and written down, the group is then lead to analyze, organize, perhaps refine, the ideas, and get them into a form agreeable to the group.²

¹Martha M. Leypoldt, 40 Ways to Teach in Groups (Valley Forge, Pa.: The Judson Press, 1970), p. 51.

²See a discussion on this teaching method in Charles H. Clark, Brainstorming (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958).

Circular Response

Another way of introducing variety in a Bible discussion group is what has been termed the "Circular Response." Participants are seated in a circle. A thought-provoking question is asked. One member is asked to begin with a response and the one beside him is to react to his response and so on around the circle. No one is to be left out.¹

Written Survey

The group is asked to participate in a written poll or survey. The survey may be a questionnaire, an opinionnaire, or other form of reaction sheet. First, members write their responses to a biblically based question. Responses are either called out or listed on the chalkboard. Tabulation or analysis of responses follows.²

Picture Study

At some point in the Bible study group, place before them a picture with religious significance. The picture may portray a biblical scene, or it may show or suggest biblical or spiritual meanings. Ask members to study the picture silently from some clearly stated point of view. Ask group members to interpret the feelings of biblical characters, to identify biblical truth in the

¹Harold D. Minor, Creative Procedures for Adult Groups (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 142-144.

²Mary Alice Douty, How to Work With Church Groups (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp. 98-100.

scene, to express what spiritual meanings they see in the picture, etc. Then use the responses in moving more deeply into a study of the passage.¹

Reflection-Response

Often the time arrives during the group meeting when members need to reflect seriously and silently upon some Biblical truth or implication. The question or other spiritual problem is stated and members are given ten or twelve minutes in which to reflect upon it. They are called upon to share with the group what they think and feel about the matter. The group may be asked to read, reflect, or respond to a biblical passage. Or the reflection might be upon an interpretation of the passage which seems to pose a problem for Christian believers.

Testimony

This is a method with value in helping the group to internalize for themselves the value of an important biblical principle. At the right place in group discussion a member, who has possibly been approached in advance is invited to tell the group what this Bible truth has meant to him and how he makes use of it. His testimony is used then as a further basis for group discussion.

¹Minor, pp. 106-109.

Panel

Another form of discussion is the panel, in which from three to five people informally discuss some subject with one another under the guidance of a moderator or panel leader who introduces the subject and helps keep the discussion on the track.

The panel may be several members of a group, who meet outside to work on a special subject for presentation to the whole group. To see three or four persons actually thinking together is a stimulating experience, and often brings new insights to other members of the group.

Lecture

It is probably the most commonly used group method and is also probably the most over-used. A speaker who can get the attention of the group at the beginning, and who can move along a clear route to a definite goal, often causes people to respond in an active mental participation which, though non-verbalized, leads to later effort. Giving needed information, stimulating interest, pulling segmented parts together into a meaningful whole--these things often need doing. When the lecture does what is needed to further the progress of the group, it is not outmoded. And it is quite possible that a lecture sometimes articulates the feeling and thinking of a group in a way that draws the members closer together.

Reflection Prayer

This may be used by asking the members to pause during group discussion, reflect upon what has been said, and sincerely pray about it as it relates to Christ's will, their own understanding and attitudes, and their response to God's Word.

All these variations (and others left out to shorten the list) lead to a process of exploring, sharing, learning, discovering, doing, and growing in the knowledge of the Bible. These different approaches promote a healthy climate of involvement, participation and teamwork. The moments of face-to-face discussion provide an opportunity for social and spiritual development. The strength of each member can be multiplied by the strength of all the other members. "Sharing together, centered in the Word of God, is an essential element in Christian growth."¹

Whether we use the case study, role playing, colloquy, brainstorming, or other approaches, we should take time to help the group members probe deeply for spiritual insights. Allow the procedure to run its course, every step in a manner satisfying to the group. Thus we will find members coming eagerly to new ways of Bible analysis and interpretation.

In these different approaches the group leader should guide the direction of the members' participation, insuring fair play in discussion time, keeping the Bible study group purposeful.

¹Lawrence O. Richards, Creative Bible Study (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 11.

Different Methods of Bible Study

The Bible is an exhaustless treasure; it is so vast a book and its aspects so numerous that a variety of approaches as we noted above, are adaptable to its study. Following we shall examine some ways or methods of studying the Bible. Again, the material is suggestive and not exhaustive. Each method is valid and valuable, and no single one ought to be followed to the exclusion of the others.

We recognize that we are living in a new day and that it has become necessary to revise the practice of our Bible study method from those followed by some of the great spiritual giants of former days. It is not beneficial in great extent to open the Bible at random each day and study the particular verse or passage which catches our eyes. Some people believe that we should have a method of study of the Bible, and it should be somewhat systematic.

Verse-by-verse Method

One of the most common methods is the verse-by-verse Bible study. For this study it is obviously necessary to have at least the suggested tools at our disposal: Various versions and translations of the Scriptures which appeal to us. A workable concordance, e.g., Young, Strong, or Cruden. A Bible dictionary for word study in the original languages. Writings of Ellen G. White. The SDA Bible Commentary, Lange's Commentary, the Expositor's Bible Commentary or others.

The passage can be worked through exegetically. Study the text in its context asking: What actually happened, or was happening at the time these words were written? What did these words mean as the writer used them? Cultivate a sense of living into the text getting a sense of living people hearing the living Word. Analyze and disclose the truths of the text. Study the arguments and conclusions in the verse and context. Understand the meaning of important phrases and words which appear to relate to the arguments, themes, and conclusions found in the text. As time permits, the passage can be set against the works of devotional writers such as Ellen G. White.

Subject Method

Another method of Bible study frequently used is that of the "subject" method. A biblical theme is selected such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the nature of man, sin, redemption, forgiveness, or prayer.

An example: "Love."

A card bearing a name and a question is handed each group participant. Each question is numbered. One might have a total of four different questions; each question is assigned to two or three members of the group for consideration, depending on the size of the group. The questions are then taken in the order in which they are numbered.

As an example, the first question might be: "According to the Bible, how important is love?" The second question: "How would

you define New Testament Christian love?" The third question: "What is the source of Christian love or what is the secret of love?"¹

Questions for future studies might be: "What does the Bible teach about the Father's love for His Son?" "In what practical ways would our love for Christ be seen?" "Is the love of God for the sinner the same as His love for His children?" "In what ways does God manifest His love towards us?" "Several Scriptural texts exhort us to imitate God's love; can you find the reference?" "The gospels name several persons whom Jesus loved. Who were they?" "In what specific ways should our love for others manifest itself?"

Other authors suggest topics such as the following: "What do I believe about God?" "Is morality the same as Christian Faith?" "Who is God?" "Who is Jesus Christ?" "What relationship does the Christian faith have to my job?" "What is a Christian home?" "Is there a place for forgiveness?" "What is death?" "What is the meaning of life?" "What is God through Scriptures saying to me now?" "Who am I?" "What is the purpose of my life?"²

Casteel reports his experience with groups who studied many topics: They "were set free to search for the truth about Christ with eager minds and spirit. There was a drawing together of the members into a new revelation of God himself."³

¹Rees, pp. 55-71.

²Arthur T. Person, Knowing the Scriptures Rules and Methods of Bible Study (New York: Gospel Publishing House, 1910), pp. 205-207.

³See Casteel, p. 27.

Some writers are helpful at this point by making a distinction between a topic and a problem.

Topics, it is suggested, should be couched in short phrases. The significant characteristic of a topic is that it does not state a problem, but rather identifies a broad general area in which the discussion can take place. The topic is a statement of a general area of investigation. The problem is a more specific identification of a situation that the group wishes to solve. Topics may be regarded as the starting point of many discussion problems. But they are not the problem.

Mastering Separate Books Method

When the members of Bible study group are showing signs of spiritual growth and development, a book of the Bible may be selected for study. This method of study, experimenters' report, may prove to be the most thorough, the most difficult, but one that yields the best and most permanent results. A report of this method will occupy the greater portion of this chapter.

1. Select the Book. Since the success of this method hinges on a good choice of a book for each particular group, suggestions such as the following are made:

- a. For your first such experience choose a short book. The choice of a long book might lead to a discouragement. It will be so long before the final results, that the ordinary group member will give it up.

b. Choose a comparatively easy book. Some books of the Bible present some difficulties that we don't find in others. We may wish to study these difficult books of the Bible, but this is not for beginning groups. Donald Guthrie suggests that a group should start its book study with Mark's Gospel, because "it serves as an excellent introduction to the other three Gospels, and lays great stress on the activities of our Lord."¹

c. We should choose a book that is rich enough in its teaching to illustrate the advantages of this method of study.

2. Contents of the Book. With this method the group would need a contract or group pledge to read (and re-read) the book at a single sitting. Writers report that a book takes on new meaning and beauty with this sort of an acquaintance. It begins to open up. New relations between different parts of the book begin to disclose themselves. The book is grasped as a whole.

We have looked at some different methods in Bible study. Each one is valid, and each one is valuable. There are many other methods of Bible study. We will just mention some of them.

Bible Chapters Method

Units of Thought Method

Prayers Method

Words and Phrases Method

Doctrine Method

Biographic Method

What has been said is by way of example, to illuminate the different ways in which we can study the Bible in a group. These

¹Cited in Rees, p. 83.

various approaches, of course, will have to be adapted to each group and its particular character and situation.

CHAPTER III

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR GROUP WORK

Church Opportunity

Those who visit Brazil are surprised to see large, modern cities with modern industrial centers and active commercial sections. Their traditional universities and institutions of investigation, their great museums and monumental stadiums, and bold architecture are always a surprise and bring forth the admiration of the foreigners who do not know the real Brazil.

About twelve years ago, Brazil's population started to leave the coastal edge and penetrate more into the interior of this great country. As a consequence of this, we can verify everywhere a great and growing transformation.

Brazil is a country of youth, for 60 per cent of the total population of a little more than 102 million is under 25 years of age.¹ These young people, fighting against old and antiquated methods, are rising up, searching for new ideas.

The modern "isms," are determined to conquer the new generation. In the colleges and universities, youth are influenced by humanism,

¹William R. Read and Frank A. Ineson, Brazil 1980: The Protestant Handbook (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1973), p. xxvi.

existentialism, Freudianism etc. In our opinion this provides a great opportunity for the Adventist Church.

For a little more than five decades our evangelists, pastors and laymen have made a determined advance, facing the intolerance that was inspired by religious fanaticism inherited from Portugal. The Adventist penetration was mainly accomplished during this period in the rural areas far from the great cities. At first our gains were moderate, but a momentum was built up, and Brazil can now be described as providing a wide-open door of opportunity to preach the Gospel without limitations. It is time to preach, to witness, to publish and build--the people are responsive.

Dr. Donald A. McGavran in his remarkable book How Churches Grow, points out that: "In Latin America there are numerous Protestant Churches now growing at 50, 100 and more per cent. Opportunity is everywhere. . . ." ¹ What a solemn responsibility to carry the Gospel urgently to every city, village and hamlet. It means that all our forces must now be marshalled into a mighty crusade for Christ. The opportunity for evangelization of Brazil is right now.

Recognizing the importance of the hour in which we live as well as the extraordinary opportunities and possibilities existing for Seventh-day Adventist church growth, we should mobilize all the energies, methods and resources for the proclamation of the Adventist message.

¹Donald A. McGavran, How Churches Grow (New York: Friendship Press, 1970), p. 5.

Church Responsibility

If we analyze the statistical report of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we shall find that it took precisely thirty-three years after its organization to baptize 52,000 members. It is encouraging to note that it took only ten years to reach another fifty thousand members. And more interesting yet is the fact that it took only five years to reach another fifty thousand.¹ We feel that we have the right to be jubilant when we are baptizing about forty thousand new members every year.²

The South American Division now, according to the Yearbook of 1973-1974, has 309,000 members of which 185,000 are located in Brazil.³ However, it should be noted that this church growth is not keeping pace with the population growth. In Brazil alone we have a population of 102,083,069 inhabitants.⁴

If all the conditions are favorable for church growth in Brazil, why don't we have a greater number of Seventh-day Adventist members? Several reasons might be cited, but unfortunately, associated with membership growth is also a bigger rate of member loss.⁵

¹Enoch de Oliveira, "Adventist Explosion in South America," The Ministry, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 9, (September, 1965), p. 12.

²H. J. Peverini, "South America," Review and Herald, (May 9, 1974), p. 30.

³Jesse O. Gibson, (ed.), Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973/4), p. 222.

⁴Read, p. xxv.

⁵Jesse O. Gibson, 110th Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists, 1972 (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: General Conference of S.D.A., 1972), p. 18.

What can we do to diminish this high number of defections? Tippett gives us a lead when he notes: "People have turned from the old way but have not been built up in the new way. Instead of inner growth there is a void."¹ Quantitative and qualitative growth should proceed together. The newly baptized member, generally, is relatively well indoctrinated. However, we are suggesting that we are failing to build up the new member "in the new way" of life.

Another important question is: Do we have enough ministers to nurture the newly baptized members and the church as a whole? In our opinion, the answer is, "no." In the year 1973 we had only thirteen per cent of the whole South American Division working force, working directly in front line ministry.² Then, what should we do?

Church Involvement

There is a growing conviction on the part of many that the church could do more to promote a climate of fellowship. As it is, people come together, sing a hymn, pray, hear a sermon and go on their way. Often it is the case that people come to church to sit and listen. Any conversation with others is usually on a superficial level. Frequently meetings are cold and impersonal. The Church does not promote mutual ministry. Believers come together for only an hour or two a week. When they are together, their role is

¹A. R. Tippett, Church Growth and the Word of God (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 62.

²Jesse O. Gibson, 110th Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists, 1972, p. 18.

primarily that of listeners, giving attention to a sermon or lesson. Most churchgoers leave the church without significantly interacting with anyone concerning the value of ideas expressed by the speakers.

Without deeply personal interaction, without discussion and sharing focused on biblical values, a sense of community cannot develop. And thus the church does in fact fail to provide the majority of its members with meaningful Christian nurture. In all honesty, may we not admit that this is an apt description of the church in Brazil and other parts of the world as it often exists today?

In the face of cultural forces, the church must seek to use effectively the mass media for communicating the Gospel. But, historically, the examples of the New Testament Church and centuries of Christian Church experience suggest that the process of nurturing the Christian life takes place within concrete situations involving persons in face-to-face relationships in small groups. The long process of promoting Christian nurture is a function of small groups or person-to-person ministry--the koinonia of the early church.

There is always something deficient about large crowds. "They tend to be aggregations rather than congregations--aggregations of unrelated persons."¹ Ellen G. White came to the conclusion that "if there is a large number in the church, let the member be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for

¹John R. W. Stott, One People (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), p. 70.

unbelievers."¹ As matter of obvious note, the great attraction of the large church for some people is its possibility for anonymity--a niche of privacy to which one can repair and then slip away without the inconvenience of being known. The church, as it presents itself to the community, is only a vast collection of different people with different motivations, heterogeneous abilities whose lowest common denominator could not care less about getting deeply involved with anyone. This is the Brazilian situation and certainly, it is also true in America.

As a result, there is a need for large congregations to be divided into smaller groups such as we can imagine the house-churches were in New Testament days.²

Our growth into Christian maturity, according to the purpose of God, takes place in the context of a family group. To learn to trust, to learn to love, and become loving, to be concerned for needs of each other, and to minister to each other, to encourage each other, we must become deeply involved in the lives of others, to whom we commit ourselves in Christ. To develop this kind of relationship we need to share ourselves with others, and they need to share themselves with us. This being true, Richards concludes, "a church is forced to move to a small group structure."³

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1902), Vol. 7, pp. 22, 23.

²Rom. 16:3-5; Phil. 1-2.

³Lawrence O. Richards, A New Face For The Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 153.

Role of the Pastor

The pastoral oversight of the congregation does not belong exclusively to the ordained minister. The Scripture indicates that each member of the church is his brother's keeper. It is in fellowship groups that the ideal can become a reality, in which all learn to care for each other.

The hardest and most rewarding pastoral task is the development of strong leaders within the church to assist in pastoral ministry. Wesley C. Baker, in describing the work of the pastor, puts it this way: ". . . a pastor is only validly a pastor when he rightly represents the pastorate of that congregation. He is only so when he is a pastor among pastors. Unless that which he symbolizes is actual, he is not even yet a pastor himself."¹ (Emphasis supplied).

The apostle Paul in Eph. 4:11 gives us the primary role of the minister. He is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry." His work is then clearly defined as preparing the people of God to minister.

