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Falling From The Faith : Causes Of Membership Dropout In The Grenada Mission Of Seventh-day Adventists

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ABSTRACT

FALLING FROM THE FAITH: CAUSES OF MEMBERSHIP
DROPOUT IN THE GRENADA MISSION
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

by

Clinton P. Lewis

Adviser: Clifford Jones

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: FALLING FROM THE FAITH: CAUSES OF MEMBERSHIP DROPOUT IN
THE GRENADA MISSION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Name of researcher: Clinton P. Lewis

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Clifford Jones, D.Min.

Date completed: June 1997

This study endeavored to find the causes of membership dropout in the Grenada

Mission of Seventh-day Adventists and the ways that it may be reduced.

The dissertation investigates the biblical and theological basis for seeking to reduce

dropouts by undertaking a study of the Great Commission and God's concern for

dropouts.

A select review of relevant literature on dropouts was done in an effort to get an

overview of the problem in various denominations and regions, as well as to receive

insights in reducing dropouts.

One hundred and sixty-nine questionnaires were completed by dropouts, and

twenty-one by church leaders in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. The Research and Statistical Department of Andrews University evaluated the questionnaire responses.

The responses to the questionnaire revealed that the churches in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists are experiencing their greatest loss among members under the age of thirty-five (75.7 percent) who are single (67.5 percent). Both church leaders and the dropouts agreed that most dropouts take place within ten years after baptism.

The dropouts gave about thirty-five factors that caused them to leave, but when the factors were categorized the major contributor to dropouts was relational problems with members (41.9 percent). The other categories were sexual sins, external influences and pressures, worship and nurture, problems with church standards and practices, assimilation and acculturation, and socioeconomic status.

The strategy developed in this dissertation was not tested before the completion of this dissertation but I anticipate a great reduction in dropouts as it is implemented in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theology Seminary

FALLING FROM THE FAITH: CAUSES OF MEMBERSHIP
DROPOUT IN THE GRENADA MISSION OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Clinton P. Lewis

June 1997
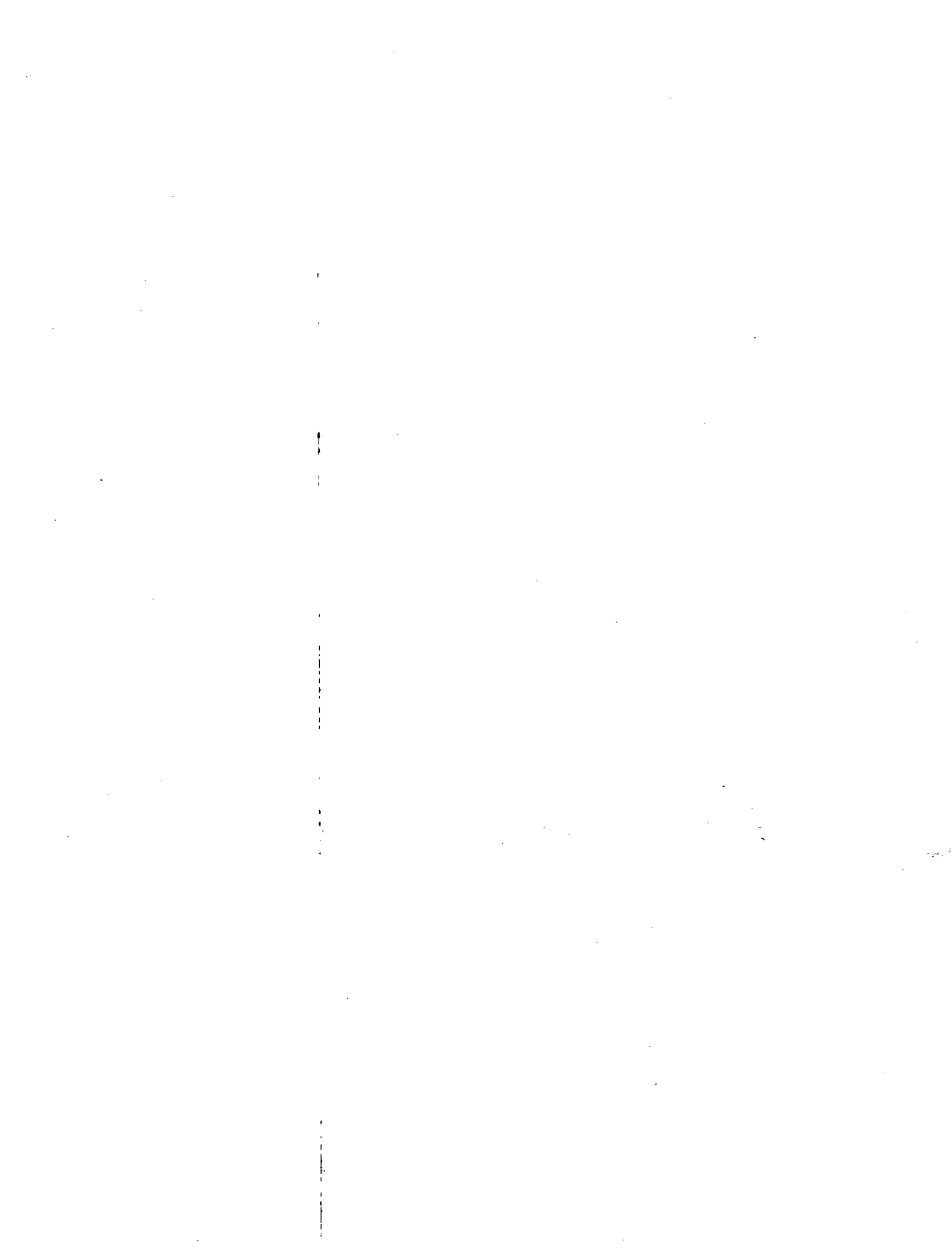
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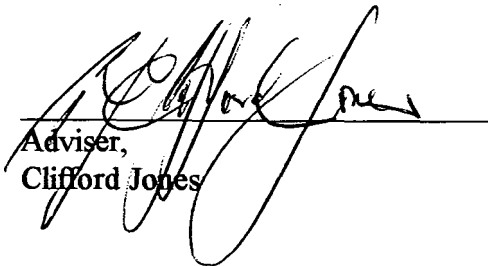Doctor of Ministry

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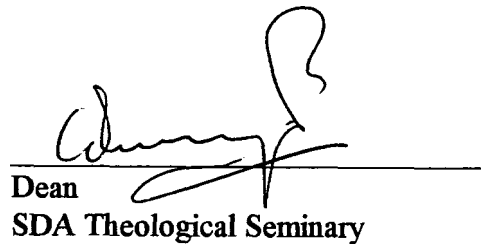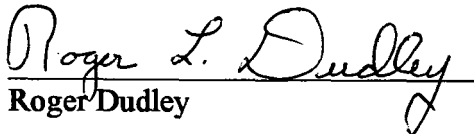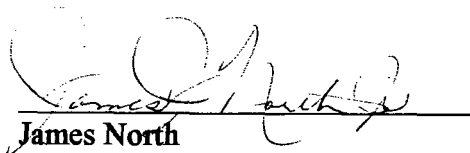
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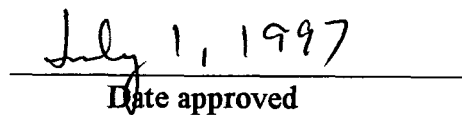APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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Finally, to God for His miraculous provisions, and for doing for me more than I could have asked or thought, to Him be glory and honor and praise.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When I began working in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists in September of 1984, I was assigned shortly thereafter to work in an island-wide evangelistic crusade conducted in the parish of St. George's. After the crusade ended I was assigned to the southern district where most of the converts from that crusade were sent. The church had no post-baptismal plans for the converts, and my undergraduate training in theology did not prepare me for assimilating new members. The emphasis in my training was in getting people baptized. It was not long before we began to experience many losses due to dropouts. This same problem was occurring in other districts where large crusades were conducted.

Statement of the Problem

The Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, like the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists of which it is a part, places great emphasis on evangelism. Consequently, many people are baptized yearly into the church. Unfortunately, though, a disturbingly significant number of them become dropouts, especially those baptized in large tent crusades. The names of some dropouts remain on the church membership books, even though they have little or no relationship with the church.

Although there has been and still is a reluctance to drop those who have left the

church from the churches' records, the actual baptisms and losses reported from 1985 to

1994[1] in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists are as follows:

TABLE 1

BAPTISMS AND LOSS IN THE GRENADA MISSION
FROM 1985 TO 1994

Year	Baptism	Apostasy and missing
1985	263	391
1986	297	78
1987	562	80
1988	322	37
1989	413	82
1990	466	256
1991	517	200
1992	262	44
1993	373	77
1994	443	90
Totals	3918	1335

Statement of the Task

The task of this dissertation is to investigate what dropouts from the Seventh-day

Adventist churches in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists perceive as the

[1]General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Executive Committee,
Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, nos. 123-132
(Washington DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984-1994).

reasons for their actions and to receive from them suggested ways the dropout rate may be reduced. It was also the objective of this research to find out from district pastors, lay evangelists, and personal ministries leaders why members drop out and ways to address the problem.

Justification for the Dissertation

1. Both clergy and laity in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists are greatly concerned about the high dropout rate.

2. The average yearly percentage of dropouts that was reported as compared to baptisms from 1985 to 1994 has been 34 percent.

3. There is an ongoing evangelistic thrust in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists that results in many baptisms each year. While the overall task of the church is to make disciples, the disciples are to remain in the church (Matt 28:19-20, John 15:16).

4. No known research has been done to find out why people are dropping out of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

5. There is a need in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists to view the prevention of dropouts as a critical component of evangelism, as well as to find new methods to address the issue of membership loss from dropouts.

Methodology

1. The descriptive method was used in this dissertation.

2. A study of the biblical foundation for making disciples and Jesus' concern for bearing fruits that remain was undertaken in an effort to clearly emphasize the need for the

Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grenada to focus on making disciples as a goal of all evangelistic activities.

3. A survey of the literature on the reasons for membership loss was undertaken to get an understanding of the problem and to find suggested ways to curb membership dropouts.

4. A questionnaire was used with dropouts to identify contributing factors and possible reasons for their actions, as well as to receive from them ways to remedy the problem.

a. A pilot test was done after the questionnaire was developed. The president of the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists was given the responsibility for having the test done. The questionnaires were returned to me by mail on August 20, 1996.

b. The sample for this study was one hundred and sixty-nine dropouts. The dropouts were chosen from the seven pastoral districts in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

c. In districts where I did not administer the survey myself, I employed educated[1] church members to help me conduct the interviews. The questionnaires were given to the dropouts to complete and they were taken up the same day, or as soon thereafter as it was possible.

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[1]Members with a secondary-school education or more.

5. Seven district pastors, seven successful[1] lay evangelists, and seven successful personal ministries' leaders participated in filling out the special questionnaire that was prepared for them. A pastor, a lay evangelist, and a personal ministries' leader came from each of the seven pastoral districts in the Grenada Mission. The purpose was to get their perception of the reasons for membership dropouts and suggestions of ways to reduce the problem. The lay evangelist and the personal ministries' leader from each pastoral district were recommended by their district pastors.

6. Analyzing and interpreting the results of the 169 questionnaires filled out by the dropouts and the 21 questionnaires from the church leaders were undertaken in this study.

7. A strategy was developed based on the results of the questionnaires and the suggestions for dropouts reductions given by both the dropouts and the church leaders who participated in the questionnaires.

Limitation of the Dissertation

Although the questionnaire was conducted in all the pastoral districts in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, dropouts were not taken from every church. The churches with the highest dropout rates in every district were the primary ones targeted.

The problem of dropouts is widespread in the Inter-American Division but this dissertation focused only on the problem in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day

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[1]Success was determined by the number of souls that person influenced to be baptized and his/her experience in evangelism.

Adventists.

The strategy developed in this study was not tested in the field before the completion of this dissertation.

Expectation from the Dissertation

1. This project will contribute to a deeper understanding of the reasons for membership loss.

2. It suggests ways the church may more effectively address the problem of dropouts.

3. It has deepened my understanding of why people drop out of the church and it has provided me with more skills to help reduce dropouts. It has also given me a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, since this problem has been a deep concern of mine since I entered the pastoral ministry.

4. It will provide the pastors working in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists with information and insights that will help them to better understand the dropout problem, and with a strategy to address it more effectively.

5. It will increase awareness in Seventh-day Adventists churches of the need for every member to be involved in conserving members. It has underlined the need for as much emphasis to be placed on conservation as is placed on evangelism.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

Church may refer to a denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist church, or a local

congregation.

Dropouts refer to anyone who was once a member of the church but drifted away and no longer identify or have little relationship with it, even though their names may still be on the church's membership record.

Grenada Mission is an abbreviation for the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

The Institute for Further Education refers to an educational institution that prepares students with Cambridge General Certificate of Education at the ordinary level for the advance level.

Laity refers to every member of the church who is not part of the clergy.

SDA is an abbreviation for Seventh-day Adventists.

The Faith refers to the body of scriptural truth or doctrines that the church teaches.

Teachers College is an educational institution that trains teachers for the elementary schools in Grenada.