The minister of the church should acknowledge his responsibility to be an equipper and an enabler of all church members, particularly the church officers.

Another important fact, the pastor should not be the only enabler in the church. Since the enabling ministry is a part of his ministry, he should enable the staff, teachers, officers, committee

¹Wesley C. Baker, The Split-Level Fellowship (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 140.

members, ordinary members to be enablers of God's gifts among the church members.

The pastor must ever be alert to better methods of helping and enabling his congregation work for the Lord, to nurture each other. The better organized his methods, the more he will get done and the happier he will be in his work. He will have more time to devote to study, his preaching will improve, more people will come to hear him speak and the results will be church growth and members spiritually nurtured.

PART II

REPORT OF AN EXPERIMENT WITH A BIBLE STUDY GROUP

CHAPTER IV

PROJECT REPORT

Locale and Physical Arrangements

After studying with great interest the procedures of group dynamics as applied to Bible study with the objective of nurturing spiritual growth, the task was undertaken to make an experimental study with a Brazilian group resident in the city of Chicago.

This Brazilian group is formed of members of four different Seventh-day Adventist churches. Wilson H. Endruveit, who is pastor and is writing his Ph.D. dissertation for Chicago University, is the natural leader of this group. Knowing of our interest in having this experimental Bible-study group, Pastor Endruveit moved quickly to help us arrange for this program.

The location of the meeting place was in a newly organized Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Church. It is a large church building with good facilities. A comfortable room of adequate size, pleasant surroundings, and good lighting and ventilation, was chosen.

There were available four five-foot tables which were arranged in a hollow square when necessary, these were divided into three or four separate tables for different study approaches. Also there was a supply of simple, comfortable, movable chairs of adult size.

This location has been used during the week by an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

In getting ready for the meeting, we came about fifteen minutes early to work out the different details in advance according to the need of that particular day of Bible study.

Because of the size of the group, the circular arrangement was used most frequently for the first part of the group presentation. Then the group divided and went to different tables for the discussion.

Aside from occasional external distractions of city noise, it can be said that the meeting place was satisfactory for our needs.

Time Factors

From past experience as pastor, we know that timing is one of the most difficult tasks. However, the Spanish Church was preparing a special program for its members in Denominational History, Bible Doctrines and The Art of Bible Studies, using special guest speakers, from 3:30 P.M. to 5:25 P.M. This extraordinary opportunity was seized to include our program for the Brazilian members. It was quickly accepted because it was also a special program for them in their mother language.

Elder Endruveit took the responsibility of calling the Brazilians who attend other churches in the Chicago area.

At the first meeting, the program, its objectives and procedures were discussed. The group established the length of the meetings to be two hours; after some considerations of this resolution, the Spanish members of the church made necessary changes in the printed program to accommodate the Brazilian group.

It was agreed to hold to a specific starting time, 4:00 P.M., and also to close at a scheduled time, 6:00 P.M. The Brazilian people usually do not pay too much attention to the time factor. But it worked out as it had been planned throughout the meetings.

That the group might gain added experience, an attempt was made to find a day in addition to Saturday to hold meetings, but it was absolutely impossible. Some couples worked in different shifts because of their children. Others worked overtime or had two jobs. So the only day available was the Sabbath. This discussion indicated how busy these people were and gave some evidence of their background.

The Spanish Church had planned to have only six meetings, but the Brazilian group decided to have another six meetings, which filled out the needs of the project.

At the last meeting the group decided to have one more meeting as a celebration in a very pleasant place in a park area of Chicago. There they had a profitable and spiritual meeting, followed by a good potluck meal.

Attendance

Attendance was excellent. Only two missed one or more meetings because of sickness. This excellent attendance showed the good interest of the group and also how they stick together. One reason for this good attendance was that more than half of the group is related to each other by family ties. Also, they live in a foreign country with very limited social life. So, this Bible study group was a welcome opportunity for them to be together and study the Bible

in their mother tongue. In addition the Spanish Church was holding special meetings for their members and secondly, they knew in advance that the meetings had a limited time for their sessions. These are some psychological reasons for the good attendance.

Size of the Group

One of the objectives of the Bible study group was to encourage face-to-face relationships. The plan was to have a group of eight to twelve members so that all participants could speak to one another. This would avoid centralization around a few people.

Because the Brazilian group felt that it was a good opportunity for them to be together once a week and study the Word of God in their own language more people came to the meetings than had been expected. Usually there were seventeen present, but there were some days that nineteen or twenty-one attended. Since we had an adequate and comfortable meeting place, this number of members in the group did not bring any difficulties in moving from a larger group to subgroups, and did not affect to a great extent the interaction. Although we would have preferred the smaller group, we were pleased that more people could have the blessings of this Bible study group.

Meeting Purpose

It was settled at the very beginning that Bible study is a serious enterprise and it is better to secure a relative depth as soon as possible. From the beginning the group was quickly persuaded that Bible study is worth doing and worth earnest effort.

From past experience in the ministry and as a Bible teacher, we know that to meet and try to guess the meaning of a passage may be an interesting parlor game but it is not Bible study. Even the method of sharing experiences by putting question marks, exclamation marks or stars against different verses yields some fruitful discussion, but is not digging deeply enough into the meaning of a passage or topic. A sharing of impressions about a Bible passage or topic has its place, but it is not enough. The members wished to discover new truths and to become better informed about their Bible. We also wanted to have something that could challenge our own experience.

It was thought that if the study remained at a superficial level, the more intelligent members would tend to pursue their own personal Bible study and eventually they would drift away from the group. This would be a loss both to the group and to themselves. Superficial Bible study also allows too much opportunity for people who speak easily and tend to monopolize the meeting. Then it was decided to bring to the group a task which could be rewarding if they worked at it.

For every meeting something was selected that was rooted in the real world in which the members live, the everyday life of the members. Every member was encouraged to think of the verse or even the chapter which was being studied in relation to his work, his home, his family, and his relationships with other people, and even further, to community life, and to the political life.

The purpose was not only to bring concerns of the world life into the group and relate them to Bible study, but also to make the

effort to live by what has been learned. We tried to expose the group members to the Word of God as it is heard in the passage studied. It was no longer the mere acquisition of knowledge; rather, the passage or topic discussed became a means of inner exploration.

Among the purposes for Bible study, there was one that had a primary function for the group. This was the nurture of its own members. The task of nurturing the members of the group as we saw it, was to make Bible study a spiritual resource available in the most helpful way to every member, in order that every member might reach that place at which he would be living life from the spontaneous overflow. We had the conviction that if a person is truly born into the people of God, his life will sound a note which rings true.

We know that the members learn by doing and are nurtured by the acceptance of responsibility for sharing, witnessing, and service that involves sacrifice in helping to evangelize their fellowmen. But most of all, the members need God. They need to nurture themselves in the Word of God in a Christian fellowship. When they are built up in God's love then they not only want to but are able to share it. For this reason, this Bible study group was primarily to help its members to build themselves up in the Christian faith and experience. From the beginning, the group moved toward this purpose. The group did not get off the track and did not spend time on extraneous matters. Significant differences of opinion were identified. Conclusions were reached, and decisions were reached and demonstrated. Every meeting was concluded with a sense of accomplishment.

Interaction Observer

For the three first successive meetings an observer was designated by the group to make notes on the way in which the group operated. He was in the group, but he did not take part in its discussion. His task was to keep a record of how the members discussed rather than what they discussed. The observer was used openly. His responsibility was made clear, and his findings discussed in open meeting. That was done because Brazilian people are very suspicious. But with all these precautions, there was some resistance. They said that it was distracting and worrying the people about their role and participation. The observer was also the best man as a resource person, and the group was losing his contribution. So, the group decided that during the following sessions, they would do better without the observer. After the observer participation was omitted, the group worked more freely.

However, from the data received we could identify that until the third meeting only eleven persons in a group of seventeen were interacting on a verbal level. One lady was isolated, except for the nonverbal response. Five ladies participated very little. There were four members with a high degree of interaction with the group. They are leaders of great potential, but they did not cause any problems of monopoly or manipulation. In general, the interchange appeared quite balanced.

It was discovered that the roles most frequently performed were information-giving, followed by clarification. Information-

giving was used and needed in the first session of the meeting. There was one person who functioned too much as an opinion-giver.

Because we had stopped the observer function in the third session, we kept analyzing and diagnosing the group's procedures and performances as they developed in subsequent sessions in post-session periods of evaluation. Theoretically, everyone should have interacted with all the others. However, there were some barriers of communication or lack of involvement on the part of one or two members. Nevertheless, as a whole, there was good involvement.

The discussions in the larger group and subgroups were high in their orientation to the subject. There were no external subjects discussed. The group had a positive attitude and a right spirit for group study.

Our instruments for evaluation and analysis were borrowed from several sources.¹

Homogeneity and Cohesiveness

Our group did not share the same background of experience, education, and interest. The things they had with a relative homogeneous background and experience were their confession of faith and the language.

¹Theodore M. Milles, Group Transformation - An Analysis of a Learning Group (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964); Robert R. Powell, Managing Church Business Through Group Procedures (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 81-102; George M. Beal, Leadership and Dynamic Group Action (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1962), pp. 289-343; and William S. Smith, Group Problem-Solving Through Discussions (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 153-167.

The group consisted of married couples and unmarried individuals. There were both men and women, having a wide spread of ages, and variety of professions and occupations.

Although members of the group had many things in common, there were a number of elements of heterogeneity that had to be taken into account. It was our experience, however, that these differences did not affect group life adversely, but demonstrated rather that some heterogeneity adds interest and challenge to the emergence of group spirit.

Because this group is living in a foreign country with cultural differences, they naturally stick together. They exhibit a team spirit of helping one another. This encourages productivity and communication. They distributed the work load among themselves. They were closely linked together by telephone. An intense sense of togetherness exists in their midst as is demonstrated by the fact that they spend time and effort in behalf of the group.

Because of the common language, culture, and religion, this group is very well identified in its major objectives and high solidarity. We can say that they were and are a highly cohesive group. And this cohesiveness contributed to large degree in the success, the vitality, and the accomplishments of this Bible study group.

Degree of Informality

The members took the Bible study meetings seriously. It was not just another meeting to them. They entered into it with a degree

of earnestness commensurate with the importance of the study. And the degree of informality was in harmony with the task of the meeting. The members appeared to be comfortable with the way the meetings were structured. In the beginning, however, there was a reluctance on the part of some to participate because of their fear of appearing foolish or of displaying their uncertainties. But real progress came after about the third meeting when the members of the group began to feel at home, and then felt free to take part.

Eventually, every person felt at home in the group. Each person felt that his presence was desired by the rest of the group, that his opinions were respected and needed, and that the other members of the group were concerned about him. These group qualities were probably facilitated by the fact that individual members already knew each other well. They already felt that they belonged, were accepted and wanted by other members of the group. As individuals there was some built-in commitment to the group. Every member knew the other by name. The larger difficulty in the beginning was for the writer to relate personally to each member of the group, and to remember his name.

As the group developed, we saw emerging an atmosphere of respect for the thinking, the ideas, and the consideration of ideas which each had to give. We saw respect shown for contributions made even by most faltering, as well as the most fluent.

In almost every meeting the larger group was broken up into smaller groups of six or seven persons. This grouping was done quickly and informally, everyone joined a group in his immediate

vicinity, keeping the voices low, and everybody had a chance to express himself in a conversational manner.

After the meeting was over, participants usually greeted one another warmly as many small conversations sprung up around the room. Several went to the leader of the group and took up some point which had been discussed in the meeting. Others nodded thoughtfully and listened to their comments.

Really, there was an informal, and friendly atmosphere at all the meetings. This was evident in their smiles, their conversation, and their easy approach to each other during and after the meeting. They showed appreciation of their knowledge and they clearly enjoyed being a part of this group. As noted below, however, much of this interchange remained on the idea and social level.

The Brazilian Personality

Brazil is a predominantly Catholic country, but freedom of worship is endorsed by the Constitution. A country with a high immigration rate and with a diversified population, Brazil is an example of successful racial inter-association and fortunate integration. Although the white race is numerically dominant, there is a widespread miscegenation with groups of African, Oriental and indigeneous origin.

This mixture of different races, nationalities, and cultures has produced the Brazilian of today: a happy, gregarious, friendly, and resourceful type. It is true, however, that the character of the people of Brazil, perhaps more than in any other country on the

globe, varies from region to region. For example, the easygoing Northeasterner is quite different from the Paulista, who is full of energy and ambition. Typical of the vast rolling prairies is the gaucho (cowboy), rugged and freedom-loving.

Generally speaking, the Brazilians are a very extrovertive and communicative people. They are characterized by their generosity and friendliness to guests. They act very much in the realm of feelings. It is natural for Brazilian people to speak loudly, for the men to embrace each other, and women to kiss one another two or three times as compliments. They are polite, and generally they use all kinds of devices in order to avoid a negative answer. They do not like the word "no." Nevertheless, they may wear a mask to cover a possible hypocrisy.

Another point very important in our communication with the Brazilian people is that even though they are friendly they may also be distrustful. It is very hard for any Brazilian person to bring out his real problems in his inner life and open up before others in a meeting. I would say that it could happen only when a bond of mutual trust and confidence has been built up carefully after a period of time. In order to make this important point clear, we present the following parallel: In the States every person is free until he is proved to be guilty. Every person is trustworthy until he does something wrong. However, in Brazil it is just the opposite. A person is suspected until his fellowman can demonstrate that he is a trustworthy person.

A kind of experimental truth, a truth that is only really seen and understood by participation, sharing, and openness is possible with a Brazilian group only after hard work.

In religion, which we were studying, they like to discuss generalities, kicking around ideas, but avoiding personal application. Somebody told us: "My religion is a very personal thing and I don't want to talk about it."

To be successful, the leader of such a group needs to be aware of the Brazilian personality, and slowly build up confidence. Then the religion and inner life can be discussed. We are confident that in time we would have seen more of this. We believe people are the same everywhere.

Many persons bring a hidden agenda to meetings, waiting, even hoping, for the time to come when they can share their personal concerns with the group. However, as explained, since the Brazilian people are very slow in building up their trust, because they are very reserved in their inner life, we can say that in our Bible study group we only saw the beginnings of such self-disclosure in the period of time covered by this project. Although we did not experience the level of personal sharing we would like to have seen there was an environment of love and acceptance growing in the group; but apparently there was not enough time to enable the members to be really free in expressing themselves on the feeling and experience level.

The Leader's Role

Below the writer presents a first person account of how he perceived his role in this experiment along with an expression of the feelings and frustrations he experienced:

I have been in the ministry for many years and have taught on the college level for several years; however, this experiment placed me in a completely new situation. I did not feel well qualified for this responsibility. I did not have a clear notion of how I would function in order to get the best for our group procedures. After a long period of wrestling with experienced people through their writings, I decided to be guided by the following criteria which helped me very much:

Respect. As I respect my own feelings and experience, so I must respect the feelings and experiences of others.

Genuineness. I decided to be honest with myself, and, thus, with the members of the group.

Concreteness. I opened my mind in order to have a complete response.

I had two things in mind before starting the Bible study group. Interest must be maintained and there must be participation from all members of the group. The two things are linked. Thus, I introduced different methods and approaches for every meeting and I noted, analyzed the slightest sign of a flagging of interest.

Here are some hints that helped me to make the participation a blessing rather than a frustration to others:

1. Let the Holy Spirit be the teacher--don't preach.

2. Don't over-spiritualize or over-apply. Never say more than the Bible says.
3. Don't pontificate. If asked a question, turn it into a question for the group.
4. Don't feel responsible to correct every heretical idea that hits the airwaves in the course of discussion.
5. Look for fresh ways to see and say old truths. Avoid clichés.
6. Allow free, honest expression of feelings, and an opportunity to discuss their own and other's problems constructively.
7. Expect God to teach you more than you've ever learned before.

I got these norms from my intensive reading on this subject.

And through out the Bible study meetings I had to struggle with these principles. I had a hard time to change my way of leadership, because I have been using for a long time a mixture of autocratic and democratic leadership. In the beginning, I did not feel comfortable in my role. There were times when I was too anxious about the outcome to use my best judgment. Because of my past experience, I have a good conception of what goes on in men's minds and something of what transpires in the group, and I like to get to the point as quickly as possible.

Based on my experience, I did not have any difficulty with a strategy for starting things. Calling the meeting to order, proposing an agenda, raising a question, changing the direction of the

discussion, introducing a new idea, sharing information, classifying and summarizing was easy. However, my difficulty was in the realm of listening. I tried very hard to listen and to understand what they were saying. Nevertheless, in the midst of trying hard to listen, I was often racing my mind in an attempt to say something important. I found out that the discipline of listening is not easy because I am often too self-concerned to give myself completely to understanding what the other person is saying. I discovered that I have seemed to be a polite listener because my facial expression and my bodily stance indicated to the other person that I am listening, but "it isn't necessarily so." Conscious of this, I tried to listen not with ears only but with my eyes, my mind and my heart. By listening with my heart, I mean paying the strictest attention to another, listening without judgment or criticism, or superiority, but with love. After hard work on my part, I can say that I achieved a great deal; today I am a better listener.

Because for a long time I had not been a good listener, the pause was not welcome to me. I had trouble when there was a period of silence. In the beginning, I was impatient and nervously sought to fill the intervals. But, gradually I began to master this problem and I was able to wait calmly for the reaction of the group, allowing members time to digest what they had discovered.

There was another point that I had to fight. Almost all the time I had the answers for important questions. But I had in mind that it was better for the group to come to the answer on its own,

or perhaps even leave the question unanswered. In the beginning I felt impatient, but after some sessions I got used to waiting for the group's reaction.

From my searching, I came to the conclusion that the pastor as the spiritual leader must take the initiative and set the pattern. However, I have not always been able to be honest about myself nor have I been able to be open in genuine fellowship with the brothers. There are barriers in my own life that prevent me from modeling this openness. However, I found out that sharing together in the Word of God is an essential element in Christian growth. In a small, intimate fellowship, people's real problems must come into the open, and Bible truth, instead of being presented theoretically, must be revealed in action and in meeting men at their need. When the people find that I am honest and open, they can dare to be open with me. After long consideration, I came to the conclusion that I have to be more honest and open in sharing my Christian life. Then I thought, how intimate should I be? After some sessions I came to the conclusion that this must be answered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let us see the other side. Because of circumstances, I became the leader of the group. But gradually I was accepted as a member of the group, though in a different sense. In my new capacity I tried to identify in all possible ways with the group. I was open to accept influence from the member of the group in order to establish and maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to the group.

By accepting the influence of the group, I was able to see myself as similar to them, or to see myself as enacting a role reciprocal to that of the group. There was no need to perform an artificial role in order to achieve a good identification with the group.

I did not have difficulty in speaking in a natural tone of voice, and in maintaining a conversational discussion. I avoided at all costs the language of the pulpit and Christian clichés, and I spoke without any problem, their own language.

I tried to facilitate an environment in which was nurtured a sense of responsibility and caring for one another. The intent was to have an environment which encouraged freedom of expression, respect for each individual as a person, and a concentration upon trying to understand the individual and the meaning of his verbal and nonverbal expressions.

I tried also to help the people go to the heart of the Biblical passage, so that they might have a genuine encounter with Bible truths.

In looking ahead to the next meeting, I always had in mind the following questions: (1) What do I need in terms of personal preparation for the next meeting? (2) What can I do to prepare the group members for the next meeting? (3) What can I do in the next meeting to preserve the patterns of operation that were productive in this one, and what can I do to improve them? As I prepared for the next session, I did not intend to lead the group to conclusions which I foresaw, rather, let the conclusion come out of the discussion.

One thing I considered very important was to be sensitive to the feelings of the group members. I tried to be sensitive to that which lay behind their words.

I did not try to hurry the group along because of the feeling that a given amount of material had to be covered. I stayed with a passage, a topic, or some point until I sensed that the group was ready to move on.

Above all, I tried to be the servant of the group and encouraged all to have a sense of responsibility for the preparation and participation which have made the study a vital group experience.

Intentional behavior patterns such as we noted above have helped me change, although admittedly, the changes are slow.

Feelings About Myself

As in all new experiences, in the first meeting, I was reticent or, more bluntly, a little frightened and nervous because of my responsibility. It was my first experience with this type of meeting. I wondered for a while what I was doing there. However, the study of the Bible which was chosen, the "Great Lessons From Jonah," brought me back home. After about fifteen minutes of verse-by-verse exegesis, we began to get reaction and participation of the group. According to my judgment, when we subdivided the larger group into three smaller groups, we reached the highest point of that meeting. When all things were over, I had the feeling that we had accomplished the purpose of that meeting, and it was a good start.

At the second meeting I did not feel too nervous and everybody felt more relaxed and comfortable.

Third meeting. This was the easiest sessions to that point. I no longer felt the utter frustration of being nervous. I felt that at the moment I could say something without excitement or pressure. I had been able to get to know the group much better at the meal we had together in the home of one of the group. At this meeting we had some spontaneous, inspiring testimonies that gave me assurance that we were on the right track.

However, it was in the fourth meeting that we really came down to our problems and needs when we discussed the responsibilities and relationships between parents and their children. Just a few months before, several people of this group had been involved in the case of a daughter, who had just finished the high school and had run away from home with the purpose of marrying somebody against the will of their parents. After several days of searching with broken hearts, her parents located her and persuaded her to come home. She is now at our college in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the nursing school. She is happy, and is planning to marry with the parents approval. It was some time after this meeting that I became aware of this episode. The discussion of this meeting, really touched the life of a Christian home.

Fifth meeting. I felt lost after this meeting and my enthusiasm left me. It was a doctrinal study. The first one of five about the "Steps to Eternal Life." The group did not grasp the theme. We had used a visual-aid, an illustration was presented by an old lady that

was right on the focal point, but we all left the meeting feeling that we needed something more.

After many hours of reflection and study, I came to the conclusion that this type of Bible study is more difficult, and demands deeper thought. Then I had the temptation to change the subject, but at the same time I realized that it is vital for our spiritual life. So I decided to go ahead. We followed almost the same approach, with visual-aids we had prepared, and some illustrations, and the whole thing became different when we changed our language in the presentation of the topic. When we finished this doctrinal session, the group and I felt that we had been richly blessed with God's plan for our salvation.

In the tenth meeting I had the purpose of helping each member personally to affirm his view that in the plan of God for our salvation, Christ is all that we need. With role-playing of Martha and Mary, and the rich young ruler we had one of the most moving and member-involved sessions. The meeting ended with a very high spiritual tone. There was a reconsecration to Christ.

In order to "possess Christ" we have to "put off some things and put on something." This was the subject of the eleventh meeting, based on Ephesians 4:25-32. This meeting was very practical and touched on many points of our daily life. And our daily life can be transformed by God through Christ into a new life. It was the subject of the twelfth meeting: "God's Best For You," based in Romans 12:1-2. This was the last meeting, with a very warm fellowship and followed by a potluck meal.

I paid very close attention to the termination of the group meetings, because I know that the Brazilian people are very affectionate. So, I did not want to finish these meetings abruptly. I made preparation for its final session. From the beginning, the group knew when it was supposed to end. Instead of a drastic termination, I decided to make the separation easier. I invited the whole group to come to visit the Andrews University. After some discussion about the day and transportation, it was decided to be August 11. Twenty-eight of them came and stayed all day. They attended the worship at the Pioneer Memorial Church, after that we had dinner together with the Brazilian students from Andrews. Following this we had a tour through the campus. Six of them stayed with us until Sunday, and I went with them to see some historical points of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Battle Creek.

Later I received a letter from Wilson H. Endruveit with the following words:

I will take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the kindly reception we had at Andrews. Until today the Brazilian brethren are commenting about your hospitality. They enjoyed very much the trip to Andrews as well as to Battle Creek. My wife and I are thinking that you all were extraordinary people and we are pleading God to give you all the right reward for to make available a day of great social and spiritual blessings to our Brazilian brethren.¹

Presented below is a more detailed description of the meetings presenting the topics, methods and approaches used. For the sake of conciseness, some are in an outline form.

¹Wilson H. Endruveit, Letter, Chicago (September 11, 1974).

Session I

Seventeen came to the meeting. We called the meeting to order and after the welcome to all, we introduced ourselves. We did not spend too much time in getting acquainted since almost everybody knew each other.

Then we explained that those to whom we had talked before the meeting thought that our idea was a good one. We did not have a chance to discuss it with all. However, at this time we would like to explain the whole program. Following this we spent ten minutes describing clearly the objective of the meetings, its procedures, the time factor, and we welcomed any suggestions.

After these preliminary explanations we introduced our study of that meeting based on the book of Jonah, presenting an introductory lecture about the "Great Lessons From Jonah." We chose the book of Jonah because it has an immediate interest. Everybody has heard of Jonah and the whale. That is a misplaced emphasis and we did a great deal to correct the mistake and discovered that this book is the story of a reluctant missionary.

On the blackboard we had the following outline:

- Chapter I. Retreat
- " II. Repentance
- " III. Revival
- " IV. Rebellion

The members began their participation reading these sections. Then we attempted a verse-by-verse exegesis calling for their participation.

Buzz Groups:

Following the lecture, the large group was divided into three smaller subgroups. To each group was given paper with these suggested topics and questions for their discussion:

Topics:

The miracles.

The converted prophet.

The converted city.

The lesson of the "Gourd Vine."

Questions:

1. Can you find contrasts between the attitude of Jonah and that of other Biblical figures?
2. How do you harmonize the theme of Jonah with the idea of God's having a chosen people?
3. What basis was there for Jonah's feeling toward Nineveh?
4. Is one miracle more significant than another?

Before the groups began their assignment, someone gave the following illustration:

"Suppose some representative Jew during the Hitler regime had received a clear call from God to prophesy to Berlin with a promise of forgiveness of Nazi Germany and its escape from judgment. What would be the feeling?"

The buzz session started and we spent thirty minutes in it. Then the groups were called back to the larger group, and reports

were written on the blackboard and submitted for general group reactions. After a period of free discussion with fair participation, the whole group came out with these conclusions:

1. Purpose of the book: The world-wide interest and concern of the Lord.
2. Lessons from Jonah:
 - a) The universality of God's presence.
 - b) The universal concern of God for man.
 - c) The conditional nature of prophecy.
3. Application:

Personal responsibility.

Evaluation:

At the conclusion we had the following questionnaire:

1. What were the insights you gained about the book of Jonah?
Which were new insights?
2. How well did you like the method we used?
3. What values do you see in using activities like this to study the Bible?

On the second and third questions we had the following results:

Question 2.

good 14 fair 3 or poor 0

Question 3.

good 13 fair 4 or poor 0

By these results and the answers we got from the first question, we can say that the meeting had good acceptance.

The time of the meeting had a duration of two hours and ten minutes. It was concluded with a prayer.

Session II

At this second meeting twenty-one members were present. We followed the unity of thought method, based on Luke 19:1-9, with the purpose that "Repentance Requires Reformation."

We asked a man to be Zachaeus and to read in Luke 19 what Zachaeus said, and another one to be Jesus, reading Jesus' part. The narrative lines between the conversation of Jesus and Zachaeus were read by a lady. The rest of the group reacted as the crowd.

The reading of the different parts was not done very smoothly and distracted a little; however, the group got the whole picture.

After that the resource person read and commented from the book The Desire of Ages of Ellen G. White, the Chapter LXI, entitled "Zachaeus."

Next, we had a panel forum with an open discussion among the entire group about:

Barriers

Short and tall

Up a tree

Cut off

Public confession

Heart susceptible

After a half hour of intense interaction the group was divided into three subgroups to express ideas about "salvation" (Luke 19:9). The members were invited to react creatively and honestly to this

important matter. They spent about twenty minutes in small group discussion and spokesmen from the small groups came with their better points of view and wrote them on the blackboard. The rest of the session was spent discussing the best definition of "salvation" in light of the unit under study.

At this point we gave out a questionnaire.¹ The duration of this meeting was exactly two hours. It was ended with two voluntary prayers.

Session III

At this third session we had eighteen members present on time. We followed the study of the Bible by the chapter method. The chapter used was Acts 12:1-25. We entitled this study "The Ultimate Victory."

Our first approach which took fifteen minutes was an oral presentation of Herod's persecution and imprisonment of Peter. Next we had an outstanding role play. One of the group was imprisoned because of his fidelity in the observance of the Sabbath day. The

1Questionnaire and the results:	Very much		Very little	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
1. Tenho interesses espirituais nessas reuniões (I have spiritual interest about this meetings).	14	5	0	0
2. Estou participando desse grupo como descargo de participação social. (I'm participating in this group as social obligation).	1	0	2	16
3. Estas reuniões satisfazem minhas necessidades espirituais (These meetings are satisfying my spiritual needs).	12	3	3	1

group had prayer meeting for his deliverance. One young girl opened the door when somebody was knocking. The man was delivered, and it caused a manifestation of incredulity among the members.

The issue for the group was the following question: "If they were praying for Peter, why were there doubts about his deliverance?"

The large group was divided into three subgroups, and was requested to find suggestions for the solution.

After an adequate time, they returned to the general group. The suggestions were recorded on a chalkboard by the group leaders without any commentary. An open discussion followed. They evaluated the best solutions in harmony with the Bible.

Since the group had already been divided into small groups, this time they continued sitting in circle and we began a seminar on Herod's presumption.

To make this study more profitable, we spent about twenty minutes to find out specific lessons which were:

1. The powers of heaven are watching the warfare of God's servant.
2. Better understanding of the mission of the angels.
3. The purpose of prayer meetings.
4. The wrath of God and Justice.

It was interesting to notice that it was at this meeting that the group made some tentative attempts at sharing their personal feelings without being pushed for it, and there were some emotions involved.

Before the final prayer, we had the following test:

1. What does this study mean to me personally?
2. What changes will I make as a person because of this study?
3. How do I plan to use that which has been experienced in this session?

From this test we had some revealing answers, showing that the group was moving along nicely toward our objectives. Here are some of their testimonies:

"My Bible will become a new book to me as a result of these meetings."

"I have read that part of the Bible many times before, and had no idea there was so much in it."

"This has been one of my most exciting spiritual experiences of my Christian life."

Session IV

In this session the topic was: Developing Christian relationships in the home. II Sam. 15:1-12 and 18:31-33.

As we prepared for this meeting we had in mind the following purposes:

1. To help group members examine the experiences of Absalom and David in their relationship as son and father.
2. To help group members understand and appreciate the significance of the experiences which Absalom and David had as son and father.

3. To help group members, in light of the experiences of Absalom and David, to strengthen their convictions about respecting their parents.
4. To help group members decide upon ways by which they would seek to deepen the bonds of respect and affection between themselves and their parents.¹

Lecture. We started this meeting lecturing briefly about Absalom's parentage, his childhood experiences in David's unpromising household, the half-brother troubles, murder, flight to the north, return to but exclusion from home, jealousy, apprehension, plotting, and so on.

Then we related to it the following statement that aroused the emotions of the group members: "The nation is crumbling because America's youth have lost all respect for their parents!" This provocative reference generated warm feelings and set the stage for our interesting Bible study.

Testimony. At the appropriate place in our lecture we made a pause, and we called for the testimony which we had carefully pre-arranged. We asked a young man to tell the group about a time when he knew that his father was going to give a brother something that he wanted very much. He told the group how he felt, what he did.

Then, we tied this testimony in with the possibility of Absalom's having discovered that Solomon, and not he, might inherit the throne.

¹This is adapted from Rice A. Pierce, Leading Dynamic Bible Study (Nashville, Tennessee: Bradman Press, 1969), pp. 47-80.

Reaction Group. We divided the group into two subgroups and each group selected a discussion leader. The groups were assigned the following questions:

Group 1. Discuss and list David's lost opportunities to establish a better relationship with Absalom.

Group 2. Discuss and list Absalom's lost opportunities to draw closer to his father.

Later we asked the reaction groups to say what they discovered from their discussions. After the first group had spent some fifteen minutes completing its assignments, we asked group 2 to evaluate it, and in the same way, group 2 members presented their reactions and group 1 to evaluate it.

Lecture. Again we used a lecture to show the situation existing between Absalom and David.

a) David's wrong-doing:

His authority in his own household, his claim to respect and obedience from his sons was weakened. A sense of his guilt kept him silent when he should have condemned sin; it made his arm feeble to execute justice in his house. His evil example exerted its influence upon his sons, and God would not interpose to prevent the result. He would permit things to take their natural course, and thus David was severely chastised.¹

b) Factors in the life of Absalom:

1. Absalom's parentage:

(II Sam. 3:3) Mother, heathen, daughter of a king.

¹This quotation was taken from Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p.

2. Absalom's home life:

(II Sam. 3:2-5) Half-brothers, jealousy, rivalry, heathenism.

3. Absalom's frustrations:

(II Sam. 14:24) Allowed in Jerusalem but not allowed to see his father.