CHAPTER II

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE
FOR ENDEAVORING TO REDUCE
CHURCH DROPOUTS

<u>The Great Commission: Making Disciples</u>

Although there are other Great Commission texts such as John 20:21, Mark 16:15-

17, Luke 24:47-48, and Acts 1:8, Matt 28:18-20 is what is usually referred to as the Great

Commission. Matt 28:18-20 "gives the blue print, the methods, and the methodology for

fulfilling Christ's command."[1] The instruction in Matt 28:18-20 removes all previous

limitations in the proclamation of the gospel and forms a distinctive turning point and a

great change of direction from all earlier gospel declarations of Jesus.[2] The word "all"

dominates the passage: "All power . . . all nations . . . all things whatsoever I have

commanded you . . . with you always" (Matt 28:18-20). The Greek words translated

"always" literally mean "all the days."[3] The Great Commission does not command Jesus'

disciples to go; Jesus assumes that His disciples will go. In the Greek text, <u>poreuthentes</u> is

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[1]Bill Hull, <u>The Disciple Making Pastor</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revel, 1994), 51.

[2]Johannes Blauw, <u>The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 85.

[3]Marvin R. Vincent, <u>Word Studies in the New Testament</u>, vol. 1 (New York: Scribners, 1918), 150.

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an Aorist participle. It can be translated "when you have gone"[1] or "having gone"[2] with

the meaning of when the disciples go. Christ expected every disciple to go.

The reason Christ gave in Matt 28:19 for His disciples to go is that they may make

disciples. He is telling them to make more of what they are themselves.[3] Matheteusate,

the word used in Matt 28:19, is "the principal verb in the 'Great Commission.' It is the

heart of the commissioning"[4] and means "make disciples."[5] The verb "to make disciples"

is found only four times in the New Testament.[6] Matt 28:19 is the only instance in which

the verb is used in an imperative sense.[7] It is the only imperative of the passage. Making

disciples is the main emphasis in the Great Commission command[8] of Christ. Bill Hull

wrote the following:

> The imperative command of the text is make disciples. . . . By specifically
> commanding the making of disciples, Jesus specified the work product of the Church.
> He did not say, "make converts," or, "make Christians." Being a Convert or
> a Christian does not necessarily equal reproduction. Many Christians are

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[1]Randolph O. Yeager, Renaissance New Testament, vol. 3 (Bowling Green, KY: Renaissance Press, 1976), 623.

[2]Richard R. De Ridder, Discipling the Nations (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 184.

[3]Michael Wilkins, The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel (New York: E. J. Brill, 1988), 162.

[4]David J. Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 73.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Matt 13:52, 27:57, 28:19; Acts 14:21.

[7]Bosch, 73.

[8]Matheteusate is an aorist active imperative.

spiritually sterile; many don't take the gospel forward. When a disciple is made, two good things happen: a disciple is healthy and godly; disciples reproduce themselves, and some become disciple makers, resulting in multiplication. Therefore, disciples solve the crisis at the heart of the church. Disciple making creates a quality product and an effective work force. This is God's plan for His church.[1]

Who Are Commissioned to Make Disciples?

The original commission was to Jesus' immediate disciples, but it is extended to all disciples until the end of time. The task of the church is explicitly defined in the Great Commission. It is to make disciples. Every disciple is to make disciples. The goal of all mission, all missions, all evangelism is to produce disciples. David J. Bosch summed it up well when he wrote:

> The link between Jesus' own time and the time of Matthew's community is, in fact, given in the command "make disciples!" (28:19). In other words, the followers of the earthly Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples. In the final analysis, therefore, there is, for Matthew, no break, no discontinuity between the history of Jesus and the era of the church. . . . The past relation between the Master and his first disciples is being transformed into something more than history--it aims at nourishing and challenging the present hour.[2]

The responsibility of Christ's disciples today in relation to the Great Commission was clearly stated by Ellen White in the following words:

> The Savior's Commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained ministry. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are

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[1]Hull, 52.

[2]Bosch, 74.

thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.[1]

What Is Involved in Making Disciples?

While making disciples remains the heart of the Great Commission, Matthew uses

the two participles <u>baptizontes</u> and <u>didaskontes,</u> which are qualifiers or modifiers or

subordinates of the main imperative verb <u>matheteusate</u>.[2] The participles "baptizing" and

"teaching" actually describe the form that disciple-making has to take.[3] Making disciples

therefore "includes the entire disciple-making process, from conversion to trained disciple

maker."[4] Matthew's use of the term <u>matheteusate</u> certainly implies more than evangelism;

the term means "both the call to and the process of becoming a disciple."[5]

Allan Coppedge noted that "making disciples" involve two parts.[6] The first aspect

is "when men and women come into an experience of salvation,"[7] and the second aspect

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[1]Ellen G. White, <u>The Desire of Ages</u> (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 822.

[2]Allan Coppedge, <u>The Biblical Principles of Discipleship</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 107.

[3]<u>Das Wahre Israel: Studien Zur Theologie des Matthaus - Evangeliums</u>, quoted in David J. Bosch, <u>Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission</u> (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 73.

[4]Hull, 59.

[5]Grant R. Osborne, <u>The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study</u> (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 91.

[6]Coppedge, 115-116.

[7]Ibid., 116.

involves the training of those who made a decision to follow Jesus Christ.[1] Coppedge

wrote that the second aspect is pointed out by Jesus when he stated, "Teaching them to

observe all that I have commanded you."[2] When a new believer begins to receive teaching

as to what it means to be a disciplined follower of Jesus, then in a sense proper discipling

begins. This aspect of the Great Commission involves extensive energy that is to be spent

over a long period of time. It includes the essential elements of training in doctrine, prayer,

worship, fellowship, and giving.[3] The ultimate result will be that the new disciple goes

out to make other disciples while having the assurance of Jesus' presence.[4]

Leroy Eims, who also regarded "making disciples" as a process, described the

process in his book The Lost Art of Disciple Making. First the process of evangelizing

takes place, resulting in the production of a convert. The commission of Jesus is to make

disciples, not converts, so the new Christian has to be led to progress to the point where

he/she becomes a mature, fruitful, and dedicated disciple.[5] This second part of the process

of disciple-making Eims referred to as "establishing." It is actually follow-up work.

"Establishing" is to be characterized with what Eims called "training objectives," which are

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 116-117.

[4]Ibid., 118.

[5]Leroy Eims, The Lost Art of Disciple Making (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 123.

to stimulate progress on the discipleship path.[1] The training list Eims suggested contained

areas such as: Bible study, prayer, personal testimony, the use of time, witnessing, giving,

world vision, and Christian fellowship.[2] The third and final part of the disciple-making

process that involves every convert Eims called "equipping," and this results in a

"committed, knowledgeable, productive worker."[3] As a "worker" that person is equipped

to evangelize, make converts, and then establish them to become disciples.[4]

Waylon Moore also suggested a process for discipling. Like Eims he emphasized

establishing converts by follow-up work. He stated that "through follow-up the convert is

loved, fed, protected, and trained. He becomes a disciple, a growing follower of Christ."[5]

Moore outlined from the book of 1 Thessalonians four methods of follow-up in the

disciple-making process. These four processes are: "Personal Correspondence"--

following up new converts with personal letters (1 Thess 1:1) coupled with simple one-

page Bible studies; "Personal Intercession"--pray for new converts by name especially at

prayer services (1 Thess 1:2); "Personal Representatives"--someone trained to minister to

the new convert (1 Thess 3:1-5); "Personal Contact"--regular visitation. Moore regarded

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[1]Ibid., 61-75.

[2]Ibid., 75.

[3]Ibid., 123.

[4]Ibid., 124.

[5]Waylon B. Moore, Multiplying Disciples: The New Testament Method for Church Growth (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, [c. 1981]), 32.

these four methods as the "actual starting point for disciple-making."[1] This is to be

followed by what he called the three principles of: (1) "extended presence" with the

disciples in order to train and teach them, (2) "care and love," which are associated with a

parent heart, and (3) "pace setting," which is teaching by example.[2]

Hull, Moore, Eims, and Waylon took different approaches in regard to what

should be the content of the training material to be used with new converts. However,

they all agreed that making disciples is a process that involves making converts, who then

receive tremendous nurture, teaching, and training into the experience of becoming

disciples and disciple makers.

Description of a Disciple

In the New Testament the word mathetes is used seventy-three times by Matthew,

forty-six times by Mark, thirty-seven times by Luke, seventy-eight times by John, and

twenty-eight times by Acts, making a total of 262 times. The term is not used anywhere

else in the New Testament.[3] This is the only name for the followers of Christ in the

Gospels.[4]

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[1]Ibid., 51.

[2]Ibid., 67-97.

[3]Robert Morgenthaler, Statistik des Neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes (Frankfurt am Main: Gotthelf-verlag Zurich, 1958), 118.

[4]Bosch, 73.

A Lexical Approach to Describing a Disciple During
the Hellenistic Period and in the New Testament

In the late Hellenistic period <u>mathetes</u> was used with the general connotations of

"a learner" and an "adherent," but its most regular usage was that of an "adherent" whose

"adherency was determined by the master."[1]

The progression of <u>mathetes</u> to widely mean "adherent" in Hellenism during the

period of Jesus Christ and the early church made <u>mathetes</u> a convenient term to designate

the followers of Jesus, because the emphasis in the common use of the term was not upon

learning or upon being a pupil but upon adherence to a great master.[2] By the third

century A. D. <u>mathetes</u> had become a technical term to refer to an adherent.[3]

Regarding the usage of <u>mathetes</u> in the New Testament, Karl Rengstorf wrote:

"The usage is from the very first characterized by the fact that, apart from a few

exceptions, μαθητής denotes the men who have attached themselves to Jesus as their

master."[4] He further noted that <u>mathetes</u>

> always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life
> of the one described as μαθητής, and which in its particularity leaves no
> doubt as to who is deploying the formative power . . . .   In the NT we do not find
> any instances where μαθητής is used without this implication of supremely
> personal union.[5]

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[1]Wilkins, 217.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Karl H. Rengstorf, "Mathetes," <u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>
(1964-1976), 4:441.

[5]Ibid., 441-442.

From the way mathetes was used during the Hellenistic period, in the early church, and in the New Testament, a disciple can be described as anyone who adheres to Jesus, making Him the Lord and Master of his or her life.

Description of a Disciple from Jesus' Teachings

A lexical contribution to the meaning of mathetes falls short of whom a disciple really is. In order to get a full description of a disciple as Jesus intended, the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels that relate to mathetes have to be investigated. Jesus in the Gospels described a disciple as someone with the following characteristics: (1) abides in Christ, bears fruits; (2) is committed to Christ's Word; (3) puts Christ first; and (4) loves others as Christ did.

Abides in Christ, Bears Fruits

Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:7-8). In these texts Jesus was referring to a permanent abiding because He used the aorist subjunctive tense. A disciple is one who is intimately attached to Christ and maintains that attachment or union throughout his or her life. It is to be a permanent relationship. Jesus also emphasized that His words are to remain in the disciples permanently.[1] Jesus and His words are virtually interchangeable. He is the

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[1]Meno is in the aorist subjunctive.

incarnate word.[1] "It is through the word that Christ abides in His followers."[2]

The disciple who remains in Christ and in whom Christ's words remain will

eventually bear fruits. The fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22-23) will characterize the

disciple of Christ. The disciple will also be involved in making other disciples.

Committed to Christ's Word

"Then said Jesus to those which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then

are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"

(John 8:31-32). The aorist active subjunctive meinete conveys the idea of a settled

determination to be established and fixed in the word. It "entails a perpetual listening to it,

reflection on it, holding fast to it, carrying out its bidding."[3] A disciple is therefore fully

committed to God's word. God's word governs and directs his/her life and brings him/her

freedom. Obedience is therefore an essential mark of a disciple of Christ.

Puts Christ First

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, if
any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children,
and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And
whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple . . . .
So like wise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot

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[1]Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI, Anchor Bible, vol. 2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 662.

[2]White, Desire of Ages, 397.

[3]George R. Beasley-Murray, John, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 133.

be my disciple. (Luke 14:25-27, 33)

Christ has the absolute loyalty of a disciple. All other loyalties, ties, and devotions take second place. A disciple is one who is willing to daily submit to anything he or she has to suffer or endure for the cause of Christ. The disciple puts Christ before even himself or herself. The following words of Bonhoeffer sum up well who a disciple is according to the above Scripture passage:

> To endure the cross is not a tragedy; it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ. . . . When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, or it may be a death like Luther's who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time-- death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call.[1]

Loves Others as Christ Did

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

A disciple loves unconditionally.[2] He loves other disciples as Christ loves him/her. The world can identify disciples of Christ by the way they love each other. Agape love is to be a distinctive distinguishing mark of a disciple. That kind of love however is not in humanity naturally. That kind of love can be only in an individual whose life is fully

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[1]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: MacMillian Company, 1963), 98-99.

[2]Jesus used the Greek noun agape.

submitted to God and is thus filled with the Holy Spirit.[1]

Making Disciples Who Remain

Jesus revealed, in John 6:38-39, that it is the will of His Father that none of Jesus' disciples should be lost. Jesus declared: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which sent me that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:38-39).