Brainstorming. The group members were divided into two sub-groups with the following questions to be used in brainstorming approach:

Group 1. In view of what we can see from Absalom's earlier life, what can we expect him to feel toward his father (see II Sam. 15)?

- Group 2.
- a) What were perhaps the two best opportunities which Absalom and David had for becoming closer and respecting each other more in the months preceding Absalom's death?
 - b) What was there in his father that Absalom as a young man still could have respected enough to have built a satisfying relationship upon?
 - c) Why may Absalom have been unable within himself to draw closer to his father?
 - d) What are two appropriate ways in which one may let his parents know that they are respected by him?
 - e) What is the main question to answer or obstacle to overcome in successfully assuring parents that they are appreciated and respected?

Open Discussion. After a reasonable time to cover this rather larger assignment, the group got together and the members were seated in a circle and we started with a member whom we knew had helpful responses. Then, each one around the circle suggested a possible answer. As each person answered, we determined the key word or phrase in his idea and we listed it on the chalkboard. With the suggested answers on the blackboard we started an open discussion focusing our minds and hearts upon ourselves and our parents.

Written Survey. Then we used a written, unsigned survey of the study group to give opportunity to each member to make his decision between himself and his God. We handed out pencils and slips of paper to each member. We appealed to each member to write down his best answer to "Developing Christian relationship in the home." We asked the members to keep their written answers and decisions as reminders of what they had said and what they will do in the future.

Reflection Prayer. We closed with a minute of reflection by each member upon how he would go about carrying out his decision. We gave them this thought provoking question: "What is the best way this week that I can deepen the bonds of respect and affection between myself and my parents?" Then we were led in prayer for the Holy Spirit's prompting, guidance, and blessing.

Session V

Steps to Eternal Life. The following five sessions we based on the workshop we attended at Andrews University on "How to Present the

Everlasting Gospel," led by J. B. Church, in the winter of 1973/4. At these doctrinal sessions we used several approaches to make experiments and to fit the need of the group.

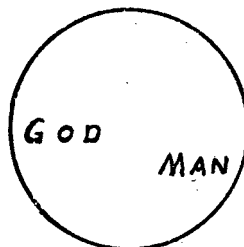
The five steps to "Eternal Life" were introduced in each session with a half hour lecture in order to get the attention of the group at the beginning, and to stimulate the interest, and thoughts. These lectures will be reported in the following sessions in outline form. After each lecture we spent twelve minutes discussing the subject with the help of visual-aids, which were very well appreciated. The first step of this serial was:

"God is Love"

Lecture

- 1) God loves us and has an eternal plan for our lives.
- 2) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.
- 3) "God made man perfectly holy and happy . . . 'God is love' . . . all testify to the tender fatherly care of God and to His desire to make His children happy."¹

¹Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1908), pp. 9, 10.

Visual-AidQuestion

God created man with nothing between. What happened?

Illustration. Spontaneously an old lady presented the following illustration: An old woman that lived not very far from Rio de Janeiro had a son. He went to Rio de Janeiro and got into bad company and murdered a young girl. He laughed at the officers, and when the judge sentenced him to life imprisonment, he laughed. He spit in the face of the chaplain, and cursed everybody in sight.

But his mother sold some little things she had and made her way to the prison where he was. One day he heard a footfall. It came nearer and nearer and as he heard it, he grew still and pale, for he recognized it--it was his mother's step.

When she saw him, she cried, "My boy, I will die for you," the poor wretch threw himself on the floor and his heart broke and he wept bitterly.

Then the old mother finished her illustration saying: "That is the kind of love and compassion that Jesus gave us."

Reflection-response. The group members were divided into three subgroups to reflect seriously and silently upon God's love and its implications. We allowed members fifteen minutes in which to reflect

upon it. It was a rewarding experience because we were not accustomed to be in silence for so long a time.

Then the leader of each group called his members to share with others what they thought and felt about the matter. After that, the subgroups were called together to sing quietly the hymn "Oh Crer Nesse Amor Sem Igual" (Oh Believe in the Love of God), which was requested by one member. Following that we were dismissed with a prayer.

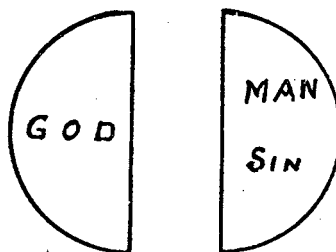
Session VI

"Sin Separates" (Step 2)

Lecture.

- 1) God and sin cannot exist together.
- 2) "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Is. 59:2.
- 3) ". . . after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God."¹

Visual-Aid



¹White, Steps to Christ, p. 17.

Question

Man being lost in sin, how did God plan to save him?

Next, was a Bible study presented by the resource person which took about a half hour. This outline was followed:

1. God loved man and gave him a perfect, happy home. There God walked and talked with man.

Gen. 1:26 Ps. 33:6, 9 Gen. 1:2

2. God gave to man whom He had created the power of choice. God wanted man to love and be loved.

Joshua 24:15 Gen. 2:17

3. God had given to angels the power of choice before He created man. Lucifer was an angel that chose to sin. This is how sin first started.

Ezek. 28:14, 15, 17 Is. 14:14

Rev. 12:7, 9 I John 3:8 John 8:44

4. God was separated from Lucifer when he sinned. Then Lucifer became Satan. He went about his evil work to separate God from man whom God had created.

Gen. 3:16 Gen. 3:18

5. God was separated from man when Adam sinned. God still loved man and wanted to be with man. This separation was more painful to God than to man.

Gen. 3:6, 9, 16-19 I. Cor. 15:22

Rom. 5:12

6. God was grieved because of this separation from man. God had created man. God had given to man this freedom of choice. God had told man not to sin. God was not responsible for man's sin.

Now God was separated from man and the very absence of the God of life meant death. This separation from man did not change God's love for man.

John 14:1 Gen. 3:19, 4 Rom. 6:23

Book Review Forum. The members of the group were divided into three groups of six and each subgroups had the book Patriarcas e Profetas (Patriarchs and Prophets) by Ellen G. White, in which was assigned chapter as:

- Group 1. "A Origem do Mal" (Why Was Sin Permitted)
- Group 2. "A Criação" (The Creation)
- Group 3. "A Tentação e a Queda" (The Temptation and Fall)

Procedure

- a) They decided upon a reader.
- b) Asked questions about what the author was saying - the meaning.
- c) Outlined significant points of interest.
- d) Identified new ideas and integrated these into their thinking.

Group Conversation. After sufficient time had been given we got the subgroups together and the leaders and the rest of the group came in on the open conversation, ending with a prayer.

Session VII"God's Grace" (Step 3)

Illustration. As an introduction to the meeting, we had asked a middle-aged man to prepare and present the following illustration which was taken from Al Bryant:

Suppose you were wandering, lost in a swamp, and a man should come to you and say, 'you are lost.' That wouldn't help you. But supposing the man said: 'You are lost. I am a guide, I know the way out. If you put yourself in my care I will lead you back to your home, back to your loved ones.' That would meet your condition.

Now, God doesn't tell you that you are lost and on the road to hell, and then leave you, but He tells you that you are on the way to hell, and He says, 'I have sent a Guide, My Son, to lead you out, and to lead you back to peace and salvation.'

That's good news. God is kind enough to tell you that you are lost and on the road to hell and that He sends a Guide out of your condition to lead you to peace and salvation.

That's God's grace, that tells a man that he needn't go to hell unless he wants to.¹

Lecture

1. God was grieved by this separation from man. God provided a plan to make man holy again in order to be with Him.

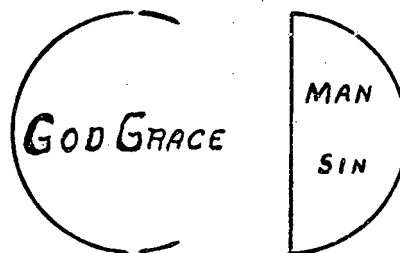
¹Al Bryant, Evangelistic Illustrations (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), pp. 43, 44.

2. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Rom. 5:20. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. . ." Eph. 2:8.

3. "It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God . . . it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God."¹

Visual-Aid.



Question.

What gift did God provide for lost man?

Bible Encounter. This time we did not provide the Bible texts. We gave them one example, and then we asked them to supply us the texts that fitted the different sections of our study. It took twice the time, but it was a rich experience for all of us. It was based on the following outline:

1. God's grace was revealed in the nature of God the very moment that man sinned.
2. God was grieved when man sinned. Man could not change himself to come back to God.

¹White, Steps to Christ, p. 13.

3. God wanted to be with man, but God could not change Himself or His law.

4. God's grace provided a way to save man.

Summary. Next, we asked for a voluntary summary of what we had studied. After some normal hesitancy, one lady gave us her summary then it was completed with contributions by other members.

Learning Activity. After considerable open discussion, the group came to the conclusion that God's grace provided a way to save lost man.

Appeal. At this point, they were ready for the following appeal: "What does this mean to me?"

Dialogue Prayers. After a time of reflection to the question "What does this mean to me?" related to the God's provision to save lost man, we divided the group into three subgroups. Then we explained how to pray "dialogue prayers." It was a completely new experience for us all.

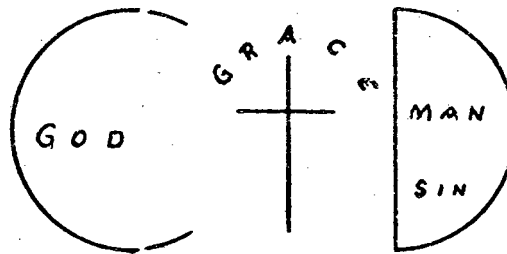
Session VIII

"God's Gift" (Step 4)

Lecture

1. God, through Jesus Christ, offers to put in us re-creative power, to grow spiritually and be with Him again.
2. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23.
3. "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith."¹

¹Ibid., p. 61.

Visual-AidQuestion

Now that God has provided a plan to save man, what must man do?

Lecture-study. Five members of the group were requested ahead of time to prepare a concise lecture with Bible support on the following topics:

1. God gives eternal life free because man cannot earn it.
2. God's grace permitted Christ to give Himself for man.
3. God came to save man. Man has no power to save himself.
4. God dwells in man's heart through His Spirit.
5. God recreates man into a new creature by His indwelling Spirit.

With the help of our resource man, generally speaking, they did a good job. The first one was very nervous; however, that was natural and to be expected. However, because the group reacted favorably, the others relaxed a little better, and they did well.

Reaction Panel. To help the group to grasp the whole idea presented by the five lectures, we made a summary, using our visual aid.

Next, the five lecturers acted as panel members. So, the rest of the group began to ask questions or make comments on their presentation in order to clarify some specific points or add an additional perspective.

Illustration. The following illustration (probably apocryphal) was presented by a middle-aged man, a member of the group, in a very simple and meaningful way that seemed to drive home the truth that the Scriptures seek to convey: "God's gift of eternal life to all who will receive Christ."

In one of the crowded back courts of Paris a fire broke out in the dead of night. The houses were built so that the higher stories overhung the foundation.

A father, who was sleeping with his children in the top garret, was suddenly awakened by the flames and smoke. The man sprang out of bed and vaulted to the window of the opposite house. Then placing his feet firmly against the window sill, he launched his body forward and grasped the window of the burning house. Shouting to his eldest boy he said: 'Now, my boy, hurry up; crawl over my body.' This was done. The second and third followed. The fourth, a little fellow, would only do so after much persuasion; but as he was passing over he heard his father say: 'Quick! Quick! Quick! I cannot hold on much longer,' and as the voices of friends were heard announcing the little boy's safety, the hold of the strong man relaxed, and with a heavy crash, he fell a lifeless corpse into the court below.

So Jesus in His own sacred body provides a bridge whereby we may cross the chasm between us and God.

The way home is through the rent veil, the crucified flesh of our Saviour.

After this illustration, we spent some minutes sharing our thoughts about God's gift and the meeting was ended with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Session IX

"God's Invitation" (Step 5)

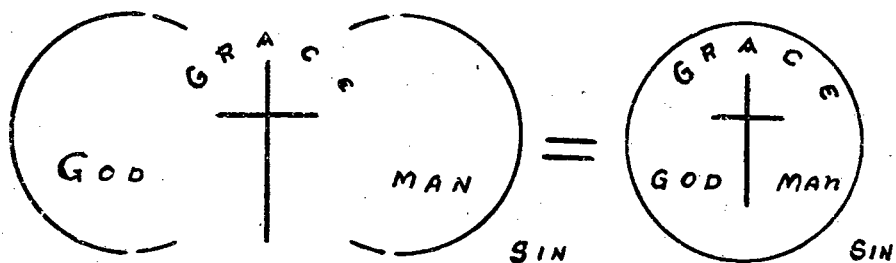
Lecture

1. God invites us to receive the gift of eternal life the moment we surrender our will and open our heart to Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour.

2. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20.

3. "It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it."¹

Visual-Aid



¹Ibid., p. 49.

Question

Having found a way to receive Christ, how can we do this now?

Lecture-Study. After we presented our lecture above the resource person spent about a half hour in the following Bible study:

"GOD INVITES MAN TO RECEIVE LIFE NOW"

<u>Key Thoughts</u>	<u>Scriptural Applications</u>	<u>Passages</u>
1. God understands our heart. Nothing is hidden from His eyes.	1. Through the power of the Holy Spirit God sees, He Understands.	Matt. 10:29, 30
	2. God knows our deeds.	Luke 23:41
	3. God knows our works.	Rev. 22:12
	4. No Man can fool God.	I Sam. 16:7
	5. Jesus knew what was in man.	John 2:25
2. God will not force His way into our heart. He is waiting for man to recognize his own need.	1. To find Christ we must recognize our need of a Saviour and see our own lost condition.	I John 1:8
	2. We are born in sin.	Rom. 3:23
	3. A few self-righteous people do not believe that they are sinners.	Prov. 21:2
3. God gave man freedom to sin and God will not take away that freedom.	1. In the Garden of Eden, God gave to man the power of choice.	Gen. 2:15-17
	2. Christ never forced Himself upon anyone.	
	3. He will not force us to become Christians, but He does invite.	Matt. 7:7, 8
4. Jesus has already paid the full price for our eternal life.	1. Jesus came to this world; He lived without sin; He died upon a cross; and He rose again. He is interceding for sinners.	Heb. 9:24

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------|
| 5. God paid our way. We have an obligation to accept His gift. | 1. A child is naturally born into the family of the flesh to die. | Rom. 8:15 |
| | 2. Adoption-paid by the blood of Christ | I Cor. 7:23 |
| | 3. Great salvation | Heb. 2:3 |
| | 4. More abound grace. | Rom. 5:20 |

Visualization. At this appropriate time of our Bible study we placed before the group a wellknown picture portraying Christ knocking at the door.

Appeal. Then, we made an appeal. God is here right now through the power of His Holy Spirit. We can't see Him, but we also can't see radio waves, however, they are here. Jesus is here, He is knocking at the door of our heart. He is ready to enter into our heart or mind.

Discussion Questions. To make the above appeal more effective, we asked the following brainstorming questions:

1. Would you like to have eternal life now?
2. Is there any reason why you would not want to receive eternal life?

Reflection-Response. Next, we asked all members to reflect seriously and silently, visualizing the picture we had before us and the two questions posted on the blackboard. We allowed the members twelve minutes in which to reflect upon it. Then we called upon them to share with the group what they had thought and felt about the matter. It was a wonderful experience for all, with excellent spiritual results.

Session X"Possessing Everything"

Purpose. The purpose of this Bible study was to help each member personally to affirm the view that Christ is the only thing we need.

Role Playing. We asked three of the less shy and more open people in the group to assist in a role-play. We requested the role-players to leave the room for a brief time to discuss the procedure of their role-play. The role-play was based on Luke 18:18-30, and the emphasis was on the phrase, "One thing you still lack." We asked one person to be the rich young ruler. The other volunteer acted out as Jesus. The rest of the group reacted like the twelve.

Open Discussion. Following the above role-play, the group discussed openly the problem involved.

Role Playing. We asked two ladies to play the role of Mary and Martha, and a man to take the place of Jesus.

The role-play was based on Luke 10:38-42. In a separated room we discussed the method of presentation, how to act out the situation, and determined the exact problem, "One thing is needful."

Case-Study. Finishing the role-play, the group was divided into three subgroups, and the second role-play was developed as a case-study. For it, they considered the following relevant facts:

1. Name the people involved.
2. Discover the social factors involved.
3. Designate the tension involved.

4. Determine what the real issue was.
5. Suggest all possible solutions.

When the groups had finished their fruitful discussion, we called them together. The leaders of each subgroup wrote the responses of their group on cardboard and posted them on the wall. Then we asked the whole group to discuss and select the best results which were:

1. Martha's motives were high. Jesus was her guest, and she wished to do Him honor.
2. But she sought to honor Him with service and material gifts rather than with spiritual communion.
3. She created her own problem by placing too much value on things which are transitory.
4. Activity and service are necessary. But when they become the source of distraction and anxiety, the cure is to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen as Mary did.
5. The "good portion" which cannot be taken away is the fellowship with God in Jesus.

Quotation. Then one of the group members read the following quotation from Ellen G. White:

The 'one thing' that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the grace necessary for spiritual advancement. She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever. Jesus would teach His children to seize every opportunity of gaining that knowledge which will make them wise unto salvation. The cause of Christ needs careful, energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in active religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus.

Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for God.¹

While we were commenting about this extraordinary quotation, someone brought out these two appropriate Bible passages:

Rom. 8:32 ". . . will he not also give us all things with him."

II. Cor. 6:10 ". . . as having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

With a little discussion, the group came up with the conclusion that if we possess Christ we shall have everything; however, without Him, we shall have nothing.

Illustration. "A Wise Choice." To open the door for an appeal, we told this illustration:

A king once told a particular favorite, 'Ask what you will, and we will give it unto you.' He thought: If I ask to be made general, I shall readily obtain it. If for half the kingdom, he will give it to me. I will ask for something to which all these things shall be added. So he said to the king: 'Give me your daughter to wife.' This made him heir to all the wealth and honors of the kingdom.

Application. So choosing Christ makes us heirs to all the wealth and glory of the Father's kingdom.

This meeting of Bible study was finished with a spontaneous reconsecration to Christ.

¹Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), p. 525.

Session XI"Putting off" and "Putting on"

Throughout this session we spent the whole time together studying Ephesians 4:25-32. It was based on a mixture of lecture, exegesis, questions, reflections, listening, and opinion-giving, in the most informal way with the objective in mind to get the feeling of the whole group. The following is a specimen outline of this study.

Introduction. We should notice that throughout this passage there are two ideas, "putting off" and "putting on." In the preceding verses, we had been told that we must "put off our nature" (v. 22) and "put on the new nature" (v. 24). In another letter, "Paul said we must "put on the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 13:14). How can Paul speak of these things so easily? The "old nature" is not a jacket to be taken off. Paul himself found it difficult, as he says in Romans 7.

This passage, beginning with Ephesians 4:25, begins to speak in practical terms. The two ideas are related to everyday activities. However, embedded in the series of practical exhortations are two terms which seem out of place: the devil (v. 27), the Holy Spirit (v. 30).

Paul clearly did not separate practical things from spiritual language. This whole passage ends with Christ and his grace (v. 32), just as the preliminary verses dealt with him (vs. 20, 21). This passage deals with the good life, only in relation to Christ and lived by His grace. Now for some verse by verse comments.

Verse 25

"Putting away falsehood" and "speak the truth." Is there a difference between these two? First, consider why a man tells lies. Is it fear of punishment, shame, greed, need to keep up a pretense of goodness, need to exaggerate the faults of others? Can you think of other reasons?

Paul gives his reason for "putting away falsehood." He says, "for we are members one of another." Does this mean that lying always indicates a deficiency of love? Is "speak the truth," in the full sense, only possible when there is love? In this connection, discuss lying which is not intended to hurt, but rather the opposite.

What do you think of flattery? Consider how seldom, when in marriage, we dare tell the whole truth to anyone. Is it because we do not wish to hurt or is it because of lack of true love or even because of cowardice? Discuss how we should "speak the truth" among our fellow church members.

Verse 26

This deals with anger. There are two kinds of anger:

1. Anger because someone has injured me.
2. Anger against sin.

The latter could be called "righteous indignation" and is a reflection of God's anger against sin. Here, Paul is concerned with the other kind of anger. Yet, he seems to approve. "Be angry." What does that mean? Is anger really permitted?

What about the qualification "but do not sin?" What is it that contains the anger so that it does not surge up and lead to

sin? Why should the sun not go down on one's anger? Discuss how we can control our anger?

Verse 27

Now we come to the text about "the devil." Why is it here, in this setting? What does he mean by "give no opportunity"?

An old proverb may throw some light on this verse: "When summer comes, you can't stop the birds from flying into your house, but you can stop them from building their nests there." Does that fit the teaching of this verse?

Discuss some example from elsewhere in the Bible which illustrates "give no opportunity to devil." Ask whether there are examples also in your own life.

Verse 28

Notice the lovely contrast between "stealing" and "giving." There is nothing here about the opposite of stealing, only about keeping for oneself. Why not? How then should we regard all our earthly possessions? We can notice here how Paul sees love as behind the whole of life, the only thing which can really make our lives new.

Verse 29

This deals with our speaking--in company, at parties and on other occasions. Paul reminds us that God is also there.

What does a "good" word mean here? And why is this further defined as "for edifying"? Here, Jesus comes to our parties. What does He say of our conversations and what part will He take in them?

Can an ordinary conversation over ordinary things be "such as is good"? Or must it always be a serious conversation?

This verse suggests two criteria of judgment: "edifying" and "impart grace." Can you recall a conversation, not about "godly" things, which could be said to "edify"? What does the word "grace" mean in this context?

Verse 30

Now we come to the text about "the Holy Spirit." Why is it here, in this setting? Is there a connection with the previous verses? It is of very great importance to grasp the full meaning of "grieve" in this verse. Compare it with "blasphemy against the Spirit" (Matt. 12:31), "to lie to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:3), "quench the Spirit" (I Thes. 5:19). Can a child of God ever "grieve" the Holy Spirit? Do you know examples? Perhaps, when I do not allow Him to work in me.

For the phrase, "in whom you were sealed" compare Eph. 1:13. What does this mean, that the Spirit is given to us when we are sealed? What does God give to us in our "sealing" and what has it to do with this verse? Does it make our grieving of the Holy Spirit more serious?

Verses 31-32

The two verses belong together. Again, we are told what to take off (or put away) and what to put on.

"Bitterness," what is that? "Wrath" and "anger," the two lie close together. "Clamour" and "slander" are the consequences of

sinful anger. "Malice" and "guile" (cf. I Peter 2:1) is what destroys our life together as men.

At the root of this lies a deeply ingrained egoism, by which each man thinks first and foremost of himself. Opposed to this, Paul now takes a series of virtues, which can blossom wherever there is life together with Christ.

"Kind," i.e. we have nothing to seek for ourselves, not feverishly thinking on our own wants, because we know that God thinks of us and has thought of us in Christ Jesus and that we await the coming of God's glorious kingdom. From this peace, rest and confidence, a man can be friendly, "kind."

Is there a difference between this deep-rooted "friendliness" and our common use of the term? "Tenderhearted" refers to the need of others. First, we must see the need. Discuss whether we do or do not often see the need of others.

"Forgiving one another." Now, rightly, we come, by one means or another, to the cross. That commits us at the end. What is the teaching of Jesus? Recall the parable in which Jesus says that the forgiveness we receive from God is dependent upon our forgiving others.

Then we read the whole passage once more. Much was touched upon and much was also passed over. Question: Can we now answer the question in our own lives--What is there that I must "take off" and what must I "put on"?

Following this exercise we had five minutes of silent meditation, followed by prayer.

Session XII

"God's Best For You"

The Meeting. This last Bible study was made in a pleasant park in the Chicago area. This time we thought of having a different approach. We preached a short textual sermon and after it, we asked the larger group to subdivide into three small groups for discussion of the subject presented. The sermon followed this outline:

Introduction

1. Rom. 12:1-2.
2. Most Christians have never proven "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," but are living on something less than God's best.
3. All who seriously aspire to God's best will find help in the Scriptural statement which reveals the way and spells God's requirements:

I - Complete Consécration

1. ". . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."
2. How do we serve our Lord?

We serve Him with our body:

With our eyes seeing what He would have us to see,

With our ears hearing what He would have us to
hear,

With our tongue speaking what He would have us
to speak,

With our hands doing what He would have us to
do,

With our feet going where He would have us to
go.

3. How do we serve sin?

Again, it is with our body:

The eyes, the ears, the tongue, the feet, and
the hands, choosing engage in that which is
repugnant to the Spirit.

4. How do we pay the penalty for sin?

Here too the body is involved. Sin ravages the
body as well as the soul.

The judgment of God descend upon the body.

Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:52; Phil. 3:21.

5. It is "reasonable" that we "present the body as a
living sacrifice."

I Peter 1:18-19; I Cor. 3:16; Heb. 3:14.

II - Complete Separation

1. Blessed is the man who does not do what the unregenerate world does. Ps. 1:1-3.
2. Daniel's separate life.
3. "Be not conformed to this world."
4. The man "who conforms to this world" does not need to invite Satan to come in, the door is already open. Along the way to God's best, there is still another requirement:

III - Complete Transformation

1. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."
2. We cannot transform ourselves. I Cor. 2:14.
He cannot change himself from a sinner to a saint,
but he can open his heart and life to the One who
is able.
3. It is not quite possible for a man to transform himself,
but it is quite possible for him to be transformed.
4. God through Christ can transform our life. We can not
have God without Christ. Eph. 2:14.

Conclusion

1. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,
acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable
services."
2. "Be not conformed to this world."
3. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."
4. Our text assures us that we can "prove what is that
good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

It is:

New life, God's best for you.

After this sermon, the group was divided into three subgroups and we spent about fifteen minutes discussing the three different aspects of "God's Best for You." This was a new experience for these people. For that meeting it fulfilled the purpose. The group appears to have been mentally and spiritually trained and prepared

along this line--for discussion and reaction. This innovation for our people needs more experimentation. We think that this method could be used following a sermon at worship in a Brazilian culture even as it is being employed in some American worship services.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Clearly one of the ways in which the contemporary church is finding renewal of spirit is the small group movement. Bible study groups are not the only way, but it is one way. Scores of churches have testified and will testify to what such groups can mean to the life of a congregation. For some persons, our Bible study group has fulfilled an evangelistic function of effecting the change of a true conversion experience. A middle-aged man, husband of a Seventh-day Adventist lady, decided to be prepared for baptism. For others, these meetings have resulted in a growth in Christian understanding beyond anything other Christian education classes were able to do. The spiritually dead have been brought to life. Because of the desire to make money and go back to Brazil, some people were neglecting their spiritual life. But some inactive church members have had their love and loyalty for the church revived. One couple was led to see the dangerous environment of the public school for their daughter, and they sent her to our Seventh-day Adventist College in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Another couple, who has five children, has the same problem. They also sent two daughters to our SDA Academy in South Brazil where the principal is their uncle. A young couple have had their love for the church so increased that they have

decided to give themselves to the service of the Lord, and their fellowmen. Thus, they are working out their way back to Brazil by the end of this year, since the school year there starts in February. He will take the theology course in the Northeast Brazilian College. Many others that had been using their week end for resting from their hard labor during the week, and escaping church activities, now are regular in the church worship and other services. The results were nothing less than redemptive for some. Admittedly, this assessment is largely subjective at this point based on continuing feedback coming to the writer through verbal reports from participants and informal comments of the Pastors of these people.

There was no question that some members of our group began to see the Christian faith in a new light, and real changes began to take place in their lives. They came to realize that in a unique way God was making Himself known, giving new insights and direction to our lives. It was the result of personal applications. Each time we read the Bible, a personal decision was called for, and at the close of each Bible study we had a personal meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ. The most outstanding point about our group experience was the discovery of the fact that whatever we study in the Bible applies to our lives directly. It was two sessions before the ending of the meetings when one lady said: "It is a high light for me when we can share what the passages says to our lives. I am becoming more aware of my daily life as a committed Christian." Surely, there are many persons that are facing their problems without realizing

how much the Bible can help them. In our Bible study group we had the opportunity to sit down with persons to whom that Word was suited to their condition.

At this point we may pick up a few reactions, comments, or testimonies of the members about our Bible study group:

One woman, who had been a member of the church for a number of years, said, "Why haven't we been told about this kind of people-centered study?" One young girl said: "My own life has been deeply affected and positively influenced by these meetings." A middle aged man wrote to us: "My family found that this Bible study group had supplied many of the fellowship, educational, social and spiritual functions which a large congregation often cannot provide us." Another man of few words wrote in the questionnaire referring to the Bible study group: "They have provided me my richest spiritual experiences. For these I am truly grateful."

I think that this kind of testimony is one reward of a small Bible study group. We cannot live in the presence of this kind of witness without realizing that God was at work in our midst. These things which speak of new life are the work of the Spirit. Really, it was an exciting thing for us to see God at work in the lives of the group who studied His Word together. We saw how many people began to taste and see the goodness of God; they were opening their hearts to the transforming, living Word (and more and more, to one another).

Insofar as the group has been able to demonstrate these redemptive qualities, we had to admit that the Holy Spirit has been

at work in our midst in unexpected ways. He really was the teacher. And He used the experiences and insights of individual members to amplify truth.

After all things in this Bible study group were over, the writer came to the conclusion and conviction that our people want and need more than church worship. They want a sense of belonging, of worthiness, and love. It is our belief that these ingredients are needed very much for Brazilian people, and for all people in all lands.

From this project, we have learned that Bible study groups provide God with an effective channel of communication whereby He can reveal Himself to His people, and the Gospel can become a living reality. In such groups by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we recaptured the vision and power of the little band that centered around Jesus.

The Bible study group was suited to our Brazilian group in Chicago, and gives every indication that it will be suitable for the people in Brazil. Its worth has been proved. It is really a laboratory in Christian experience where members and friends explore Scripture, pray and share one another's burdens, stimulating positive change, growth and maturity. By the results we have had in our experiment, we can say with confidence that Bible study groups can nurture and conserve our church members in Brazil.

We close on a personal note. We know now, as a result of the transformation which has come from our Bible study group, what St. Augustine must have meant when he spoke of the ecclesiola, the little church within the church.

Further Study

1. The role of the minister in the creation and the leadership of Bible study groups.

2. Since the writer is a teacher in a Bible Department, he plans to experiment with Bible study group approaches (1) in his Bible classes and (2) open up Bible study groups in the neighborhood of our college with the ministerial students because we are convinced that all the great movements in Christianity have been based on the training of small groups.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ABSTRACT OF PORTUGUESE MATERIAL

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The material we have gotten from our intensive reading on Bible study groups opened up our horizon for future work in Brazil. It is our plan to prepare a syllabus for our ministerial students when we get back to our school. We have already translated some of the material into the Portuguese language, some of which being the background of our experiment with a Brazilian group in Chicago. The following is an abstract of what we have presented in Portuguese.

1. Group Planning and Functions.

The first meeting of a new group is a crucial one. Since the opening usually sets the emotional climate for succeeding meetings, it is important that it be as stimulating and interesting as possible. Impressions formed during the opening meeting will determine whether or not individuals will continue as members of the group.

At the opening meeting, members of a group have many expectations and anxieties. They need an orientation period about the objectives, content, and procedures of the group. They need a clear understanding as to why the group is being organized, what the objectives are and how they are to be reached.

Every member should have a clear understanding of:

The purpose of the meeting.

The group pattern.

Role of group members.

Involvement.

Group members must develop reasonably harmonious relationships with others and develop mutual support by participating; personal growth does not take place without involvement.

2. Small Group Structuring.

Locale. Private homes or apartments have proven to be the best setting for group meetings, although various groups in different days of the week could meet in the church's facilities.

Time. The time of the meeting should be strictly discussed by the group members; and should be considered in relation to other activities of the church. One thing appears certain: one two-hour session is more profitable than two one-hour sessions. One possibility is for a group to agree to meet once a week or twice a month for a few months as an experiment and then re-evaluate.

Homogeneity. There are some authors that think that the more the members of the group share the same background of experience, education, interest, or need will be necessary if the group is to find bonds to unite them in their venture together. On the other hand, differences can be the source of enrichment to the group.

Size. Some research in group dynamics suggests that five may be the optimum number. But often groups of eight or twelve are suggested for fellowship groups. The primary test for the size of the group is to be found in the question whether the number is

small enough to make possible a maximum amount of face-to-face relations. Leaders agree that it is better to have quality experience for a small number rather a mediocre experience for many.

Physical Arrangements. An adequate meeting place. A large round table, which will accommodate the people. If a round table is not available, use four six-foot tables arranged in a hollow square. A triangle shape arrangement is effective. Use comfortable chairs which are of adult size and are movable. A pleasant meeting room, in which the members of the group will feel easy and relaxed, will go a long way in creating a climate that is conducive to good discussion.