In His prayer recorded in John chapter 17, Jesus reinforced the fact that God expects His disciples to remain with Him and be saved. Jesus said: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12).

In the parable of the lost sheep in which Jesus stressed the concern of the Father over one sheep that strays, Jesus declared that it is not the will of the Father "that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt 18:14). God expects sheep to remain sheep.

Jesus did not only implement the Father's will as He made disciples, but Jesus also appointed His disciples to do the same. John 15:8, 16 records the words of Jesus in regard to His disciples and fruit bearing. As a disciple remains in Christ and Christ's words remain in the disciple, the disciple will bear fruit, both the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of other disciples. Jesus made it clear that the fruits made by the disciples are to

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[1]Gal 5:22, 23.

remain. He stated it this way: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

God's Concern for Dropouts

The issue of church dropouts cannot be seriously addressed until we understand the importance of humanity to God and the significance to God of each individual who breaks relationship with Him.

The Psalmist concluded that humanity has great value and importance to God. He wrote: "What is man, that thou are mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor" (Ps 8:4-5).

Jesus stated that humanity was more important to God than all the rest of His creatures (Matt 6:25-30). He illustrated this fact in the following words: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt 10:29-30).

Adam and Eve

From the first recorded dropout in the Bible we get a clear view of God's love, concern, and care. Adam and Eve were created perfect and in harmony with God. After Adam and Eve sinned and separated themselves from God, God came seeking them while they were hiding from Him (Gen 3:8). God came with love and tenderness, not with harshness and accusations. He knew where they were, but he asked "Where are thou?"

(Gen 3:9). He did not ask "Why did you do this?" God then announced a plan to make

ultimate victory over Satan possible (Gen 3:15-19). God announced hope to the first pair

in that moment of great despair and hopelessness. In this plan, restoration of humanity to

God was now possible. White, commenting on the Fall, stated:

> The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. . . . The Son of God, heaven's
> glorious commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was
> moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose before Him.
> But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed.[1]

God was saddened, He was touched with pity, He was moved with infinite love.

He came seeking the lost pair and gave them hope of restoration to relationship with Him

again. God did all He could to seek to bring back the dropout pair to reunion with Him.

The Israelites

God chose Israel to be His peculiar people. They were to be a holy people unto

the Lord their God (Deut 7:6). God chose them to be His treasured possession and to

walk blamelessly before Him (Deut 14:2; 18:9-13). Israel was expected to love the Lord

their God with all their heart, soul, and strength and to obey God's commands and decrees

(Deut 6:4-5; 27:9-10). They were God's "sons" (Isa 1:2-4), His vineyard (5:1-7).

Israel's history reveals that they were a people who repeatedly apostatized, backslid and

became careless and even lawless at times (Exod 32:1-6; Isa 1:2-6; Jer 3:6-10; Hos 11:7).

God's concern for His people Israel, who separated themselves from Him, is well

documented in the Old Testament. Isaiah recorded the attitude of God toward His

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[1]Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View CA: Pacific Press
Publishing Association, 1913), 63.

rebellious, backsliding people when He wrote: "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isa 1:18). God is inviting the backsliders to debate with Him, and He holds out unconditional forgiveness to them if they will only change their attitude and their behaviors. That is the kind of attitude God has toward the straying. He wants to bring them back to relationship with Him, and so He pleads with them to weigh their options and return to Him.

In Jer 3 God pointed out to Jeremiah the sins of backsliding Israel (Jer 3:6-10). God then told Jeremiah:

> Go and proclaim these words toward the North, and say, return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.
> Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and has scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. (Jer 3:12-14)

God in this passage is addressing Israel who has turned from Him to evil. God passionately pleads with Israel to repent and to return to Him. He mixes His plea with promises (Jer 3:14; 4:1-20). God referred to their relationship as that of parent and child (Jer 4:14) and as that of husband and wife (Jer 4:14), the greatest of human relationships. Within that kind of context one can easily realize the pain and yearnings of God for backsliding Israel. He pleaded with them to return and He would heal their backsliding (Jer 4:22); He would give them salvation (Jer 4:23). God was reaching out purposefully to a people who turned their backs on Him. Commenting on Jer 7:2-7, White wrote:

The unwillingness of the Lord to chastise is here vividly shown. He stays His judgments that He may plead with the impenitent. He who exercises "loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth" yearns over His erring children; in every way possible He seeks to teach them the way of life everlasting.[1]

The prophet Hosea, whose theme in the book of Hosea centers around Israel's sins and the certainty of judgment if Israel did not repent, provided a deep insight into God's attitude to those who drop out. God revealed, in Hos 11:1-7, how much he loved Israel and how Israel rebelled against Him. God then revealed His heart toward these apostate people by stating, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hos 11:8). God could not bear to give up His apostate children. His words in these verses show that God's love for His people is a love that will never let them go. Such is the heart of God toward the dropout, the apostate, the backslider. He does not want to give up on anyone. He seeks to draw people back into relationship with Him regardless of how wicked they are or have been.

White wrote the following words in regard to God's attitude and concern toward backsliding Israel: "With a father's heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. Patiently He set their sins before them and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment."[2]

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[1]Ellen White, Prophets and Kings (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), 413.

[2]Ibid., 21.

The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son

"The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, bring out in distinct lines God's pitying love for those who are straying from Him."[1]

The parable of the lost sheep recorded in Luke 15:4-17 reveals the attitude of God toward those who have denied, wandered, or even severed their relationship with Him and become lost. The parable presents God as One who loves His children so much that He is willing to leave the ninety-nine saved souls to seek out the one who was lost (Luke 15:4). When the lost is found there is rejoicing, for the parable states that the shepherd calls to neighbors and friends saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). The love, care, and concern for the dropout are clearly portrayed in this parable as God seeks out the one who knows that he is lost but cannot find the way back to Him.

The parable of the lost coin reveals the person who is lost at home. Just as it was a calamity for a woman in the East to lose one piece of her ten pieces of silver, so the loss of one who walked with God is a great calamity. Through a diligent search the coin was discovered. "God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness."[2]

In both of the above parables there were boundless joys when the lost was found. Like the shepherd and the woman, God rejoices greatly when one who became lost is

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[1]Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), 198.

[2]Ibid., 193.

restored to relationship with Him again. Commenting on the parables of the lost sheep

and the lost coin, Jeremias wrote: "Such is the character of God; it is his good pleasure

that the lost should be redeemed, because they are his; their wanderings have caused him

pain, and he rejoices over their return home."[1]

Joachim Jeremias contended that the parable of the prodigal son can more

correctly "be called the parable of the Father's love."[2] He stated further that the parable

"describes with touching simplicity what God is like, his goodness, his grace, his boundless

mercy, his abounding love. He rejoices over the return of the lost, like the father who

prepared the feast of welcome."[3] The father is certainly the central character of the

parable. He respected the son's choice, but the father's actions reveal that he was always

looking for the son to return home (Luke 15:20). White wrote while commenting on this

parable that God "yearns over the one who has chosen to separate from Him, and He sets

in operation influences to bring him back to the Father's house."[4] So God does not only

wait for the return of the lost, He seeks to influence them. He does something to help the

lost to return. Like He did with Adam and Eve, so He did with the prodigal son. God did

not condemn, taunt, or reprimand the son for his evil deed but instead willingly accepted

him, forgave him, and restored the repentant son (Luke 15:20-24). The father and his

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[1]Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM Press, 1972), 136.

[2]Ibid., 128.

[3]Ibid. 130.

[4]White, Christ's Object Lessons, 202.

household rejoiced over the returned son (Luke 15:24).

The above three parables are like doors or windows that allow us to look into the heart of God and view His concern toward dropouts. They reveal that God's attitude toward the lost is that of patience, sadness, yearning, compassion, seeking, forgiving, reclaiming, and restoring, and that He rejoices over the reclaimed ones.

CHAPTER III

A SELECT REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE ON
THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH DROPOUTS
FROM 1950-1995

Historical Overview of the Dropout Problem

The phenomenon of church dropouts has been a problem all through this century.

Arthur Archibald wrote in 1952 that "a study of the statistics from all major denominations

for the past twenty years reveals that nearly 40 percent of our evangelistic recruits are lost

to the church within seven years of their reception."[1] The rate of dropouts from 1920 to

the 1950s was low when compared to that of the 1960s. The 1960s saw a dramatic rise in

withdrawal from the church especially among high-school and college graduates.[2] This

dramatic trend of church disaffiliation continued from the 1960s to 1980s when it abated

somewhat.[3] The fact is that the liberal mainline denominations in the United States of

America continued to experience big decline in membership even into the 1990s.[4]

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[1]Arthur C. Archibald, Establishing the Converts (Chicago, IL: Judson Press, 1952), 13.

[2]Michael B. Hobbs, "Re-Activating Inactive Members of the Glendale Heights United Methodist Church of Durham" (D.Min. dissertation, Drew University, 1980), 18.

[3]C. Kirt Hadaway, What Can We Do about Church Dropout? (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 24.

[4]Ibid., 25.

James Christensen rightly stated: "If the church could stop its fall-outs, it would hurdle one of its greatest problems."[1]   This literature review focuses on material that deals with the causes people drop out of churches and ways that the problem can be addressed.

<div align="center">Church Dropout Studies on Catholics</div>

Few studies have been done on Catholic dropouts since 1950. The two most significant studies among those done are Joseph Fichter's and Dean R. Hoge's.

Fichter's[2] research was done in twenty-three urban parishes of Louisiana. Through his research he identified five kinds of dropouts among adult Catholics. Those five groups were those who left the church because of: family disorganization, mixed marriages, problems with priests, traumatic experiences with the church, and no identifiable reasons.

Hoge's[3] study was an extensive sociological survey done on about two hundred dropouts. The dropouts were from the diocesses of Baltimore, Detroit, Oakland, Omaha, Orlando, Providence, and San Antonio. He defined a dropout as someone who was eighteen years or older who had stopped attending mass within the three years prior to the study. At the time of the study such a person was attending mass twice a year. Hoge found that 35 percent of those who dropped out of the Catholic church did so by age twenty, while 54 percent did so by age twenty-five.

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[1]James L. Christensen, How to Increase Church Attendance (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1961), 91.

[2]Joseph H. Fichter, Social Relations in the Urban Parish (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

[3]Dean R. Hoge, Converts, Dropouts, and Returnees: A Study of Religious Change among Catholics (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981).

Hoge found that the two main factors responsible for Catholic dropouts among all ages were emotional and interpersonal. Dropouts between the ages of eighteen to twenty-two did so mainly because of family tensions, to which they later rebelled, and objection to confession. They also stated that they found the church to be boring and uninteresting, and their lifestyles conflicted with that of the church. The dropouts over age twenty-three were most influenced by lifestyle conflicts and how boring the church was. To this must be added the strong spiritual need or void they experienced, which the church was not meeting.

Hoge's study brings forcefully to the surface the importance of human relationships within the Catholic church. Hoge's work confirms Fichter's findings in the area of intermarriages, problems with priests, family conflicts, and dissatisfaction with the church. Neither study, however, gave remedial measures.

Seventh-day Adventist Church Dropout Studies

James H. Smuts[1] in 1950 studied the reasons that led individuals to apostatized from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His sources for this study were from eighty questionnaires filled out by Seventh-day Adventist ministers in different unions and divisions around the world, Seventh-day Adventist literature, the Annual Statistical Report of the Seventh-day Adventist Conferences, Missions and Institutions from 1940-1949, and a 1943-1947 unpublished report of apostasy in the South England Conference.

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[1]James H. Smuts, "An Examination of the Reasons Leading Individuals to Apostatize," (Master's thesis, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1950).

Smuts concluded from the answers to the questionnaires he received that the majority of apostasies in the Seventh-day Adventist Church took place within two to three years after baptism. The responses to the questionnaires revealed the causes of apostasy to be evangelistic failings, poor pastoral care, absence of true conversion, and economic needs. He failed to give ways that the apostasy problem could have been reduced.

Two significant studies were done among Seventh-day Adventists during the decade of the seventies. These were done by Louis C. Nielsen and Roger Dudley.

Nielsen's[1] study investigated the contributing factors of backsliding and separation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan. He limited his study to three districts containing sixteen churches. One hundred and fifty persons were interviewed for the study.

Nielsen placed his findings into ten categories in his effort to recapitulate the more significant factors that contributed to separation from the church. He learned that the highest ranking factors were:

1. Failure to live according to their professed beliefs and the high standards of Christian living the church required

2. Lost interest in the church and drifted away

3. Felt discriminated against, ignored, humiliated, unloved, rejected, disliked, degraded socially

4. Baptized prematurely

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[1]Louis C. Nielsen, "Disassociation: An Investigation into the Contributing Factors of Backsliding and Separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan" (D.Min. Project Report, Andrews University, 1977).

5. Strict, conservative, authoritarian, and inflexible nature of the church

6. Were dissatisfied with the preaching; felt they got nothing by going to church

7. Experienced external pressures and influences

8. Encountered conflicts, problems, and crisis the previous year before their separation from the church

9. Disagreed with the doctrines

10. Joined another church.

In an effort to reduce or prevent dropouts Nielsen suggested the following:

1. Local pastors should be encouraged by church leaders to give stronger spiritual leadership, improve their preaching and the worship services, provide for better Sabbath school classes and group activities, and plan constructively in an endeavor to retain the youths of the church.