Discipline. Regularity and punctuality are of great importance. Faithfulness in attendance is almost the first commitment the group members are asked to make. The members should agree on their own disciplines. Those disciplines vary from group to group, for every group grows at a different pace.

Cohesiveness. The ability of the group to stick together. They exhibit team spirit, they help one another, they encourage productivity, morale, and communication. They distribute the work load among themselves. They spend time and effort in behalf of the group, they identify themselves with the group.

3. Small Group Values

We live in a time when group techniques are widely used to teach many different subjects. More and more, teachers are encouraged to break classes into smaller groups for instruction by

modular scheduling to work on assignments. Students often informally get up small groups to study for examinations or to prepare for classes.

We find learning more profitable in groups. By reading, thinking and exchanging ideas, members of a group obtain better insights into human values, look beyond their immediate experience and develop a depth and breadth of outlook.

The church has always been a natural setting for groups. We well know that the majority of the activities in the church are carried out by groups. Churches large and small do well when they find ways to organize their membership in small groups.

What is the value of Bible study groups? Through discussion, a group can explore fundamental ideas and issues, and find a level of talking together that provides each person with a meaningful experience. An individual may learn to think for and express himself, to recognize and analyze basic Bible issues and to form sound independent judgment about them. The process is free thought and communication, the product is the mature and responsible Christian in a confused world.

4. Leadership

Miles suggests: "Without leadership, a group can't function." There is no question but that the life and work of a group depends upon its leadership, therefore some thought needs to be given to this issue.

Students of group procedures hold up shared leadership as the ideal. Study groups approach this ideal where leadership is

rotated from one to another, and where the leader perhaps simply opens and closes the meeting. In other cases, for time at least, one person may be designated as leader. Or there may be two, three, or four persons who assume a leadership role until the others are ready to participate on a completely equal basis.

Some characteristics which have been associated with good group leadership appear below:

The leader does not manipulate.

A leader is willing to pay the price.

He speaks up.

He does his home work.

Leaders provide guidance.

He trains others for leadership.

The leader's attitude.

Group leaders are not instructors, lecturers, but must function as constructive guides who have the obligation of helping each person in the group do his own thinking.

Basically, their leadership functions require:

that the purpose of the discussion--sharing--will be achieved,

that group members will be satisfied with the leadership, and

that group members will feel satisfaction with their experiences in the discussion meeting.

APÊNDICE B

PLANEJAMENTO E FUNÇÕES DE UM GRUPO

A primeira reunião de um novo grupo sempre é crucial. O clima emocional das reuniões sucessivas usualmente dependerá da primeira reunião. Portanto, ela deverá ser a mais interessante possível. Impressões formadas durante a reunião de abertura determinarão se as pessoas continuarão ou não como membros do grupo. Se o líder é amigável e cortês, descontraído e confiante, os membros do grupo se sentirão à vontade e responderão favoravelmente. É de grande importância que o líder seja alguém que ajude os membros do grupo a se sentirem bem-vindos, e que eles são "parte do grupo".

Na primeira reunião de um novo grupo, as pessoas logicamente gostariam de conhecer os companheiros. Assim, as introduções são importantes e já servem como organização do novo grupo. Isto não deveria ser considerado como coisa rotineira e fazê-la o mais rápido possível. O líder pode apresentar-se a si mesmo ao grupo ou ser apresentado por alguém. Identicamente os membros podem apresentar-se ou eles se apresentarem ao colega que está ao lado e este faz a apresentação ao grupo. Este último método é mais positivo porque ajuda aos membros se conhecerem e já tomam parte no grupo. Este tempo gasto nessas introduções não é tempo desperdiçado.

Na inauguração de um grupo os membros estão expectantes. Eles

querem saber quais são os regulamentos, a participação, a sua contribuição. Serão somente ouvintes ou terão que falar? Qual é propósito do grupo? Quais são os objetivos que desejam alcançar? Os membros não se sentirão à vontade se essas perguntas imaginárias ou expressas não forem devidamente respondidas. É muito natural que os membros sejam devidamente orientados consoante aos objetivos, o conteúdo e procedimento do grupo. Eles precisam ter compreensão clara do porquê da organização do grupo, os objetivos e como alcançá-los. É aconselhável que o grupo tenha suficiente tempo para fazer perguntas e esclarecimentos. Se esses preliminares são observados, concomitantemente os membros estarão mais preparados para uma participação espontânea.

Propósito da Reunião

Cada reunião deveria ter um propósito claro e deveria ser explicado antes ou no começo da reunião. De acordo com Casteel, os objetivos do Estudo Bíblico em dinâmica poderiam ser:

1. Assegurar aos membros a necessidade da oração nos Estudos Bíblicos.
2. Dar aos membros fiéis a oportunidade de desenvolver a sua própria personalidade participando com o grupo.
3. Conservar os membros fiéis à tarefa de nutrir e disciplinar a sua própria vida para um crescimento espiritual.¹

A reunião deverá ser planejada para atingir o propósito. O que

¹John L. Casteel, Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups, (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. 205.

devemos fazer para alcançar o objetivo? Deveríamos usar diapositivos para ilustrar as apresentações? Sessões de perguntas e respostas? Ou assentar-nos arredor de uma mesa e discutir tópicos ou passagens bíblicas? Ou simplesmente assentar-nos em círculo sem a orientação de um líder, cada um falando e fazendo o que bem desejar?

Uma reunião de grupo requer tempo e esforços em planejar seus diferentes estágios. Se não negligenciarmos este fator importante, estaremos livrando-nos de muitas dificuldades imprevistas e não perdemos o nosso tempo bem como dos nossos colegas de grupo. Quando todos os detalhes são manejados com cuidado, os membros sentirão que as reuniões são importantes.

Não há uma norma de estruturação para o funcionamento de um grupo. Nem tão pouco um currículo pra completar ou objetivos prescritos de dogma ou experiência religiosa para se alcançar. O grupo deve ser livre no seu desenvolvimento, sem nenhuma norma rígida a seguir. Isto, contudo, não significa que não há necessidade de um planejamento, de uma orientação. Pelo contrário, isto é indispensável, todavia, deve ser flexível. Flexibilidade significa que a forma organizacional deve ser adaptada, modificada, e trocada de acordo com a necessidade do grupo. No passado, uma reorganização era uma demonstração de fracasso, hoje, porém, é diferente. "Flexibilidade é a palavra chave quando um grupo procura centralizar-se no individual."² Desta maneira, o grupo deveria criar a sua própria norma que seja adequada às suas necessidades e condições.

²M. Wendell Belew, Churches and How They Grow (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1971), p. 116.

Participação dos Membros

Ao começar uma dinâmica de grupo, verificamos que imediatamente as pessoas começam a assumir certas funções e participações no grupo. Nenhuma liderança de grupo poderá dirigir com êxito um grupo sem a participação de outros. Ele necessita da colaboração de muitas pessoas que desempenham diferentes responsabilidades. Algumas pessoas deverão fazer perguntas inteligentes e significativas relacionadas com o assunto. Outras deverão trazer informações. Alguém deverá explicar o significado de certas palavras ou pensamentos que estão sendo ventilados. Ocasionalmente, alguém precisa fazer um sumário do que foi apresentado. Outras pessoas precisam sugerir novos métodos para implementação e exploração das idéias que estão sendo discutidas.

Há também a necessidade de ter alguém para testar as idéias focalizadas. Ele poderá dizer, por exemplo: Nesta situação, como poderemos aplicar essa idéia? Qual será o resultado? Destarte, o grupo é levado a pensar melhor da particularidade de uma idéia. De quando em vez, alguém deverá ajudar a esclarecer as alternativas e levar o grupo a uma decisão.

Dentro de um grupo, obviamente se precisa de uma pessoa com intuição para sentir as necessidades espirituais dos seus membros. Que tem o senso de descobrir as pessoas que estão em dificuldades, com o objetivo de poder ajudar.

Esporadicamente, num grupo surgem algumas diferenças. É bom ter alguém que faça o trabalho de um mediador, que tenha a habilidade de aliviar a tensão, provavelmente através de alguma coisa humorística.

igualmente há a necessidade de alguém para desafiar o grupo a fazer alguma coisa.

Não há líder que satisfatoriamente está em condições de realizar todas as funções de um grupo. Precisa da participação de muitas pessoas para ajudar o grupo a funcionar com produtividade.

Específicos Procedimentos

Apesar das muitas variações num grupo, os autores concordam em certos específicos procedimentos. Geralmente falando, um grupo dinâmico deveria ter a duração de pelo menos duas horas; a primeira hora e meia deveria ser dedicada ao estudo do texto ou tópico bíblico, ou de um capítulo, ou qualquer material designado, e depois então, uma compartilhagem de idéias. A discussão deveria girar em torno de alguma idéia estudada ou dúvidas, fazendo aplicações para a vida cotidiana. Os membros têm a oportunidade de avaliar e reafirmar as suas próprias idéias dentro da conjuntura do grupo.

Alguns grupos antecipadamente dão aos participantes um determinado assunto para preparar uma breve discertação com o objetivo de começar a discussão. Muito frequentemente cada estudo apresentado toma a forma individual do apresentador, podendo ser a leitura de um capítulo com espontâneas aplicações, com perguntas e respostas, e o que um determinado assunto significa para ele individualmente em sentido espiritual.

³Para uma completa discussão desse importante fator, ver G. Gratton Kemp, Small Groups and Self-Renewal (New York: The Seabury Press, 1971), pp. 131-134.

Pode ser também que algumas vezes uma leitura bíblica sem nenhum comentário ou interrupção. Doutra feita, o grupo possivelmente só cobre um versículo ou dois, ficando todo o tempo para uma discussão espontânea.

Quando surgem algumas perguntas que exigem explicação de uma palavra, frase ou de algum fato histórico ou geográfico, poderiam ser respondidas por uma pessoa qualificada ou então termos à mão alguns bons dicionários ou comentários para serem consultados.

No decorrer dos estudos muitos problemas começam a surgir. A medida que os problemas aparecem dentro da vida do grupo, soluções começam a surgir como respostas. A observação tem demonstrado que não importa quão difícil é o problema ou obscuro a passagem bíblica, Deus de alguma maneira fala através de Sua Palavra e nunca na história de um grupo uma reunião é pobremente considerada.

De quando em vez, auto-identificação e problemas pessoais são compartilhados ao serem apresentados certos problemas bíblicos. Não podemos evitar. Geralmente a própria natureza do material bíblico faz com que essa participação pessoal se torne algo rotineiro e normal. Como é de se esperar a Bíblia está cheia de material objetivo relacionado com a nossa vida diária. Nesse processo de participação de particularidades da vida privada, oferece a oportunidade para o trabalho do Espírito Santo nutrir a vida espiritual. Aí é quando o grupo se torna uma agência para o crescimento espiritual. O grupo se torna mais do que simplesmente uma associação de indivíduos. Os membros se identificam um com o outro e desenvolve-se um espírito de lealdade e confraternização.

Richards, todavia, dá-nos aqui uma precaução: "Se a participação de concerns e sentimentos pessoais resultam na única função do

grupo, então este deixa de ser um grupo de estudo da Bíblia. Ele toma os característicos de um grupo terapêutico e o foco muda da pessoa de Cristo, da Bíblia para o "eu".⁴ Nenhum grupo de motivação religiosa deveria ter o objetivo de simplesmente congregar as pessoas para uma compartilhãõ de problemas pessoais. O seu propósito deveria ser de reunir as pessoas de tal maneira que Cristo se torne o centro de todas as coisas.

Ouvir

Um dos ingredientes básicos na dinâmica de Estudos Bíblicos é o processo de prestar atenção, saber ouvir. "Nõs ouvintes estamos tão preocupados em decidir o que vamos dizer, que somente ouvimos parte do que estã sendo dito - e pouco ou nada sentimos arrespeito de quem fala."⁵ Desafortunadamente, presume-se que agente tenha desenvolvido essa parte em nossa comunicaçãõ. Porém, o processo de ouvir nãõ deveria ser deixado para desenvolver a mercê das oportunidades. Para se tornar um bom ouvinte, hã necessidade de um persistente esforço por um longo de tempo.

Imperceptivamente nõs desenvolvemos certos característicos como ouvintes que sãõ prejudiciais. Enquanto estamos ouvindo, comumente estamos avaliando, discernindo as omissões, os pronunciamentos ilõgicos, as faltas de informações, etc. A maioria de nõs somos condicionados a

⁴Laurence O. Richards, A New Face for the Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 155.

⁵John L. Casteel, The Creative Role of Interpersonal Groups in the Church Today (New York: Association Press, 1968), p. 176.

ouvir dentro desta padronização. Contudo, se quisermos ouvir bem, devemos ouvir com entendimento, relacionando-nos com a pessoa que está falando, e assim seremos mais efetivos em nossas comunicações.

Envolvimento

Os membros do grupo deveriam razoavelmente desenvolver um relacionamento harmonioso entre si, ajudando-se mutuamente. Não há desenvolvimento pessoal sem envolvimento.⁶

Richards menciona que não se forma um grupo simplesmente ajuntando oito ou dez pessoas. Tão pouco, em si mesmo desenvolverá o grupo.⁷ A expectativa é de que no processo de explorar em conjunto, desenvolva-se um senso de camaradagem, aprofundando-se na experiência religiosa na qual Deus possa comunicar a cada membro do grupo. Desta maneira, o grupo se torna um laboratório onde as idéias, sentimentos, conhecimentos e espiritualidade são compartilhadas e testadas. Há oportunidade para o Espírito Santo se comunicar com os membros, sustentando-lhes a fé, aguçando-lhes a consciência.

O que acima foi escrito apresenta a natureza geral de um planejamento de grupo. O seu propósito pode ser sumariado nos seguintes critérios oferecidos por Herman:

Desenvolver a percepção de relacionamento com os outros.

Estabelecer uma compreensão mútua com os demais.

⁶Robert S. Clemmon, Dynamics of Christian Adult Education (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), pp. 30-32.

⁷Richards, p. 153.

Formar um clima para uma comunicação efetiva no grupo.

Ouvir atentativamente, apreciativamente, objetivamente e criticamente as idéias dos outros.

Iniciar a habilidade de trabalhar efetivamente em grupo.

Desenvolver a capacidade de avaliar uma discussão como aspecto do processo de comunicação oral.⁸

⁸Deldee Herman, Discussion and Argumentation-Debate in the Secondary School (Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Corporation, 1968), p. 5.

APÊNDICE C

ESTRUTURAÇÃO DE DINÂMICA DE GRUPOS

O estudo que segue é baseado na experiência de pessoas que gastaram a vida trabalhando com estudos da Bíblia em dinâmica de grupos.

O método de Estudo da Bíblia em Dinâmica de Grupo é bem diferente de evangelismo em massa. No evangelismo público, quanto mais publicidade melhor, todavia, em estudo bíblico em pequenos grupos, quanto menos melhor. Há algumas razões para esse conceito de falta de publicidade e promoções. Em primeiro lugar, não estamos devidamente preparados e equipados para um número maior de pessoas nesses grupos. Segundo, há uma necessidade dos membros terem o coração mais abertos uns para com os outros numa certa homogeneidade espiritual. Por estas razões e outras que mencionaremos, o Estudo da Bíblia em Dinâmica não deveria ser mencionado do púlpito da igreja ou nos boletins.

Quando iniciar um grupo, como já tivemos oportunidade de mencionar, deveremos fazer bem claro os objetivos e característicos desse grupo. A formação desse grupo deve ser baseado no grande interesse e senso de necessidade dos membros, e nunca no espírito de criar mais alguma coisa para a igreja fazer. Esse deveria formar, desenvolver gradualmente sem problemas, como uma semente lançada ao solo. Um passo após outro, sem movimentação anormal na igreja.

Localização

Selecionar um local para a reunião do grupo que seja mais conveniente para a maioria dos seus participantes. O tempo gasto em viagens excessivas deveria ser usado no grupo, se arranjamos um lugar convenientemente bem localizado.

Casas particulares ou apartamentos têm sido aprovados serem o melhor para essas reuniões, outros preferem as dependências de uma igreja quando não há reuniões.

Tempo

Determinar o dia e hora para reunir o grupo é uma das tarefas mais difíceis. A duração das reuniões variam de acordo com o tempo disponível dos seus membros. Pode ser quarenta e cinco minutos na hora de uma refeição ou uma hora e meia, ou duas a noite. Uma coisa é certa de que em duas horas de reunião há mais possibilidade de alcançar um estudo mais adequado.