2. Church programs should be made more people oriented.

3. Pastors should guard against building up guilt feelings in their members to the extent that the members drop out of church.

4. Members are to be more tolerant, understanding and loving, and less judgmental, critical, and condemning.

5. There should be strong home visitation program and genuine Christian fellowship in the church.

6. Coercion and baptism of young people who are not spiritually and psychologically mature should be avoided.

7. The church should study how pastors can be of better service to people who

have difficulty adjusting to Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle.

Roger Dudley[1] added an interesting aspect to the issue of dropouts among Seventh-day Adventist youths. He did a study on four hundred teenagers in grades 9 through 12 who were randomly selected from Adventist academies throughout the United States and concluded that 16 percent of Seventh-day Adventist academy students might be considered to be alienated from religion in general, while another 36 percent have hostile feelings toward certain areas of religion. He also concluded from the study that teenagers' rejection of religion was an emotional experience, not an intellectual one.

The reasons Dudley gave for the rejection of religion by teenagers included:

1. Boring sermons

2. Felt the church was not warm, loving, caring, and supportive

3. Were not happy about their experience with the church

4. Had unpleasant experience with school's Bible class

5. Felt the church was too strict

6. Believed that restrictions on the Christian life were too many

7. Perceived their homes as being conflict-ridden

8. Had religion forced on them by harsh, rigid, and autocratic parents and school administrators

9. Quality of relationship between youth and parents

10. Quality of relationship between youth and teachers.

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[1]Roger L. Dudley, Why Teenagers Reject Religion and What to Do About It (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1978).

As a solution to the problem of teenagers' rejection of religion Dudley suggested:

1. Building a sense of community and a spirit of fellowship within the church

2. Give more responsibility in the operation of the church to youths

3. Trained youths should assume more leadership roles

4. Members should be genuine, authentic, revealing unconditional love and care, and develop a sensitivity to look at things from another's viewpoint.

The studies of both Dudley and Nielsen revealed common factors for alienation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Both studies revealed dissatisfaction with sermons, lack of love and care, strictness of the church, and encountering conflicts and relationship problems as factors responsible for or contributing to alienation.

Gottfried Oosterwal,[1] one of the leading church-growth researchers within the Adventist Church, recommended the following guidelines in seeking to reduce membership loss:

1. Start visiting missing and former members.

2. Develop and implement small groups to foster fellowship, prayer, and Bible study.

3. Employ Bible workers to strengthen the teaching ministry alongside the preaching ministry and to show the relevance of doctrines to life.

5. Encourage more lay participation in worship and develop a liturgy with more singing, sharing, and Bible readings.

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[1]Gottfried Oosterwal, "Ten Basic Reasons for Apostsy in the SDA Church in North America," handout circulated during his presentation at the Columbia Union Conference Church Growth Seminar, 1980.

6. Change the present system of handling transfers of membership. The initiative for transfer should not be left with the individual member alone.

7. Know your congregation--its people, fellowship units, and interest groups and the needs of each.

8. Do not overemphasize teachings that are more rooted in culture than in Scripture.

Most of the researches reviewed previously was done mainly in North America. Joseph Akwasi Addai's research took place on the continent of Africa to view the drop-out problem there. Addai's research on the factors that were responsible and contributed to the apostasy problem in the Central Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was based on 250 personal interviews. He interviewed both persons who were dissociated from the church and active church leaders and laity. Addai found the following factors as the main contributors to apostasy and inactivity: marital problems, failure of the church to aid members in crisis, mobility of members, divorce, decline in their spiritual life, church members' attitude, rigid standards, inadequacy of pastors, change in social status, and unfulfilled expectations.

Addai's recommendations in the area of preventing dropouts included premarital counseling, family life workshops with commitment seminars, retreats for married couples, regular visitation of members by pastors, good programs for the proper assimilation of new members into the church, and greater emphasis on human relationships in church programs.

The dropout problem among Adventists outside of North America was also

studied by Horace A. Russell.[1] He investigated the causes of membership dropouts among selected churches in the East Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1990. His study was based upon 176 responses to a questionnaire, and personal interviews with individuals who had dropped out of the church. The first ten factors respondents gave as their reasons for dropping out are as follow: (1) Violation of the commandment on adultery, 45.2 percent; (2) Personal spiritual life decline, 42.2 percent; (3) Sabbath work, 33.3 percent; (4) Lack of support in time of crisis, 24.0 percent; (5) Members are too proud, 23.3 percent; (6) Influenced by non-Adventist association, 22.1 percent; (7) Lack of fellowship, 18.4 percent; (8) Drastic financial change, 18.2 percent; (9) Inadequate preparation for baptism, 17.6 percent; and (10) Inconsistency of members, 16.9 percent. Russell's recommendations to reduce dropouts included concentration on seminars and lectures in the area of family life, training of members for caring ministry, programs to address members' needs, visitation, support groups, continual instruction, relationship building, and fellowship.

Among the Seventh-day Adventist writers reviewed in this section the problem of human relationships as a contributing factor to membership loss was unanimous even though it played a more significant part in North America than in the Jamaican and Central Ghana studies. Other factors that occurred often were: poor preaching, church is too strict, lack of support especially during crisis, lack of love and care, and marital problems.

The factors that were mostly responsible for dropouts in Addai's and Russell's

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[1]Horace A. Russell, "A Study of the Causes of Membership Dropout among Selected Churches in the East Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (D.Min. Project Report, Andrews University, 1990).

research were different to that of the research on Adventist dropouts in North America.

Marital and sexual problems, decline in spiritual life, Sabbath work problems, and lack of

support in time of crisis were significant factors in both studies.

Solutions to the dropout problem unanimously centered on the area of visitation,

fellowship, and building human relationships. Other areas that surfaced often were better

preaching, more involvement of members in church life, need for love and care, continual

instruction, and training.

Studies on Dropouts in United Methodist Congregation

John Savage[1] between 1973 and 1974 concluded a study of four United Methodist

congregations in his endeavor to answer the questions: Why do persons who were active

members leave the church? and What can be done about it? Savage found through this

study that those who dropped out of the church all began the process of dropping out due

to an "anxiety provoking event" triggered usually by personal relationships. He found that

when the conflict was with the pastor, other church members, or with members of one's

family, the most anxiety was stimulated. When no one paid attention to the member and

the personal tension was allowed to go unresolved, the member eventually dropped out.

His work points out the importance of personal contact between member and member,

and member and pastor. It also revealed that dropping out of the church is usually a long,

slow process. Regarding what can be done about it, Savage was unable to answer

through this research, although he was able to offer a hypothetical answer.

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[1]John S. Savage, The Apathetic and Bored Church Member (Pittsford, NY: Lead Consultants, 1976).

John Savage's findings have been challenged by Carl S. Dudley, who stated that people did not leave mainline churches in anger and apathy. He submitted that is was the shift in cultural values that carried them away.[1] Nevertheless, Savage's research is important in that it gives clear insights into the process that many church members go through before dropping out of the church.

Another important study conducted on the United Methodist church in the 1970s was done by Warren Hartman.[2] He investigated membership trends in the United Methodist church between the years of 1949-1975. Hartman found the following reasons given by more than two hundred respondents who had already dropped out of the church:

1. They felt that they were not accepted, loved, or wanted.

2. There were hindering personal circumstances such as family illness, change in work schedules, transportation problems, opposition and lack of family members' support and leisure pursuits.

3. The church was irrelevant.

4. The church was too liberal or too conservative theologically, socially or politically.

The reasons given are listed in the order of frequency as given by the respondents.

In this same study the dropouts listed the dominant factors that attracted them to the church and that would keep them in it. These factors were: a sense of being loved,

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[1]Carl S. Dudley, Where Have All Our People Gone? New Choices for Old Churches (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 42.

[2]Warren J. Hartman, Membership Trends: A Study of Decline and Growth in the United Methodist Church 1949-1975 (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1976).

accepted, and wanted; the minister; the worship services; the loyalty and dedication of church members in the congregation; the church school; and opportunities for them to serve.

Both studies located personal relationship problems as a major contributor to people dropping out of the church. Hartman was able to get the dropouts to list factors that will keep them in the church. He was therefore able to give information that can be used to address the problem. Savage's research failed to delve into the realm of solutions.

Interdenominational Studies on Dropouts

Arthur C. Archibald[1] endeavored to find what pastors and church members can do to conserve converts. He found that among the reasons that converts who left gave were: lack of tender care and nurture, lack of warm fellowship within the church, lack of faith in the converts' sincerity, lack of involvement in service, and lack of conversion.

Archibald stated that it is admitted everywhere that the business of retaining our converts, of developing them, and enlisting them in great kingdom projects respresents the weakest and most vulnerable line in present-day Protestant strategy. He suggested the following to help conserve new members:

1. Deliberately plan programs to provide for the development of new believers.

2. Seek to enlarge and deepen "those Christian attitudes of faith, reverence, surrender, love, obedience, co-operation, and service which are born within the soul in

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[1]Establishing the Converts.

that holy moment of conversion."[1]

3. Fix in converts the conserving habit of regular participation in public worship--the worship services are the central and primary factor in convert conversions.

4. Establish the habit of private prayer and devotions in new converts.

5. Devoted church class teachers should be made guardians and educators of the new converts.

6. Converts should join a missionary organization or program in the church since "seventy-five per cent of those whom we lose never united with any church organization."[2]

7. Enlist the converts immediately in some form of Christian service.

8. Conserve converts through fellowship because fellowship is a basic longing of the human soul.

9. Encourage and train converts to witness and become soul winners.

10. Guide converts in discovering their gifts because "ninety per cent of the latent talent of our new members is never used because it is never discovered."[3] Archibald's approach to conserve converts is a balanced one. He seeks to develop new members spirituality, socially, and intellectually and get them physically involved in church activities.

James Christensen[4] analyzed research on the reasons people gave for church attendance and the excuses they gave for non-attendance in an endeavor to find ways in

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[1]Ibid., 26.

[2]Ibid., 58.

[3]Ibid., 77.

[4]Christensen, 1-126.

which the church can increase attendance and reduce its losses. He stated that the findings from the surveys on excuses for non-attendance should be used as a soul-searching inventory for the church. He believed that people usually neglect church attendance and eventually fall away because many people live largely on the horizontal plane, where they do not see any spiritual dimensions. Added to this is the quality of the church's fellowship and the extent to which it provides opportunities for discussion, participation, acceptance, personal testing, and leadership through small fellowship groups. Christensen also placed some of the blame on little attention that is given to the readiness of prospects for church membership.

Christensen drew on the suggestions of many ministers and lay workers to stop church dropouts. He then submitted the following solutions:

1. Hold special training classes in the meaning of church membership, church history, prayer, stewardship, and biblical interpretation.

2. Assign new members to dedicated sponsors who are to assimilate them into church life.

3. Provide each member with a portfolio.

4. Implement a shepherding system where the members are divided into units that can create fellowship and oversight.

Dean M. Kelley[1] wrote that most of the major church groups in the United States of America stopped growing and began to decline in membership in the latter half of the

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[1]Dean M. Kelly, <u>Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in the Sociology of Religion</u> (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977).

1960s. These churches had been growing continuously since colonial times. Kelly attributed the decline in mainline denominations to their failure to adhere to the marks of the church. Those marks are: theological conservatism, evangelical zeal, separation from the world, and strictness of the institution.

Kelley's work has been challenged by Carl S. Dudley,[1] who reported that the United Presbyterians and the United Church of Christ tested the effectiveness of Dean Kelley's thesis in their congregations and concluded, as did several other studies, that Kelley's marks of a church did not affect growth or decline in their congregations. Dudley concluded that Kelley's thesis is effective for specific churches in particular circumstances but does not have universal application.

Kelley also contradicted Hartman's research on the aspect of theological conservatism. Respondents to Hartman's survey stated that theological conservatism was among the reasons they dropped out of church. Kelley submitted that the failure of the church to be theologically conservative caused it to lose many members from the latter part of the 1960s.

Carl Dudley contended that the causes of droputs are not clear-cut, but there appears to be a general consensus from a variety of perspectives. He then named the following two reasons: (1) broken relationship--dropouts who live in the vicinity of the church gave this as the main reason for leaving, and (2) theological reason--theological conflicts with the social involvement of the congregation, absence of contemporary worship, and financial preoccupation of church leaders.

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[1]Carl S. Dudley, 48-49.

Another significant study was that done by Edward A. Rauff.[1]   He interviewed

180 individuals from various Christian churches who were dropouts but eventually

returned to the church. Those interviewed came from seven counties. There was one

county in each of the following States: Oregon, California, Maine, Virginia, Alabama,

Florida, and Michigan. Rauff wanted to know why dropouts left the church, and why

people join the church. The former dropouts gave the following reasons for their leaving:

rebellion against parents who forced them to attend church; lost interest due to lack of

family encouragement; marriage to a person with no religious background; no fellowship

and no spirit of community in the church; doctrinal conflicts; erosion of interest; following

unchurched friends; and the church demanded too much from them.