O tempo suficiente para a discursão bem como o horário deveria ser considerado em relação com as outras reuniões e atividades da igreja. Quando os membros consideram esses problemas e se comprometem em começar e terminar na hora que eles determinaram, geralmente se tornam pontuais. Assim o grupo deve começar e terminar realmente no tempo estabelecido. Isto traz respeito e honra a determinação feita. Se algum membro deseja ficar mais tempo depois da reunião, esta bem, mas que os outros estejam livres para os seus diferentes compromissos.

É interessante verificarmos que nós arranjamos tempo para as

coisas que realmente cremos ou satisfazem as nossas necessidades. É recomendável que o grupo se reúna uma vez por semana durante alguns meses como experiência e depois fazer uma verificação e estabelecer a continuação por mais tempo. Um tempo determinado para terminar ou continuar é psicologicamente sábio.

Homogeneidade

Alguns autores pensam que quanto mais os membros se assemelham em educação, interesses, e experiências melhor. Todavia, há outros que pensam que as diferenças de cada um enriquecem o grupo.

Cada membro gradualmente reconhecem que os membros com heterogêneas habilidades e experiências podem contribuir mais para o desenvolvimento de um grupo do que mesmo de indivíduos com a mesma relativa homogeneidade de background e experiências. Quanto mais diversificada as habilidades e experiências em relação a matéria em consideração, maior é a possibilidade de ampliar e esclarecer as percepções das partes em relação ao total interesse do que cada membro pensa e sente. Para que isto seja bem sucedido, cada membro deve sentir livre para expressar suas idéias,... como ele vê e como os outros as compreendem.¹

Esse mesmo conceito foi também atestado por John L. Casteel, no seu livro Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups. Ele afirma que:

O grau de uniformidade, ou diversidade, dos membros de um grupo não depende de sua homogeneidade. Uma certa soma de interesse comum,... é indispensável se o grupo se quer aventurar juntos. Por outro lado, as diferenças podem ser uma fonte de enriquecimento para o grupo. Se o grupo consiste de casais, ou solteiros, exclusivamente homens ou mulheres, ou mixtos, da mesma idade ou diferença s de idades, centralizados sobre um interesse comum vocacional, ou homens e mulheres de profissões e ocupações diversas, mas que podem compartilhar seus problemas de vocações e pessoais - tudo isto e questões semelhantes devem ser acomodadas de acordo com as circunstâncias imediatas e as necessidades e possibilidades particulares

¹C. Gratton Kemp, p. 132.

das pessoas envolvidas.²

Algumas pessoas pensam que os jovens deveriam estar num grupo e os mais idosos noutro. Clyde Ried, um experiente ministro e professor, que dirige seminários através dos States chegou a seguinte conclusão: "Tendo experimentado os dois tipos de grupos, estou convencido que na maioria das circunstâncias é uma vantagem incluir no mesmo grupo toda vez que possível pessoas jovens e mais velhas, homens e mulheres, ricos e pobres."³ Nessa variedade deve se encontrar uma homogeneidade de objetivos.

Tamanho do Grupo

Por que há necessidade de ser o grupo pequeno? Porque no grupo há necessidade de se conhecer um ao outro e de maneira mais íntima, caso contrário não será um grupo.

Pequeno, sugere o tamanho de um grupo que permite e encoraja o relacionamento face-a-face. Qual deverá ser o tamanho ideal de um grupo? Algumas pesquisas feitas em dinâmica de grupo sugerem que cinco pessoas é um número desejável. Mas frequentemente um grupo de oito a doze pessoas é o número mais aceitável.

O teste primário para verificar o tamanho de um grupo se é ou não o ideal, é a quantidade de relacionamento face-a-face do grupo.

Um grupo de cinco pessoas ou menos, todos os participantes falam

²Casteel, p. 197.

³Clyde Reid, Groups Alive-Church Alive (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969), p. 37.

um com outro, mesmo as pessoas mais íntimas e tímidas. Num grupo de sete ou mais, a pessoa de pouca palavra cessa de falar com os membros e só fala com o diretor do grupo, quando solicitada. À medida que o grupo torna maior a conversação se centraliza mais ao redor de poucas pessoas. Assim a intercomunicação é cortada. Num grupo de treze ou mais, um pequeno grupo de cinco a sete pessoas usualmente domina a discussão e os outros passam a expectantes e ouvintes. Em grupos maiores a tendência é de formar pequenos grupos dentro do grupo.

Quanto menor for o grupo maior é a soma de tempo devotado a cada pessoa, e isto traz aos membros muita satisfação. Do ponto de vista dos membros, grupos pequenos dão mais satisfação aos seus membros. Um grupo que passa de mais de doze pessoas já deixa de ser um grupo para ser uma reunião pública, havendo menos possibilidades de oportunidades e incentivos. C. Gratton Kemp menciona que "... além de vinte e cinco os problemas relacionados com a coesão e participação do grupo aumenta matematicamente."⁴ Lógicamente, com o aumento no tamanho do grupo diminui a oportunidade de intercomunicação verbal, dificultando o processo de compreender e ser compreendido pelos demais.

Os líderes de um grupo já experimentados concordam que é melhor ter uma boa experiência com um pequeno número do que uma medíocre experiência com muitos.

John W. Keltner tem alguns critérios que ajudam a determinar o trabalho e tamanho relativamente ideal de um grupo.

Conservar o grupo menor possível dentro da condição situacional.

⁴C. Gratton Kemp, p. 148.

Ajustar o tamanho do grupo em relação com o tempo disponível para discussão. Quanto mais curto for o tempo menor deveria ser o grupo.

A harmonização do tamanho do grupo depende da natureza dos participantes do grupo. Se são pessoas difíceis de se tornarem envolvidas, o tamanho deverá ser reduzido.⁵

Como deveremos proceder com as pessoas que desejam integrar um grupo que já está avançado em estudos e experiências? Casteel dá-nos uma solução que nos parece muito sábia:

Adicionar novas pessoas a um grupo que já está em funcionamento parece ser insatisfatório. Os que chegam mais tarde na experiência de um grupo, não estão em condições de compreender o nível no qual o grupo está agora participando, ou acompanhar o seu desenvolvimento pessoal. O problema torna-se cada vez mais difícil à medida que o grupo vai se tornando mais maturo.⁶

A possibilidade de satisfazer as necessidades dos novos que desejam participar do grupo é de criar um novo grupo. Com o tempo o grupo em funcionamento deve dividir-se e se multiplicar, como as "células" formando novos núcleos. Isto além de ajudar outros, revitalizam os próprios membros do grupo em funcionamento, porque os novos membros repetem as mesmas experiências que eles já passaram.

Arrançamento Físico

Um requerimento vital é um lugar adequado para as reuniões. Em regra geral, um lugar apropriado deveria ser: (a) confortável, (b) am-

⁵John W. Keltner, Group Discussion Processes (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p. 112.

⁶Casteel, p. 198.

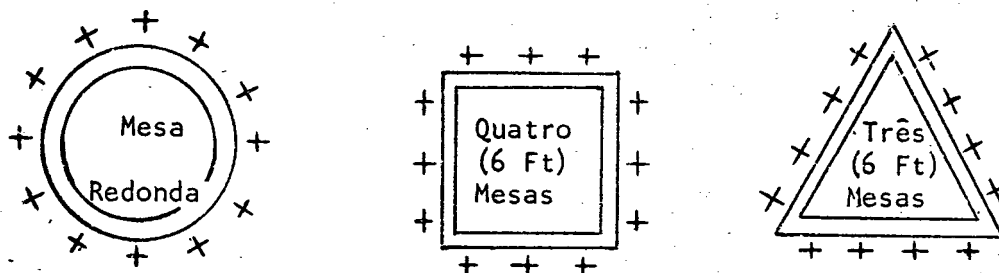
biente agradável, (c) que não perturbe a experiência e expectativa do grupo, (d) que proporcione uma atmosfera informal, (e) livre de distração externas, (f) boa luz e ventilação, (g) uma sala de tamanho adequado, não muito grande, também não muito pequena.

Não é muito fácil encontrar um lugar que satisfaça as necessidades do grupo. A melhor coisa é condicionar o grupo de acordo com o que é possível conseguir. Salas de aulas, num todo é um pobre lugar para as reuniões em grupo. Mas em circunstâncias de não encontrar alguma coisa melhor, o melhor é tentar fazer uma acomodação com o que é possível. O melhor possível é fazer com que esta sala seja bem funcional e não distrai a atenção dos componentes do grupo.

Ao se preparar para as reuniões, é necessário estudar todos os detalhes antes. Primeiro considerar a disposição dos móveis na sala. Que espécie de arranjo é o mais efetivo? De nossa pesquisa intensiva e também de material apresentado em classes pelo Dr. Arnold Kurtz, nosso professor na Andrews University Theological Seminary e também de nossa própria experiência, apresentamos algumas conclusões sugestivas sobre esse ponto.

Se possível não devemos usar uma sala que tem somente uma entrada. É preferível que a entrada seja por detrás para não perturbar o grupo. Uma mesa redonda grande que acomoda um grupo de doze pessoas, é o ideal. Se uma mesa redonda não for possível, pode-se usar quatro mesas de seis pés arranjadas em quadrado. A forma triangular, formada com três mesas também é efetiva. O importante é que cada membro do grupo esteja em condições de ver e ouvir o seu colega sem nenhuma di-

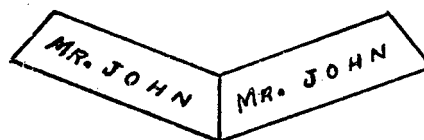
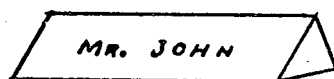
ficuldade. É difícil uma discussão em grupo quando alguém tem que comentar alguma coisa por detrás de outro. Dependendo do tamanho do grupo, podemos fazer o seguinte arranjo:



As cadeiras deveriam ser confortáveis (não demais), tamanho para adultos e que podem ser removíveis.

Nas duas ou três primeiras reuniões especialmente, devemos por os nomes de cada membro num cartão para identificar. Eles ajudarão a eliminar a desagradável referência de um para com o outro: "a senhora que acabou de falar," ou "você de terno marron," e etc. Uma folha de papel (8 1/2" x 11") ou uma cartolina (4" x 4") podem ser usadas.

Exemplos:



John Keltner sugere algumas formas que devemos evitar:

A formação T é a mais popular em muitas reuniões administrativas, mas esta frequentemente cria uma espécie de estatus ou de um poder centralizado no T. Ao mesmo tempo torna-se difícil para uma pessoa que está na parte superior do T se comunicar com a outra do lado oposto.

Alinhar os participantes num lado da mesa de maneira que não po-

dem ver face-a-face o companheiro.

Assentar as pessoas em fileiras um atrás do outro.

De termos um círculo, duplicar o círculo quando o grupo se torna grande. Em vez de fazer um círculo duplo é melhor formar um outro grupo.⁷

Esses arranjos dentro de uma sala são importantes para manter (1) o máximo de contato para uma comunicação oral informal; (2) o máximo de visão para todos; (3) a impressão de que o grupo é uma unidade e não é constituído de partes divididas.

Uma sala de reunião agradável, na qual os membros se sentirão confortáveis e descontraídos, ajudará a criar um clima para boas discussões.

Disciplina

A chave para o crescimento na vida de um grupo é a disciplina. Os próprios membros insistem em ter uma disciplina. A disciplina em si mesma, por melhor que seja, contudo, não deverá ser imposta sobre os membros do grupo. Qualquer norma adotada pelo grupo, deverá ser formulada pelo próprio grupo, e o suficiente possível, com o objetivo de ajudar os membros a realizar o propósito estabelecido.

Regularidade e pontualidade são de grande importância na vida de um grupo. Lealdade em assistência é o primeiro requisito que um membro deve estar disposto a cumprir. É uma boa prática também de a

⁷Keltner, p. 113.

reunião começar e terminar na hora marcada, como foi programada. Se o líder não é consistente em começar e terminar na hora marcada, os membros logo terão a impressão de que não há muita necessidade de se esforçar para estar a tempo. Igualmente as pessoas que chegam a tempo e tiveram que esperar para começar a reunião, possivelmente descidirão aproveitar o tempo em alguma outra coisa. Mesmo que tenham poucos membros presentes, sempre se deve começar na hora especificada.

Michael Skinner no seu livro House Groups, sugere que se deve evitar competição quando o grupo se reúne nas casas dos seus membros. Porém, se a reunião é num outro lugar, os membros podem descidir ter um pequeno recreio com alguns refrescos e biscoitos, etc.⁸

Deveremos conversar e chegar a uma conclusão sobre essas disciplinas indispensáveis para o bom funcionamento do grupo. Todavia, devemos ter em mente de que essas disciplinas e outras variam de grupo para grupo, porque cada grupo cresce de maneira diferente.

Dr. Reid apresenta que o "grupo que tem mais êxito é aquele em que os membros concordam com certas disciplinas nas quais todos obedecem."⁹ De um grupo no qual ele participou, foram tiradas as seguintes disciplinas:

Atender todas as reuniões do grupo possíveis.

⁸Michael Skinner, House Groups (London: Epworth Press and SPCK, 1969), p. 91.

⁹Reid, p. 41.

Ler o material que concordaram antes das reuniões.

Orar regularmente uns pelos outros.

Começar e terminar com cinco minutos de silêncio, e

Ter um recreio, mas sem servir nenhuma alimentação.¹⁰

É interessante verificar que quando os membros concordam sobre um corpo de disciplina que eles mesmos prepararam, sentirão mais dispostos a cumprir.

Coesão

Coesivo se refere a habilidade dos membros se manterem juntos. Um grupo com alto índice de coesão, cada membro trabalha para o bem-estar do grupo. Há um espírito de time, um ajudando o outro, encorajando a produtividade, incentivando o moral e a comunicação. Distribuem entre si as responsabilidades. Gastam tempo e se identificam um com o outro. Eles falam arrespeito do nosso grupo, o que nós desejamos alcançar, etc. Discentralização do eu em favor de um todo, do conjunto.

Nenhum grupo poderá desenvolver um espírito de grupo se os seus membros não sentem que são aceitos e pertencem ao grupo. Reeves menciona:

Coesividade é diretamente proporcional a identificação do grupo com os seus principais objetivos. Não há necessidade de desenvolver uma forte amizade, precisa é ter a estima e admiração dos presentes. Isto levará à solidariedade do grupo.¹¹

Esta coesão depende da honestidade, do interesse dos membros do grupo, e também de sua vitalidade.

¹⁰Reid, p. 41.

¹¹Elton T. Reeves, The Dynamics of Group Behaviour (n.p.: American Management Association, Inc., 1970), p. 108.

APÊNDICE D

O VALOR DE ESTUDOS BÍBLICOS EM DINÂMICA

Vivemos num tempo em que dinâmica de grupo está sendo usado proficuamente no ensino de muitas matérias. Mais e mais os professores estão encourajando subdividir as classes em pequenos grupos. Os próprios estudantes muito frequentemente formam grupos para estudar para os exames ou preparar para as classes.

A maior parte da nossa vida social e recreacional está relacionada com grupos. Pensamos um pouco na semana passada. Quanto de nosso tempo gastamos em conversações sociais com os amigos? Quão frequentemente vamos com grupos à festa, concêrto ou reuniões religiosas?

Não importa o que fazemos ou aonde vivemos, sempre estamos gastando o nosso tempo em grupos. O homem sempre tem vivido em grupos. Designações como família, clan, tribo, e gang têm uma longa história. O famoso teólogo Paul Tillich afirma que "nenhum ser pessoal existe sem uma comunidade.... Não há pessoas sem viver com outras. Pessoas somente podem crescer em comunhão pessoal com outras."¹

Por que não perguntar a nós mesmos: Podemos trabalhar com outras pessoas? Podemos sentar-nos à mesa de conferências com um grupo e participar ajudando nas decisões? Podemos dar a nossa contribuição para

¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Vol. I, pp. 176, 177.

uma conferência mais proveitosa? Que tipo de pessoas somos? Estamos dispostos e prontos a contribuir com os nossos conhecimentos, falando ou ouvindo, explicando ou resolvendo?