In response to Rauff's study, Dean R. Hoge wrote that Rauff gave insightful

results but that they cannot be generalized to large populations. He claimed that Rauff's

method to *choose* those he interviewed makes his sample not representative of anything.[2]

After conducting several surveys and studying surveys conducted by others,

Hadaway[3] concluded youths who apostatized during the sixties and seventies did so

because the suburban churches had very little to offer them, and a great number of

American youths believed that the church represented irrelevant tradition. Many of the

older adults saw church involvement as optional and irrelevant, but few of them became

dropouts.

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[1]Edward A. Rauff, Why People Join the Church (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

[2]Hoge, 4.

[3]Hadaway, 1-134.

Hadaway believed that preventing dropouts is more important than devising strategies to reclaim them after they leave. He offered the strategies of leading by example, involving everyone in church activities, keeping religion relevant, and promoting Christian values as preventative measures.

A biblical and practical guide to welcome new members was written by Ervin R. Stutzman.[1] In it Stutzman discussed factors that were important to assimilating new members and thereby reduce dropouts. His guide included the following:

1. Adequate pastoral care

2. Strong relationships between members--"they stay for only one reason--relationships."[2]

3. Hospitality of individuals and groups in the church

4. Meeting the needs of members

5. Employment of each church member in ministry according to the person's spiritual gift(s)

6. Helping each member to find a secure and significant place in the structure of the church

7. Clarifying expectations of every assignment given to the new member.

About two dozen individuals who had left Christian churches were interviewed by

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[1]Ervin R. Stutzman, Welcome: A Biblical and Practical Guide to Receiving New Members (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990).

[2]Ibid., 96.

William Hendricks.[1] He concluded that there is no one overriding reason why people leave the church. Through the interviews he found that there were some common themes that recurred. Among these common themes were:

1. An initial trust in churches and ministers was not satisfied.

2. There was a longing for community. They expected the church to be a place of "camaraderie, belonging, commitment, honesty, and forgiveness"[2] but they did not find this in the church.

3. They found the church services to be boring.

4. "Truth" is not told and the people are not "real."

5. The church failed to meet their needs.

6. Women were resentful who felt that the church was dominated by male perspectives.

7. There was a desire to express their spiritual gifts which the church failed to foster.

Hendricks suggested that the church can reduce its lost of members by doing the following:

1. Listen to: (a) members who are pleased with the church's program, (b) potential recruits, and (c) people on the fringe of deciding whether to leave or stay in the church.

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[1]William D. Hendricks, Exit Interviews: Revealing Stories of Why People Are Leaving the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993).

[2]Ibid., 260.

2. Analyze the problems and initiate intervention.

3. Work at building community through encouraging personal relationships and shared experiences.

4. Teach people how to think theologically.

5. Preach sin and then grace.

6. Help people discover their giftedness.

7. Promote emotionally healthy families.

Summary of Findings

From 1950-1995 research was done on the major denominations in the United States in regard to membership loss. Throughout the research of that period, the problems causing dropouts were mainly related to emotional experiences and interpersonal relationships.

The general trend of the solutions given was to implement more effective assimiliating methods for new members and to foster strategies that will keep those who are already members. Among the most common approaches to address the problem were: identification of members' spiritual gifts; involvement of members in church activities based upon their spiritual gift/gifts; relationship building among members; activities and groups to foster fellowship and community; regular visitation of members; training of members for ministry; ongoing education of members; help members feel loved, accepted, and a sense of belonging and identity. The solutions of regular visitation and relationship building surfaced often among the Seventh-day Adventist researchers both in and outside

of North America.

John Savage's research directed tremendous light on the dropout path. His findings are important to intervention before individuals make the decision to finally sever their relationship to the church. Even though there was unanimous agreement that most dropouts take place within the first few years after baptism, Savage's work points out that individuals who leave because of relationship problems go through a slow, long process.

<u>Review of Seventh-day Adventist Periodicals and
Ellen G. White's Writings on Church Dropouts</u>

The Ministry from 1950-1995

<u>The Ministry</u> magazine is a monthly international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association. This magazine was begun in 1928. Throughout its history, articles have appeared in it addressing the issues of dropouts, backsliding, and apostasy.

H. A. Vandeman wrote that the church's failure to see its responsibility in helping to establish new believers has resulted in some souls beginning to backslide shortly after baptism.[1] He further submitted that "our first effort, then, is to stop leaks in a large measure."[2] Vandeman then added this insightful statement: "Many who came into the church are not fully converted, and not instructed. Some are not brought into the Sabbath school, some do not get periodicals, and comparatively few purchase or read our

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[1]H. A. Vandeman, "Let's Stop Those Leaks," <u>Ministry</u>, September 1941, 39.

[2]Ibid., 40.

Spirit of Prophecy books. It takes all these factors to make Adventist Christians."[1]

E. E. Cleveland[2] wrote that the majority of apostates leave the church after ten years' membership. Cleveland claimed that "a soul won, then lost, is worse than a soul never gained."[3] He suggested the following seven ways that dropouts can be reduced:

1. Evangelists should integrate the pastor into the evangelistic program to facilitate easy transition.

2. Pastors should guard the souls added to the flock with the same zeal whether they were responsible for bringing them in or not.

3. Tactfully integrate new members into the financial program of the church.

4. Set up visitation units with the sole purpose of having systematic contact with new converts.

5. Assign some form of specific responsibility to each new convert shortly after baptism.

6. Conduct a weekly minister's Bible class with the objective of grounding the new members.

7. Do Christ-centered Bible preaching.

G. Burnside, in his article "Can We Reduce Our Apostasies?"[4] pointed out that since the majority of apostasies take place after ten years' membership, the problem of

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[1] Ibid., 39-40.

[2] E. E. Cleveland, "Close That Door," Ministry, August 1961, 17-18.

[3] Ibid., 18.

[4] G. Burnside, "Can We Reduce Our Apostasies?" Ministry, February 1967, 17-19.

apostasy is largely a pastoral one. He stated that the responsibility to prevent apostasies

begins with the evangelist, but pastors, administrators, and church members all have a part

in it. Burnside asserted that "lack of preaching the great teachings of the Bible in our

church services is the greatest cause of apostasy among God's blood-bought children."[1]

Monte Sahlin[2] discovered through surveys and interviews he did with missing and

former Adventists that three quarters of them stated they left because of relationship

problems with people and groups in the church. To reclaim these individuals, Sahlin

suggested personal contact through visitations as the most effective method.

In the article, "How to Keep What You Reap--1," Floyd Bresee[3] wrote that as the

church evangelizes it must also seek to keep those it wins. Bresee gave two suggestions

how the church can become better at keeping new members:

1. Prepare candidates carefully before baptism because six thoroughly converted

to the truth are better than sixty who make a profession but are not truly converted.

2. Make baptism a big event in the local church to facilitate bonding and

receptivity.

In his second article entitled "How to Keep What You Reap--2,"[4] Bresee added

three more suggestions to assist in keeping new converts. He suggested that new

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[1]Ibid., 19.

[2]Monte Sahlin, "Where Have All the Members Gone?" Ministry, February 1990,
4- 6.

[3]Floyd Bresee, "How to Keep What You Reap--1," Ministry, June 1990, 25.

[4]Floyd Bresee, "How to Keep What You Reap--2," Ministry, April 1991, 27.

converts should be attached to someone they respect who cares about them. The new

converts should continue to receive instruction, and they must be put to work.

In the article, "Win Them and Hold Them,"[1] Miguel Angel Cerna claimed that the

Seventh-day Adventist Church loses between 2 percent to 6 percent through apostasy

each year. Eighty-five percent left the same year that they entered the church. Cerna

stated that the primary reason for dropping out was the lack of permanent friendships.

He suggested that to reduce dropouts we need to organize small groups in which new

converts can be nurtured and develop friendships, as well as receive training for service.

Almost all the above articles emphasized the time element in membership loss.

The general trend is that most dropouts take place within the first ten years after baptism.

The authors shared the preventive approach to church dropouts. Their solutions were

aimed at establishing or assimilating new converts.

Adventist Review and Other Periodicals

The Adventist Review is a weekly periodical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It is the general paper of the church. John McGraw[2] wrote in the October 22, 1987, issue

of this periodical that we lose members too often in the first weeks, months, or year due to

poor nurturing. McGraw submitted that both new and old members need nurturing. He

added that the same effort put forth to get converts should be put forth to keep them.

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[1]Miguel Angel Cerna, "Win Them and Hold Them," Ministry, December 1993, 24 -25.

[2]John W. McGraw, "Reclaiming the Scattered Harvest," Adventist Review, October 22, 1987, 17.

In the September 14, 1995, issue of the <u>Adventist Review</u>, John R. Martin[1] stated

that the real reason people quit the church is because they "do not want to make the self-

disciplined commitment to Christ that active membership demands."[2] Martin seemed to

refute other reasons given for people dropping out of the church. Some might agree with

him when he says that the reason the back door swings is not totally the church's fault, but

many will find it difficult to agree with this opinion since it does not agree with many

reputable researchers.

Ila Zbaraschuk[3] approached the issue of dropouts from the perspective of

Adventist youths. She wrote that Adventist young people were not leaving the church

because of doctrinal problems. She related the personal experiences of young Adventists

who dropped out and why they did. She also related the views of an academy girls' dean

in regard to why young Adventists leave the church. The reasons given by Zbaraschuk for

young Adventists leaving the church were:

1. Observation of pastor who tried to get seventh-graders to be baptized whether

or not they were converted

2. Believed the church was using deception to get money from members

3. Observed the uncaring attitude of members

4. Observed bad examples of adults who appeared not to have genuine Christian

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[1]John R. Martin, "The Real Reason People Quit the Church," <u>Adventist Review</u>, September 14, 1995, 15.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ila Zbaraschuk, "Why Young Adventists Leave the Church," <u>Insight</u>, September 11, 1973, 10-14.

experience

    5. Found the church was not relevant to young people's needs

    6. Regarded self as hypocritical

    7. Saw limited opportunity to think for themselves

    8. Felt the church was too preoccupied with organization and establishment

    9. Were dissatisfied with poor quality of Adventist preaching and the lack of opportunity to be used within the local church organization

    10. Encountered ministers who did not have time to minister.

Alan Williams,[1] addressing the problem of dropouts, gave the following reasons for individuals leaving:

    1. Some grew up in the church but never internalized faith nor had a personal relationship with Christ.

    2. Many singles, single parents, shy individuals, and new members felt a lack of inclusiveness.

    3. Some experienced interpersonal conflicts.

    4. Many encountered poor church programs and services.

In the December 3, 1992, issue of the <u>Adventist Review</u>, Roger Dudley[2] reported his findings from a group of Adventist young adults who had dropped out of the church. There he recorded that the most frequent factor stated by the dropouts as a contributor to

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[1]Alan Williams, "Home Again after Years of Wandering," <u>Southwestern Union Record</u>, September 1992, 2-6.

[2]Roger Dudley, "The Lost Generation: Why Did 86 Adventist Young People Drop Out of the Church?" <u>Adventist Review</u>, December 3, 1992, 18-20.

their leaving was lack of fellowship in the church (48 percent). This was closely followed by: disagreement with some Adventist teachings (40 percent), church's teaching and practices do not match (37 percent), and the church's standards are too strict (35 percent). Thirty-five percent claimed that the church was irrelevant to their lives, while 31 percent said that it was not meeting their spiritual needs. The other factors indicated were mistreatment by members (29 percent), pressure from non-Seventh-day Adventist friends and relatives (25 percent), and disagreement with pastor (20 percent).

The dropouts were asked to identify one thing that would have made them stay in the church. Their answers were divided into eight categories. The leading category, which contained sixteen responses, identified acceptance by members and fellowship in the church as the main things.

The articles I reviewed in this periodical placed great emphasis on retention of new members. They stressed the importance of putting forth as much effort to keep converts as was put forward to win them. The need for nurturing and bonding of members was also stressed.

In Adventist periodicals apart from the Adventist Review the issue of church dropouts is rarely addressed.

Ellen G. White's Writings

Ellen White has written quite extensively on the issue of backsliding, apostasy, and assimilating or establishing new members. She made a differentiation between backsliding and apostasy. She regarded backsliding as the first step to apostasy, a period during

which humans do their own will in opposition to God's requirements.[1] She regarded

apostasy as when character and works do not harmonize with divine truth.[2]

White mentioned many causes of apostasy and backsliding among Christians. She

named lack of conversion, lack of Bible studies by new converts, inability to resist test or

trial, and the incomplete work of ministers with new converts as contributors.[3] Among

the other causes she mentioned were neglect of prayer[4] and disobedience to God's

commands.[5]

Many guidelines were given for establishing new converts and thereby reducing

dropouts. White stated that new converts are to be thoroughly instructed by faithful

teachers of the Bible.[6] She emphasized the need for new converts to be trained and given

assignment in soul winning[7] and for the church to devise ways and means to provide

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[1]Ellen G. White, MS 87, 1897, 3, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs,MI.

[2]Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1962), 151.

[3]Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1936), 368-370.

[4]Ellen G. White, "Pray Without Ceasing," Signs of the Times, June 19, 1901, 4.

[5]Ellen G. White, "Idolatry Punished," Signs of the Times, June 9, 1881, 253-254.

[6]Ellen G. White, "The Work in Oakland and San Francisco--No. 6," Review and Herald, February 14, 1907, 8.

[7]Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1948), 7:20.

sympathy and help for new converts.[1] She drew attention to the following points on which new converts are to be established but which are frequently neglected: health reform, spiritual gifts, systematic benevolence, and the great branches of missionary work.[2] White also listed visitation to inquire into members' spiritual condition,[3] involving every member in the guardianship plan,[4] and teaching new converts how to meet the enemy as guidelines to establishing members.[5]

White clearly stated that new members are to be properly established or assimilated into the church. Her guidelines cover most of the strategies and suggestions given by modern writers. Like most of them, she advocated training and assigning to ministry. She established the importance of helping converts identify their spiritual gifts. White also submitted the need for regular personal contact of new members through visitation and the need for continuing to teach new converts. In giving reasons why individuals drop out, White gave mainly spiritual reasons. The social aspect that was prevalent in later researchers was absent in her writings.

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[1]Ellen G. White, "Our Youth and Children Demand Our Care," Review and Herald, April 28, 1896, 277-278.

[2]Ellen G. White, "Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work," Review and Herald, December 12, 1978, 185.

[3]Ellen G. White, "Preach the Word," Sign of the Times, January 28, 1886, 50-51.

[4]Ellen G. White, MS 63, 1898, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

[5]Ellen G. White, Letter 60, quoted in Evangelism (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 340.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FIELD RESEARCH
ON DROPOUTS IN THE GRENADA MISSION
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

In order to obtain information on the problem of dropouts from the Grenada

Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, data were collected directly from former members and

church leaders in the islands of Grenada and Carriacou. The field research was conducted

over a three-week period. This was largely due as a result of the respondents' readiness

to participate. Throughout the territory researched, those who administered the

questionnaires reported that many of those selected for the research were friendly,

cooperative, and happy to know that something was being done to address the church's

dropout problem.

As was stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this field research was twofold. First, it

was to identify contributing factors to church dropouts in the Grenada Mission of

Seventh-day Adventists. Second, it was to receive suggested ways to address the

dropout problem and reduce it.

Territory Covered by the Research

The Grenada Mission is part of the Caribbean Union, which is part of the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The Mission covers the three islands of Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique, which together form the Independent State of Grenada. There are seven pastoral districts which include twenty-nine churches. The Grenada Mission was organized in 1983. The membership at the end of 1995 was 7,330.[1]

The research was conducted in all seven pastoral districts. Twenty-five surveys were used in each district. The districts of Eastern, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and Western returned twenty-two, twenty-three, and twenty-four surveys respectively.

Dropouts for the Study

The church clerks supplied the names of the dropouts. The district pastors assisted in getting the clerks to have the names ready. The dropouts were individuals who had been dropped from the churches' records. The names were chosen from the most recent dropouts. Every other name was chosen as they appeared on the church clerks' books. The churches targeted were those with the highest dropout rates in each district. The total dropouts who participated in the study were 169.

Church Officers and Pastors for the Study

All seven district pastors were given the questionnaire prepared for them. I interviewed some of them as they filled it out. The district pastors supplied the names of

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[1]General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, no. 133 (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 48.

one leading lay evangelist and one personal ministry leader from their districts. A total of twenty-one questionnaires was received--seven each from the district pastors, lay evangelists, and personal ministry leaders.

Administering the Questionnaires

In order to have the questionnaires completed quickly, I traveled to Grenada on September 3,1996, and returned September 20, 1996. Many of the district pastors had already informed their church clerks to prepare a list of names of the dropouts before I arrived because I had explained to the pastors during their visit to Andrews University in June-July, 1996, how I needed them to help me. The other pastors whom I met when I got to Grenada were very cooperative and quickly had their clerks supply the names. The pastors also suggested individuals to assist in conducting the questionnaires. Two pastors, six church members who had completed secondary school, and I conducted the research. The church members were paid transportation expenses. They were also paid for each completed questionnaire they collected.

After giving the names of the dropouts to the church members who helped with the research, and explaining to them how the questionnaires were to be completed and collected, they were given the questionnaires. I contacted them daily over the telephone to be updated on their progress. After two weeks we had completed the research on the island of Grenada. The pastor for the district of Carriacou and Petite Martinique mailed his district's completed questionnaires to me at Andrews University two weeks after my return from Grenada.

The questionnaires for the district pastors were given to most of them at a ministerial meeting. The mission president invited me to attend the meeting and gave me the opportunity to explain to all present what my research was about. I gave the questionnaires to most of the lay evangelists and personal ministry leaders. Those whom I was unable to meet received their forms from their pastors. By September 18, 1996, I had all the questionnaires conducted on the island of Grenada. Copies of the questionnaires are included in the appendix.

Analysis and Interpretation of Field Research

The computer entry and evaluation of the data from the questionnaires were done by the Andrews University Research and Statistics department. This followed consultation with the Director of the Institute of Church Ministry of Andrews University, Roger Dudley. The analysis is expressed in number of respondents and percentages unless otherwise indicated. In those tables that have the data expressed in "number of responses" and "percentage of responses" the respondents were able to make several responses; thus the number of responses may not total 169 and the percentage of the responses may not total 100.

The Dropouts: Who They Are

The participants in this survey were 40.8 percent male and 57.4 percent female as shown in table 2. This is a fair reflection of the membership of the church in Grenada because more females than males are baptized yearly.

TABLE 2

DROPOUTS BY GENDER

Gender	Number	%
Male	69	40.8
Female	97	57.4
No response	3	1.8

Table 3 reveals the age range of respondents. It shows that 75.7 percent were less than thirty-five years of age. The church's loss is predominantly among the young.

The respondents were mostly single (67.5 percent). Of the other respondents, 21.3 percent were married (see table 4).

TABLE 3

DROPOUTS BY AGE

Age Group	Number	%
Under 20	20	11.8
21-25	50	29.6
26-35	58	34.3
36-50	29	17.2
51 and over	12	7.1

Table 5 reveals that 56.8 percent of the respondents obtained only an elementary education, while 33.7 percent achieved a secondary education. No one went beyond a Teachers' College education according to the data.

Although many who remain in the church usually advance to higher education, the data in table 5 are a true reflection of the educational groups the evangelistic crusades are reaching. Tent crusades are the main soul-winning method used in Grenada.

TABLE 4

DROPOUTS BY MARITAL STATUS

Marital Status	Number	%
Single	114	67.5
Married	36	21.3
Separated	6	3.6
Divorced	1	0.6
Widowed	3	1.8
Other	4	2.4
No response	5	3

TABLE 5

DROPOUTS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ACHIEVED

Educational Level	Number	%
Primary	96	56.8
Secondary	57	33.7
Institute for Further Education	6	3.6
Vocational Institute	4	2.4
Teachers' College	3	1.8
No response	3	1.8

The research reveals that 69.3 percent of the respondents were earning an income

of less than $10,000 (see table 6). From conversations held with some of them as they

completed the questionnaires, it was revealed that many of them, both men and women,

were unemployed.

When tables 2 through 6 are compared, they reveal that the Grenada Mission of

Seventh-day Adventists is experiencing its highest dropouts among single, young adult,

male and female members whose educational levels are mainly secondary and primary and

who are earning less than $10,000 yearly.

Table 7 shows that many of the dropouts have Adventist relatives. Fifty of them

(29.6 percent) have mothers in the church. Twenty-nine (17.2 percent) have fathers,

fifty-nine have sisters (35.0 percent), and forty-seven (27.9 percent) have brothers who are

members of the church. The questionnaires were not analyzed to show how many of the

respondents had both parents or various family members in the church.

Many of the dropouts had known Adventist members less than ten years before

they joined the church. Interestingly, 10 percent had known an Adventist church member

less than nine months before they were baptized (see table 8).

TABLE 6

DROPOUTS BY YEARLY INCOME

Income in Eastern Caribbean $	Number	%
Under $5,000	75	44.4
$5,000-$9,999	42	24.9
$10,000-$14,999	21	12.4
$15,000-$19,999	6	3.6
$20,000-$29,999	3	1.8
$30,000-$40,000	2	1.2
Over $40,000	1	0.6
No response	19	11.2

TABLE 7

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST RELATIVES
OF DROPOUTS

Relatives	Number	%
Other	63	37.3
Sister	59	35.0
Mother	50	29.6
Brother	47	27.9
Aunt	36	21.3
Uncle	32	18.9
Father	29	17.2
Daughter	23	13.6
Spouse	14	8.3
Son	14	8.3

TABLE 8

LENGTH OF TIME DROPOUTS KNEW ADVENTIST
MEMBERS BEFORE BAPTISM

Time	Number	%
Under 4 weeks	7	4.1
4 weeks - 1 year	10	5.9
1-10 years	60	35.7
Over 10 years	38	22.3

Former Religious Affiliation and Factors That Influenced
Dropouts to Become SDAs

The major religious affiliation of the dropouts was Catholic (41.4 percent) before they became Seventh-day Adventist members. The second largest percentage indicated that the dropouts were raised as Seventh-day Adventists (20.7 percent), while the third largest percentage of the respondents had had no church affiliation (15.4 percent). Those who are dropping out of the church are mainly children of Adventist parents or relatives and former members of the Roman Catholic Church. Table 9 contains the data on religious affliation.

The respondents were mainly influenced to join the church by a Seventh-day Adventist church member (18.3 percent), an evangelist (16 percent), because they grew up in the church (13 percent), a pastor (11.2 percent), a friend (10.7 percent). (See table 10.)

TABLE 9

PREVIOUS AFFILIATION OF DROPOUTS BEFORE
BECOMING ADVENTISTS

Previous Affliation	Number	%
Roman Catholic	70	41.4
Raised as SDA	35	20.7
No affliation	26	15.4
Anglican	15	8.9
Pentecostal	11	6.5
Baptist	6	3.6
Methodist	2	1.2
Evangelical	2	1.2
Church of God	1	0.6
No response	1	0.6

In reply to the question of what influenced them most to join the church, 63.9 percent of the respondents indicated an evangelistic crusade, and 16 percent indicated the fellowship they found among members (see table 11).

There were many events that affected the lives of some of the dropouts six months prior to their baptism into the church (see table 12).

The events in table 12 that influenced the dropouts to join the church are shown in table 13.

TABLE 10

PERSON WHO INFLUENCED THE RESPONDENTS
TO JOIN THE CHURCH

Person	Number	%
SDA church member	31	37.3
Evangelist	27	16.0
Raised Adventist	22	13.0
SDA pastor	19	11.2
Friend	18	10.7
Parents	15	8.9
Other relatives	15	8.9
Other	10	5.9
No response	9	5.3
Brother/sister	3	1.8

TABLE 11

WHAT INFLUENCED RESPONDENTS MOST TO
BECOME SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Factor	Number	%
Evangelistic crusade	108	63.9
Fellowship found among members	27	16.0
No response	16	9.5
Correspondence course	10	5.9
Other	8	4.7

TABLE 12

EVENTS THAT DISTURBED THE LIFE OF RESPONDENT
SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO BAPTISM

Event	Number	%
Personal injury or illness	15	8.9
Death of close family member	10	5.9
Dream to join church	9	5.3
Marriage	4	2.4
Death of spouse	2	1.2
Fired from job	2	1.2
Retirement	2	1.2

TABLE 13

EVENTS SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO RESPONDENT'S BAPTISM
WHICH INFLUENCED THAT DECISION

Event	Number	%
Personal injury or illness	8	40
Dream to join church	6	30
Death of spouse	3	15
Death of close family member	2	10
Divorce	1	5

The respondents were asked if they were pressured or if it was their own decision to join the church. Approximately 75 percent of them claimed that it was their own decision. The 21.3 percent of them who reported that they were pressured need special notice (see table 14). Pressuring individuals to make baptismal decision is widely practiced in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

TABLE 14

HOW THE DECISION TO JOIN THE CHURCH WAS MADE

Decision	Number	%
Own decision	126	74.6
Pressured but agreed	29	17.2
Pressured but reluctantly agreed	7	4.1
Did it to please parents, friends, or other	5	3.0
Other	1	0.6
No response	1	0.6

Adequacy of Instructions Prior to Baptism

Those who participated in this questionnaire were asked to evaluate the instructions they received in Seventh-day Adventists' beliefs and standards prior to joining the church. Ninety-eight percent of the participants responded to the question. The instructions received before baptism were satisfactory to 86.3 percent of the respondents. Only 13 percent expressed dissatisfaction with pre-baptismal instructions as shown by the data in table 15.

TABLE 15

EVALUATION OF PRE-BAPTISMAL INSTRUCTION
IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS' BELIEFS
AND STANDARDS

Instruction	Number	%
Very adequate	69	40.8
Quite adequate	33	19.5
Satisfactory	44	26.0
Unsatisfactory	19	11.2
Very unsatisfactory	3	1.8
No response	1	0.6

Post-Baptismal Evaluation by Respondents

Personal Evaluation

The question, How committed were you to the church after you joined it? was

asked in the questionnaire. The responses, recorded in table 16, show that 47.3 percent

felt that they were very committed, while 34.3 percent felt they were fairly committed.