O aprendizado é mais efetivo em grupo. Lendo, pensando, e examinando as idéias, os membros do grupo obtêm uma melhor introspecção dos valores humanos, olhando mais além do que a sua experiência imediata, tendo um vislumbre mais abarcante das coisas.²

Aprender a confiar e tornar uma pessoa de confiança, aprender a amar e se tornar amado, devemos nos envolver na vida dos demais, servindo por amor de Cristo. Para desenvolver esse tipo de relacionamento precisamos compartilhar com os outros a nossa vida e por sua vez eles também conosco. A maior necessidade do homem é de compreender e ser compreendido. Mas o homem vive solitário porque não confia as coisas boas e más a um companheiro. Assim ele veste uma máscara superficial de respeito e auto-dignidade. "Eu conheço um grupo que me compreende e me ama. Agora eu tenho razão para viver, tenho uma missão na vida.... Neste grupo eu posso ajudar as pessoas que vivem sozinhas como eu. Eu posso compartilhar-me com elas."³

Os membros de um grupo deveriam estar alertos arrespeito de seus colegas. Cada membro deveria fazer um treino próprio para ser sensitivo e responsivo às necessidades e desejos dos outros membros do grupo.

²Robert S. Clemmons, Young Adults in the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 43.

³Robert Lee, The Library-Sponsored Discussion Group (New York: American Library Association, 1957), p. 7.

Sendo que é importante que cada membro expresse os seus sentimentos próprios, deveria igualmente estar disposto a ajudar os outros expressá-los também. Frequentemente ficamos tão envolvidos com os nossos problemas que falhamos em ver que no grupo há outros que estão lutando da mesma maneira. Parte do grande valor que podemos tirar dos estudos em grupo é a oportunidade de aprender arrespeito de outras pessoas e começar a sentir as suas preocupações com o objetivo de ajudar. E quando ajudamos, somos ajudados.

Não há instituição que tem contatos mais regulares de face-a-face com milhões de pessoas do a igreja. O método de pequenos grupos é coisa muito natural na igreja, e é de longa data. "O direito de cada pessoa é de desenvolver a sua capacidade potencial como filhos de Deus na herança judaica-cristã."⁴

A igreja tem sempre sido um ambiente natural para a formação de grupos. Sabemos que a maioria das atividades na igreja é levada avante através de grupos. Igrejas grandes e pequenas são sucedidas quando conseguem organizar os seus membros em pequenos grupos.

Clyde Reid afirma que "igrejas e agências paroquiais em todos os lugares estão fazendo uso de pequenos grupos de tal maneira que estão trazendo vida nova e vitalidade para os membros."⁵ Realmente, a proliferação de pequenos grupos, de face-a-face dinâmica de grupos é um

⁴Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., The People Dynamic, Changing Self and Society Through Growth Groups (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), p. 128.

⁵Clyde Reid, p. 16.

dos desenvolvimentos contemporâneos mais significativos na vida da igreja. O que a igreja necessita desesperadamente em nossos dias é desse relacionamento pessoal, face-a-face de seus membros. Um relacionamento que é possível com poucas pessoas, por algum tempo. Desta maneira, a igreja é forçada ao estabelecimento de pequenos grupos. Basicamente pequenos grupos de três ou mais pessoas que trabalham juntas num específico trabalho para alcançar um objetivo comum.

Usualmente apreciamos a companhia de alguém conosco enquanto trabalhamos ou viajamos. Porém, um esforço coordenado em grupo é diferente. Aqui estamos lidando com idéias, uma tarefa que não é muito fácil. Trabalhar com várias pessoas num grupo para atingir um alvo comum é algo complicado. Logicamente não devemos esperar que um grupo tenha a mesma concentração e eficiência de uma pessoa que trabalha sozinha. Grupo requer estruturação e coordenação. Coordenação exige eficiência em planos e comunicação.

Para ajudar-nos a compreender e guiar-nos há necessidade de conhecermos certas normas de naturais de dinâmica em grupo. Cada grupo tem um padrão social de relacionamento dos seus membros, podendo ser simples ou mais elevados e elaborados.

Quais são os benefícios da participação de um grupo de Estudos Bíblicos em Dinâmica? É uma oportunidade para

se tornar mais alerta dos problemas sociais de nossa época,

se tornar mais familiarizados com as verdades bíblicas,

regozijar em atividades criativas e espirituais,

fazer novos amigos e compartilhar os nossos interesses, e

discutir idéias estimulantes com os outros.

Quais são mesmos os valores dos Estudos Bíblicos em Dinâmica?

Através da discussão, um grupo pode explorar as idéias e problemas fundamentais da vida cristã e no no conjunto encontrar uma experiência pessoal significativa.

Num grupo a pessoa avalia as suas próprias palavras e as dos companheiros concernente as verdades bíblicas. Com esse processo de poder expressar livremente os pensamentos, a pessoa adquire maturidade e se torna um cristão mais responsável num mundo de confusão.

Um grupo satisfaz as necessidades de um melhor relacionamento. Providencia oportunidades para experimentar a atividade redentora do Espírito Santo. Enriquece a vida espiritual. Treina as pessoas para a liderança da igreja. Providencia uma arena para as discussões. Capacita os membros a testarem e testemunharem a fé que professam.

Irwing Harris resume satisfatoriamente o trabalho de um grupo dinâmico, dizendo que a necessidade de Estudos Bíblicos em Dinâmica é de aprender como conjugar os seguintes verbos: "ver, orar, crescer, partilhar, aplicar êstes verbos que formam o coração de grupos cristãos."⁶

⁶Irwing Harris, Groups That Work (Grand Rapids; Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 11.

APÊNDICE E

LIDERANÇA

Uma orquestra ou time atlético são ilustrações bem apropriadas de como um grupo dinâmico funciona. Eles são ajudados, guiados, dirigidos, sincronizados, habilitados a usarem suas energias e aptidões dependendo uns dos outros. Contudo, todos os esforços são sustentados por alguém que age como líder. Matthew B. Miles afirma categoricamente que "sem uma liderança um grupo não pode funcionar."¹ O próprio Jesus foi líder de um pequeno grupo. Ele treinou esse grupo e sobre ele dependeu para apresentar ao mundo o Seu Evangelho. Não há dúvida, de que a vida e o êxito de um grupo depende de sua liderança. Por isso devemos considerar esse fator de real importância.

Num grupo um líder pode ser designado pelos seus membros. Mais tarde deveria haver um rodízio de direção, dando oportunidade a outros. Um grupo bem dirigido, deveria ter vários membros que estarão capacitados para assumir a liderança a qualquer momento. Numa liderança descentralizada, cada membro é um líder.

Uma imposição de liderança parece ser desaconselhável. Num grupo bem sucedido, os líderes deveriam "emergir" espontaneamente e assumir a sua posição no grupo, dando a sua contribuição. À medida

¹Matthew B. Miles, Learning to Work in Groups (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971), p. 21.

que o grupo desenvolve, cada participante vai assumindo certas responsabilidades. O grupo deveria ser dirigido de tal maneira que os seus membros tenham realmente essa oportunidade de desenvolver como líder.

Quais são as características de um líder? Reid comentando sobre isto, disse: "Grandes somas de dinheiro têm sido gastas nas pesquisas para identificar os traços de um líder, mas nenhuma correlação foi descoberta que permitisse predizer os futuros líderes."² Contudo, há algumas características que podemos e devemos encontrar num líder de grupo as quais passaremos a mencionar muito consisamente.

O Líder não Deve Ser Um Manipulador.

A maneira mais rápida de disqualificar alguém para a liderança de um grupo é a maneira de agir e falar deixando os outros perceberem que eles estão sendo manipulados. De maneira geral, pertencemos a um grupo e não gostamos de ser manipulados. Aquele que emerge de um grupo como líder natural, deve ser sincero e dedicado aos interesses do grupo. Ele não deve colocar as palavras na boca dos membros e nem impor os seus pontos de vista. Neste ponto deve haver um equilíbrio entre desempenhar uma tarefa e as funções sócio-emocionais dos membros.³ Se os membros percebem que uma orientação do líder é uma indicação de que ele é superior aos demais, e que está usando o grupo para propósito próprio, simplesmente não será obedecido. Ele deveria confiar suficientemente nos demais para deixar que todo o grupo participe.

²Casteel, p. 36.

³Robert R. Powell, Managing Church Business Through Group Procedures (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 132-138.

O Líder Deve Ser Disposto a Pagar o Preço.

Ao ser aceito como líder natural do grupo, a pessoa deve estar disposta a ajudar o grupo a realizar o seu trabalho. Quase sempre, todos querem as recompensas de um líder, mas poucos querem o trabalho que vai além do dever para o bem de todos. As pessoas que emergem como líder, fazem sacrifícios pessoais em favor do grupo. Trabalha além do horário, enfrenta trabalhos difíceis, inconvenientes com entusiasmo. Nada comunica mais claramente o interesse despertado e desprendido do que a disposição de se sacrificar em favor do grupo. O manipulador consegue o que deseja às custas do grupo. Mas os verdadeiros líderes fazem as coisas do grupo às expensas de sacrifícios próprios. Ele não está preocupado com apreciações pelo seu trabalho. Frequentemente ele atribue aos outros os resultados alcançados. As pessoas que estão preocupadas com o reconhecimento de seus planos, suas idéias, raramente surgem como líderes.

Participação.

Se um líder deseja ser líder, ele precisa tomar interesse ativo no trabalho do grupo. Deve dar a sua contribuição. Considerar os demais. Saber ouvir, comunicar pacientemente e compreender os outros.

Preparação.

O líder tem que saber o que está se passando no grupo. Isto exige dele sua preparação para cada reunião. Ler o material programado. Estar em condições de responder perguntas, orientar. Não há necessidade que ele seja um especialista na área de determinada discussão, porém, deveria ter um conhecimento da matéria. Estar disposto e apto a

criar e manter o interesse sobre o assunto de tal maneira que ele possa conduzir a discussão inteligentemente.

Orientação.

O líder tem a responsabilidade de orientar a discussão, encorajar a participação de todos. Igualmente deve assistir o grupo em explorar e analisar o tópico em discussão, focalizando a atenção nas idéias principais. A sua orientação não deve ser arbitrária ou artificial mas espontânea contribuição ao grupo.

Olhando a cada membro do grupo, o líder pode assistir quando alguém tem uma boa contribuição a fazer. É seu trabalho fazer com que essa pessoa seja ouvida, etc. Sendo desta maneira um catalizador, ajudando a todos darem o máximo possível.⁵

Treinar Outros Líderes.

Um dos objetivos importantes na discussão de liderança é o desenvolvimento de outros líderes dentro do próprio grupo. Isto significa que o líder eficiente deve se tornar um treinador de outros líderes. Pois, num grupo deveria haver um bom número de pessoas preparadas para assumir a liderança numa emergência, ou mesmo trabalhar como líder assistente.⁶

Atitude do Líder.

A atitude do líder determinará se cada membro do grupo se sente

⁵Franklin S. Haiman, Group Leadership and Democratic Action (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), pp. 113-118.

⁶Malcom and Hulda Knowless, How to Develop Better Leaders (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 168-170.

liyre a participar ativamente nas discussões. Se o líder tem uma atitude receptiva, que pode criar uma atmosfera de confiança, ajudará os membros a se sentirem liyres. O tom da sua voz, a maneira de responder e de se comunicar, ajudará a produção do grupo. Nunca deverá ter a atitude de que é sua obrigação concertar o que está errado. Pelo contrário, deve ter um espírito de tratar os outros membros do grupo como pessoas de maturidade, ouvindo cuidadosamente e respeitando cada contribuição. Pela sua atitude, ele deve transmitir ao grupo um senso de objetividade. Crer na potencialidade do grupo.⁷

Outros característicos e qualidades de um líder de grupo poderiam ser mencionadas, todavia, não queremos tornar a lista demasiadamente grande. Devemos lembrar que da mesma maneira como existem bô as qualidades que caracterizam os bons líderes de grupo, há também aquelas poucas ou muitas que distinguem os máus e pobres líderes. Somente mencionaremos aqui algumas poucas para alertar-nos desse fato.

As pessoas que são inflexíveis nas suas opiniões, que o conceito de liderança como sendo de manipulador dos outros para fazerem o que bem desejam, devem ser rejeitados como líderes. Evitar igualmente, os que gostam de falar muito, os dominadores de qualquer situação, e entendidas em todas as matérias.

Sendo que o êxito de um grupo depende em grande parte de uma liderança, os membros deveriam escolher o mais proyável ser um bom líder.

⁷Alvin J. Lindgren, Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration (New York; Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 168-170.

Muito mais quando se escolhe um líder para um grupo de Estudos Bíblicos em Dinâmica, onde o objetivo principal é o desenvolvimento espiritual de seus membros.⁸

⁸Ver J. Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), p. 25.

APPENDIX F
QUESTIONARIO
(Questionnaire)

AVALIAÇÃO FINAL DA REUNIÃO

(End-of-Meeting Evaluation)

A sua ajuda em suprir estas informações contribuirão para melhorar e avaliar as reuniões do nosso grupo.

(Your help by supplying this information will contribute to the improvement and evaluation of our group meetings.)

1. Como você se sente acérca desta reunião? (Favor check)
(How did you feel this meeting was today?) (Please check)

Medíocre _____ Regular _____ Boa _____ Excelente _____
(Mediocre) (All right) (Good) (Excellent)

2. Durante êste estudo teve alguma coisa que gostaria de ser expressado e não foi possível?

(Did you find yourself wanting to say things during the meetings that you didn't actually say?)

Não _____ Poucas Vêzes _____ Frequentemente _____
(Never) (A few times) (Frequently)

3. Houve algumas razões particulares por que você não contribuiu?
(Were there any particular reasons why you did not contribute?)

Sim _____ Nao _____
(Yes) (No)

4. O que voce pensa que o grupo desejava alcançar hoje?
(What do you think this group was trying to accomplish today?)

(Não precisa assinar o nome)
(You need not sign your name)

AVALIAÇÃO FINAL DA REUNIÃO

(End-of-Meeting Evaluation)

1. Como voce se sente consoante a esta reunião? (Check)
(How did you feel about this meeting?)

Medíocre _____ Regular _____ Boa _____ Excelente _____
(Mediocre) (All right) (Good) (Excellent)

2. Quais foram os pontos fortes?
(What were the strong points?)

3. Quais foram as partes fracas?
(What were the weaknesses?)

4. Que aprimoramentos poderiam sugerir para as futuras reuniões?
(What improvements would you suggest for future meetings?)

(Não precisa assinar o nome)
(You need not sign your name)

AVALIAÇÃO FINAL DA REUNIÃO

(End-of-Meeting Evaluation)

1. Como voce se sente arrepeito desta reunião? (Check)
(How did you feel about this meeting?)

Medíocre _____ Regular _____ Boa _____ Excelente _____
(Mediocre) (All right) (Good) (Excellent)

2. Esta reunião foi suficientemente planejada? (Check)
(The amount of planning for this meeting was)

Mais ou Menos _____ Muito Pouca _____ Muito Bem _____
(About right) (Too Little) (Too Much)

3. Num todo o programa depedeu dos membros do grupo. (Check)
(The Total program depends on group members)

Muitíssimo _____ Mais ou Menos _____ Pouquíssimo _____
(Too Much) (About right) (Too little)

4. Observações:
(Observations)

Não precisa assinar o nome
(You need not sign your name)

QUESTIONÁRIO

(Questionnaire)

1. Quais foram os pontos novos adquiridos acerca do livro de Jônas?
(What were the insights you gained about the book of Jonah?)

2. A que ponto voce tem gostado do método que usamos?
(How well did you like the method we used?)

Bom _____ Serve _____ ou Pobre _____
(Good) (Fair) (Poor)

3. Que valores voce ve em usar essas atividades no estudo da Bíblia?
(What values do you see in using activities like this to study
the Bible?)

Bom _____ Serve _____ ou Pobre _____
(Good) (Fair) (Poor)

Observações:
(Observations)

(Não precisa assinar o nome)
(You need not sign your name)

QUESTIONÁRIO

(Questionnaire)

- | | Very
Much | Very
Little |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Tenho interésses espirituais nessas reuniões.
(I have spiritual interest about these meetings) | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Estou participando desse grupo como descencargo de participação social.
(I'm participating in this group as social obligation) | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Estas reuniões satisfazem minhas necessidades espirituais.
(These meetings are satisfying my spiritual needs) | _____ | _____ |

Muitissimo:

Pouquissimo:

Observações:
(Observations)

(Não precisa assinar o nome)
(You need not sign your name)

AVALIAÇÃO

(Evaluation)

De maneira geral, como voce se sente arrespeito dessas reuniões?

(Generally, how did you feel about these meetings?)

Observações:

(Observations)

(Não precisa assinar o nome)
(You need not sign your name)

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