Respondents were asked to reveal how long they considered themselves to be

church members. This question was intended to find out more accurately how long the

participants remained in the church. This is important because there are many who had

left the church many years before they were removed from the churches' records. Relying

on the churches' records for this information can be misleading. The responses of the

dropouts to the question on duration of membership are recorded in table 17, which shows

that 59.8 percent of the dropouts left the church within five years after their baptism, while

79.3 percent left within 10 years.

TABLE 16

POST-BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT OF RESPONDENTS

Commitment	Number	%
Very committed	80	47.3
Fairly committed	58	34.3
Not very committed	20	11.8
Don't know	10	5.9
No response	1	0.6

TABLE 17

PERSONAL EVALUATION OF RESPONDENTS'
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Duration of Membership	Number	%
Under 1 year	29	17.2
1-5 year	72	42.6
6-10 years	33	19.5
11-20 years	22	13.0
Over 20 years	10	5.9
No response	3	1.8

Participants were asked to rate themselves concerning when they considered themselves most committed to the church. The following are areas of concern: 20.1 percent prayed every few days, 52.7 percent studied the Bible every few days, and 8.3 percent never did. Approximately 36 percent stated that they never witnessed to others, 32.5 percent were seldom involved in church life, and 24.9 percent never got involved. Irregular attendance was reported by 16.6 percent (see table 18). These are patterns of behavior that will eventually lead to dropping out.

The majority of the dropouts were optimistic about their returning to church (see table 19). Those who said it was very likely or it was likely totaled 63.9 percent.

At the time the questionnaires were done, 35.5 percent of the participants rated their relationship with Christ as strong and 53.3 percent rated their relationship with Christ as weak. These responses indicate that these participants still regarded themselves as having a relationship with Christ (see table 20).

In regard to their feelings at the time they left the church, 35.5 percent reported that they were frustrated, 23.1 percent reported feeling guilty, 13 percent felt bitter, while 8.9 percent felt rebellious (see table 21).

TABLE 18

RESPONDENTS' SELF-RATING OF THEIR HABITS AND
PRACTICES WHEN THEY WERE MOST
COMMITTED TO THE CHURCH

Event	Number	%
1. Prayed daily	127	75.1
Prayed every few days	34	20.1
Never prayed	1	0.6
2. Daily Bible study	55	32.5
Bible study every few days	89	52.7
Never study the Bible	14	8.3
3. Witness to others daily	6	3.6
Witness to others every few days	87	51.5
Never witness to others	60	35.5
4. Active involvement in church life	63	37.3
Seldom involved in church life	55	32.5
Never involved in church life	42	24.9
5. Attended church regularly	132	78.1
Attended church irregularly	28	16.6
Never attended church	3	1.8

TABLE 19

CHANCES OF DROPOUTS BECOMING
ACTIVE REGULAR MEMBERS

Chances	Number	%
Highly likely	61	36.1
Likely	47	27.8
Don't know	46	27.2
Highly unlikely	6	3.6
Unlikely	7	4.1
No response	2	1.2

TABLE 20

RESPONDENTS' PRESENT PERSONAL
RELATION WITH CHRIST

Condition	Number	%
Strong	60	35.5
Weak	90	53.3
None	9	5.3
No response	10	5.9

TABLE 21

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS' FEELINGS WHEN
THEY STOPPED ATTENDING CHURCH

Feelings	Number	%
Frustrated	60	35.5
Guilty	39	23.1
Bitter	22	13.0
Rebellion	15	8.9
No response	15	8.9
Relief	9	5.3
Angry	9	5.3

Evaluation of Dropouts' Assimilation Experience

In order to evaluate the post-baptismal experience of the respondents they were

asked to give a "no" or "yes" answer to a number of activities and events. The highest

"yes" answer of the participants who responded to the question, Did you experience any

of the following after baptism? was given to the sections "Life had greater meaning" (84

percent), and "Assurance of life after death" (81.1 percent). This should be an indication

of conversion.

The areas of assimilation tested by this question leave much to be desired

according to the data shown in table 22. The data show that 86.4 percent of the

respondents never attended a spiritual gifts seminar, 78.1 percent never received any

training for service, 55.6 percent said that no opportunity for training was available, 45.6

percent received no pastoral visits, 46.7 percent reported not receiving continual

instruction, 47.3 were never involved in a fellowship group, 39.6 percent were never

involved in helping others, and 37.9 percent did not return tithes and offerings regularly.

These are areas that the church in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists has to

strengthen as it seeks to retain its new converts.

Fellowship, Relationships, and Attitudes
Found in the Church

The respondents referred to the fellowship they found in the church mainly as very

warm. Those who said the fellowship was warm and they had many friends represented

56.2 percent, while those who said the fellowship was warm but they had few friends

represented 24.9 percent. Though fellowship was not reported as a major problem,

friendship certainly was, because 37.3 percent said that they had few friends, and 4.7

percent claimed that they had no friends in the church (see table 23).

The respondents were asked to rate the relationship and attitudes they found in the

church. Fifty-five percent of them agreed that the church members loved each other while

almost the same number (52.6 percent) agreed that members are critical of each other.

They found the members to be hospitable (73.2 percent), willing to sacrifice for God (61.6

percent), eager to share the good news of salvation (76.3 percent), but 28.4 percent said

that the church members were cold and unfriendly. It is worth noting that many of the

dropouts were uncertain about the attitudes and relationships that existed between

members of the church (see table 24).

TABLE 22

RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE IN THE
CHURCH AFTER BAPTISM

Experience	Yes	%	No	%
Life had greater meaning	142	84.0	23	13.6
Assurance of life after death	137	81.1	27	16.0
Greater desire to share the good news of salvation	118	69.8	47	27.8
Participation in church activities	104	61.5	22	36.7
Members' support and encouragement	102	60.4	59	34.9
Involvement in helping others	101	59.8	67	39.6
Church adhered strictly to teaching and doctrine	97	57.4	60	35.5
Regularly returned tithes and offerings	95	56.2	64	37.9
Pastoral visitations	88	52.1	77	45.6
Continual instruction	87	51.5	79	46.7
Involvement in fellowship group	85	50.3	80	47.3
Opportunity was available to receive training for service	71	42.0	94	55.6
Received training for service	32	18.9	132	78.1
Attended a seminar on spiritual gifts	19	11.2	146	86.4

TABLE 23

RESPONDENTS' VIEW OF FELLOWSHIP
FOUND IN THE CHURCH

Categories	Number	%
Very warm and many friends	95	56.2
Very warm and few friends	42	24.9
Little fellowship and few friends	21	12.4
Little fellowship and no friends	7	4.1
No fellowship and no friends	1	0.6
No response	3	1.8

Factors Responsible for or Contributing to Dropouts and
Ways Suggested by Respondents to Reduce Them

The dropouts were asked to list the ten things that influenced them most to stop

attending or drop out of the church. These data are recorded in table 25. The number of

responses are arranged from the greatest to the least. Table 26 lists which of the

responses were indicated as the number one cause for dropping out. The respondents

listed their answers from the most influential to the least influential.

The data in table 25 suggest that the main contributing factors to dropouts were:

sexual sins (9 percent), worldly pleasures (6.6 percent), financial and material needs (5.4

percent), and loss of interest (5.4 percent). The area of relational problems between

members was a great contributor since it covered a wide range of the responses. Among

TABLE 24

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS OF RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTITUDES AMONG CHURCH MEMBERS
(in percentages)

Categories	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Uncertain	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
They loved each other	8.3	16.6	18.9	28.4	26.6
They cared for each other	10.1	13.6	13.0	36.1	24.3
Critical of others	17.2	10.1	16.6	19.5	33.1
Understanding and forgiving	5.9	16.0	25.4	32.5	16.0
Cold and unfriendly	33.7	21.3	14.2	19.5	8.9
Hospitable	5.9	11.8	4.7	43.2	30.0
Willing to sacrifice greatly for God	4.7	5.3	26.6	29.6	32.0
Willing to obey what they believe	3.0	8.3	19.5	39.1	27.8
Eager to share good new of salvation	4.1	7.7	8.3	32.5	43.8

the relational problems indicated were: hypocrisy of members (5.1 percent), conflict with church members (3.9 percent), lack of members' support (3.6 percent), double standards of members (3.6 percent), members' criticism (3 percent), lack of friends (2.7 percent), lack of fellowship (2.4 percent), lack of love among members (2.4 percent), and members' selfishness (0.6 percent). This gives a total of 27.3 percent of the responses. The way members relate to each other seems to be the major contributor to new members dropping out in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

These responses also suggest that the church's program was an important contributor to drop out since 3.6 percent listed that the church was boring, 0.9 percent claimed the worship service was unsatisfactory, and 0.6 percent said that the sermons were boring. This totals 5.1 percent of the responses. The factors of the influences of non-Adventist associates (4.2 percent), family problems (3.3 percent), failure of the church to involve respondents in church activities (2.7 percent), premature baptisms (2.7 percent), and disagreement with church doctrines (2.7 percent) are also worthy of attention as reasons for dropping out.

The factors listed in table 26 as the number one contributor to dropping out were the very ones that surfaced as the main contributors to drop outs when all the responses were tabulated (see table 25).

The dropouts were asked to list efforts that were made to bring them back into fellowship. As shown in table 27, after the participants dropped out of the church less than half of them received a pastoral visit, only sixteen of them received visits from church officers, and thirty-two of them said nothing was done to reclaim them. The greatest

efforts were made by church members through visitations.

Table 28 presents the responses to the question, What can the church do to retain its members? Many good suggestions were given, but there were no suggestions to address one of the main reported contributing factors to drop outs, which is sexual sins.

The dropouts were asked if there was only one thing that could have caused them to remain in the church what would that have been. The answers were many but they were similar to the answers given to the previous question. Table 29 presents the data.

Results and Analysis of Pastors, Lay Evangelists, and Personal Ministry Leaders' Questionnaires

The most important contributors to dropouts that pastors, lay evangelists, and personal ministry leaders gave are listed in table 30. The factors they listed were all listed by the dropouts themselves with three exceptions, namely: people join the church for the wrong reasons, expectations not met, and attachment to the evangelists. The church leaders omitted sexual sins, the first reason the dropouts gave for leaving.

Eighty-one percent of the leaders said that dropping out most often took place soon after baptism (see table 31).

Various post-baptismal strategies have been used in many of the churches to reduce dropouts, but from my conversation with some of the leaders I realize that these strategies were not widely used and in many instances consistency was lacking. The strategies reported as used in the churches were: Bible classes, the "buddy" plan, involvement of converts in church activities, visitation, prayer cells, and post-baptismal Bible studies (see table 32). There was no strategy stated that was unanimously used in

the churches. Post-baptismal strategies in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists

need to be seriously addressed.

The leaders were asked to suggest strategies beyond what is being presently used

in their churches that can be helpful in reducing dropouts. Table 33 presents those

responses and their percentages.

Summary

The surveys ascertain that the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists is

experiencing its greatest loss of members from people under the age of 35 years. Most of

them are single, have a secondary education or less, and are low-income earners. The

majority of them joined the church through an evangelistic crusade, but 86.3 percent of

them related that the instruction they received before baptism was adequate (see table 15).

They also revealed that they were committed (see table 16), 84 percent said that life had

greater meaning after baptism, and 81.1 percent had the assurance of life after death (see

table 22). However, ten years after baptism, 80.7 percent of them had already become

dropouts. Most of the pastors and church officers who participated in this research also

agreed that most dropouts take place soon after baptism.

The information presented in tables 18 and 22 as given by the dropouts needs

special attention because that information can be a great contributor to the problem of

dropouts. When the dropouts were at the peak of their Christian experience, 20.1 percent

never studied the Bible; 35.5 percent never witnessed to anyone; 32.5 percent were

seldom involved in church life, while 24.9 percent were never involved (see table 18); and

TABLE 25

WHAT INFLUENCED THE RESPONDENTS
THE MOST TO DROP OUT

Factors	Number of responses	% of responses
Sexual pleasure	30	9.0
Worldly pleasure	22	6.6
Financial and material needs	18	5.4
Lost interest	18	5.4
Hypocrisy of members	17	5.1
Lack of members' encouragement	17	5.1
Members cold and indifferent	15	4.5
Influenced by non-Adventist association	14	4.2
Conflict with church members	13	3.9
Working on Sabbath	13	3.9
Lack of members' support	12	3.6
Double standards of members	12	3.6
Church is boring	12	3.6
Family problems	11	3.3
Members' criticism	10	3.0
Failure of church to involve them in activities	9	2.7
Lack of friends	9	2.7
Disagreement with church doctrines	9	2.7
Premature baptism	9	2.7
Lack of fellowship	8	2.4
Lack of love by members	8	2.4
Lack of pastoral care	7	2.1
Decline in spiritual life	6	1.8
Stopped attending church	6	1.8
Peer pressure	5	1.5
Frustration	5	1.5
Marital problems	4	1.2
Unsatisfactory worship service	3	0.9
Church is too far	2	0.6
Boring sermons	2	0.6
Age group differences	2	0.6
Members' selfishness	2	0.6
Conflict with pastor	2	0.6
Too many rules	2	0.6
Broken promises by the church	1	0.3

TABLE 26

RESPONDENTS' NUMBER ONE LISTING OF THE FACTORS
THAT MOST INFLUENCED THEM TO DROP OUT

Factor	Number of responses	% of responses
Sexual sins	22	13.7
Worldly pleasures	11	6.8
Hypocrisy of members	11	6.8
Lost interest	11	6.8
Financial and material needs	9	5.6
Premature baptism	9	5.6
Influenced by non-Adventists association	7	4.3
Conflict with church members	7	4.3
Working on Sabbath	7	4.3
Family problems	7	4.3
Lack of church members encouragement	6	3.7
Failure of church to involve them in activities	5	3.1
Members cold and indifferent	4	2.5
Members' double standards	4	2.5
Lack of friends	4	2.5
Stopped attending church	4	2.5
Marital problems	4	2.5
Church boring	3	1.9
Lack of fellowship	3	1.9
Members' criticism	3	1.9

TABLE 27

EFFORTS MADE TO BRING DROPOUTS BACK
INTO FELLOWSHIP

Factor	Number of responses	% of responses
Church members' visits	90	34.3
Pastors' visits	63	22.3
Nothing	32	11.3
Invitation to attend church	23	8.1
Family encouragement	23	8.1
Church officers' visits	16	5.7
Friends' encouragement	12	4.2
Bible studies	6	2.1
No responses	5	1.8
Help meet needs	3	1.1
Church members' prayers	3	1.1

TABLE 28

SUGGESTED WAYS THE CHURCH CAN
REDUCE DROPOUTS

Factors	Number of responses	% of responses
Show more love and encouragement	45	17.5
Visitation of members	37	14.4
More caring church	19	7.4
Help members with material needs	19	7.4
Involve members in church activities	16	6.2
No responses	15	5.8
Fellowship groups	14	5.4
Help members to be genuine	12	4.7
Post-baptismal Bible class	11	4.3
Unity among members	10	3.9
Better preparation of converts before baptism	8	3.1
More open communications	5	1.9
Members to be more supportive	5	1.9
Uphold church standards	5	1.9
Make church services more contemporary	5	1.9
Pray for each other	5	1.9
Help meet members' social needs	5	1.9
Provide more educational opportunity	4	1.6
Nothing	4	1.6
Help member build personal relationship with Christ	3	1.2
Transportation to church for member living far away	2	0.8
Other	1	0.4

TABLE 29

ONE THING THAT COULD HAVE PREVENTED
RESPONDENTS FROM DROPPING OUT

Factor	Number of responses	% of responses
Love and care	21	13.5
More member encouragement	18	11.6
Help with material needs	16	10.3
Nothing	14	9.0
Be more supportive	11	7.1
Greater fellowship	11	7.1
No response	11	7.1
If members were more friendly	9	5.8
A spouse	7	4.5
Members to be more understanding	4	2.6
Visitation	4	2.6
Involvement in church activities	3	1.9
Bible studies	3	1.9
More church activities	3	1.9
Support groups	3	1.9
Closer member relationships	2	1.3
Better preaching	2	1.3
Fewer church standards	1	0.6
Follow-up programs	1	0.6
Pastoral care	1	0.6

TABLE 30

MOST IMPORTANT REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT

Factor	Number of responses	%of responses
Lack of love and care from members	13	21.7
Joined church for wrong reason	6	10.0
Expectations not met	5	8.3
Lack of involvement in church activities	5	8.3
Lack of friends in the church	4	6.7
Poor fellowship programs	4	6.7
Material needs not met	4	6.7
Lack of conversion	3	5.0
Association with non-Adventists	3	5.0
Encountered ungenuine members	2	3.3
Had employment problems	2	3.3
Violation of doctrines	2	3.3
Lack of spiritual commitment	2	3.3
Different worship style to that in crusade	2	3.3
Lack of pastoral care	1	1.7
Attachment to evangelist who left	1	1.7

TABLE 31

WHEN MOST DROPOUTS LEFT THE CHURCH

Period	Number	%
Soon after baptism	17	81.0
A number of years after baptism	3	14.3
Other	1	4.8

TABLE 32

POST-BAPTISMAL STRATEGIES BEING USED
IN THE CHURCHES

Strategy	Number of responses	% of responses
Bible class	10	22.2
"Buddy" plan	9	20.0
Involvement of converts in church activities	6	13.3
Visitation of members	5	11.1
Prayer cells	3	6.7
Bible studies	2	4.4
None	2	4.4
Friendship building	2	4.4
Hospitality to converts	1	2.2
Social activities	1	2.2
Help converts solve problems	1	2.2
Encouragement	1	2.2
Worship in new member's home	1	2.2
Conservation seminars	1	2.2

TABLE 33

SUGGESTED POST-BAPTISMAL STRATEGIES
TO REDUCE DROPOUTS

Strategy	Number of responses	% of responses
More love and concern by members	9	20.5
Visit members	5	11.4
Assign new members to sponsors	4	9.8
Conduct more social activities	3	6.8
Help members with material needs	3	6.8
Pastors to plan conservation strategies	3	6.8
Involve members in church activities	3	6.8
Have fellowship groups	3	6.8
Help converts develop relationship with Christ	2	4.5
Provide counseling opportunities	2	4.5
Have more flexible church practices	1	2.3
Continue to teach new converts	1	2.3
Help singles find mate	1	2.3
Prepare baptismal candidate better	1	2.3
Train church leaders in conservation	1	2.3
Help unemployed find employment	1	2.3
Provide contemporary church programs	1	2.3

16.6 percent attended church irregularly.

The dropouts also reported that 46.7 percent of them did not received continual instruction after baptism, 86.4 percent of them never attended a seminar on spiritual gifts, and 39.6 percent were never involved in helping others. Approximately 45 percent of them never received a pastoral visit, 78.1 percent of them were never involved in fellowship groups, and 37.9 percent of them returned tithes irregularly.

The respondents gave about thirty-five factors that caused them to drop out, but there may not be any one factor that by itself is responsible for a member dropping out, of the church. It is significant to note that the first five factors listed by the respondents as the number one reason responsible for their dropping out were the first five factors that surfaced when all the given dropout factors were tabulated (see tables 25 and 26). These five factors were: violation of the seventh commandment, worldly pleasures, hypocrisy of members, loss of interest, and financial and material needs.

I have categorized the thirty-five factors given by the respondents as causes for their dropping out into seven sections: sexual sins, relational problems with members, external influences and pressures, worship and nurture, problems with church standards and practices, assimilation and acculturation, socioeconomic status.

1. Sexual Sins. This was the number one factor listed as responsible for members leaving the church when the members listed the factors from most to least influential. It was also the number one factor when all the responses for the causes of dropouts were tabulated.

2. Relational Problems with Members. This area has been the major contributor to dropouts. It includes the following responses and percentages: hypocrisy of members, 5.1 percent; lack of members' encouragement, 5.1 percent; members cold and indifferent, 4.5 percent; lack of members' support, 3.6 percent; double standards of members, 3.6 percent; members' criticism, 3.0 percent; lack of friends, 2.7 percent; lack of fellowship, 2.4 percent; lack of love by members, 2.4 percent; members' selfishness, 0.6 percent; age group difference, 0.6 percent; and broken promises by the church, 0.3 percent. To these must be added conflict with church members, 3.9 percent; conflict with church pastor, 0.6 percent; family problems, 3.3 percent; marital problems, 1.2 percent. This adds up to 41.9 percent of the total responses. The area of relationship between members needs to be seriously addressed as the church endeavors to reduce its losses, especially the areas that involve unresolved conflicts.

3. External Influences and Pressures. The respondents listed worldly pleasures as the second greatest contributor to their dropping out of the church. Peer pressure, the influence of non-Adventist associates, Sabbath employment, and the church building being too far away were also listed as contributors.

4. Worship and Nurture. Many of the dropouts were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the church's program. They claimed that boring sermons, unsatisfactory worship services, and lack of pastoral care were among the factors that caused them to leave. Some of them even stated that the church was boring.

5. Problems with Church Standards and Practices. Premature baptisms and disagreement with church doctrines both received an equal number of responses (2.7

percent). Some claimed that the church had too many rules, but their responses formed only 0.06 percent of the data.

6. <u>Assimilation and Acculturation</u>. The failure of the church to involve members in the activities of the church was a significant factor in the responses. Some of the dropouts felt that they were not important, therefore no effort was made to get them involved.

7. <u>Socioeconomic Status</u>. The third factor that surfaced when all the responses were tabulated was financial and material needs. This is the case because the church is baptizing mainly those individuals with low or no financial incomes.

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Comparison of Results from the Dropouts' and the
Church Leaders' Questionnaires

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There was great agreement between the suggestions given by the dropouts and the pastors, lay evangelists, and personal ministry leaders. Eight of the first ten factors listed by the dropouts to reduce apostasy are listed in the first fourteen factors the pastors, lay evangelists, and personal ministry leaders gave. The eight factors are: more love and encouragement from members, visitation of members, more caring church, help members with material needs, involvement of members in church activities, fellowship groups, post-baptismal Bible class, and better preparation of converts for baptism. Two factors that were mentioned early in the pastors', lay evangelists', and church ministry leaders' list of factors were: assign new members to sponsors and help converts develop relationship with Christ. Helping members develop a relationship with Christ appeared in the dropouts' list, but it was toward the end of the list (see table 28).

In chapter 5 a strategy is presented to reduce dropouts, which will incorporate the suggestions from the respondents in the above study.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGY TO CURB MEMBERSHIP DROPOUT
IN THE GRENADA MISSION OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

In chapter 4 the main factors contributing to dropouts in the Grenada Mission

were identified. This chapter presents a strategy intended to adequately address the

causes and thereby reduce membership loss. The strategy incorporates elements from the

suggestions of the dropouts and the church leaders who participated in the research. It

also seeks to incorporate elements from the New Testament and the writings of Ellen

White that are relevant to addressing the problem of dropouts in the Grenada Mission of

Seventh-day Adventists. Finally, any factor from past research or strategies that I am

aware of that is relevant to reducing dropouts in the Grenada Mission's situation is

included.

Objective of the Strategy

The strategy endeavors to better assimilate every new convert into the Grenada

Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. This will be done through the joined efforts of the

church pastors and the laity. It will be done primarily by decentralizing ministry and

pastoral care and by empowering the entire laity for ministry.

Description of the Strategy

There are two phases to the strategy. Phase one is a seminar for the church pastors and the Grenada Mission departmental and administrative officers. The second phase involves the actual program that will be implemented in the church. The church pastors will be responsible for the implementation of the second phase of the strategy in their churches.

Phase One: Seminar for Church Pastors, Departmental Directors, and Administrative Personnel

The church pastors must be willing to play their part in order to have a successful program to reduce dropouts. The church pastors will need the support of the departmental directors since the directors may become resource persons for the pastors' districts. The pastors also need the administration's support so that they will not regard the effort put into preventing dropouts as wasted because it is not among the administration's priorities.

Purpose of the Seminar

The purpose of the seminar is as follows:

1. To establish a biblical and theological rational to reduce dropouts

2. To help the church leaders get a deeper understanding of the dropout problem in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists

3. To assist the church leaders in realizing the need for deliberate efforts and a more effective strategy for reducing dropouts

4. To help the church pastors develop a better assimilation strategy for their churches by presenting them with a new approach, material, and ways to make the present methods they are using more effective

5. To prepare the church pastors to prepare the laity for their role in preventing dropouts

6. To inspire a commitment in the pastors to implement the strategy.

Seminar Description

The seminar will be conducted over a period of two days and will last for twelve hours, six hours each day. It will consist of twelve sessions with six sessions being taught each day. The first session of each day will include a fifteen-minute song service, a twenty-five-minute devotion, a ten-minute prayer session and a ten-minute recess. The first day of the seminar will contain sessions of fifty-five-minute presentations except the fourth and sixth sessions, which will have thirty-minute presentations respectively. Twenty-five minutes will be given during the latter half hour of the fourth and sixth sessions of day one for questions and discussions. The latter twenty-five minutes of the fourth session on the second day will be used for questions and discussions, and the sixth hour will be given to questions, discussions, commitment to dropout prevention, and prayer sessions for God's guidance in implementing the program. The other sessions of day two will contain fifty-five-minute presentations (see tables 34 and 35).

TABLE 34

SEMINAR STRUCTURE AND TOPICS
DAY 1

Sessions	Structure	Duration	Topics
1	Song service Devotion Prayer Break	15 min. 25 min. 10 min. 10 min.	The Great Commission
2	Presentation Break	55 min. 05 min.	Biblical and theological rationale for reducing dropouts
3	Presentation Break	55 min. 05 min.	Data from research: Who are leaving the church? Why are they leaving?
4	Presentation Questions, discussion Break	30 min. 25 min. 05 min.	Data from research: continued from session three

5	Presentation
	
	Break
		55 min.
		
		05 min.
			Data from research: suggested ways to reduce dropouts
			   a. Church leaders' suggestions
			   b. Dropouts' suggestions
			   c. Ellen White's suggestions

6	Presentation
	
	Questions, discussion
	Prayer/dismissal
		30 min.
		
		25 min.
		05 min.
			Data from research:
			  a. Present approach used to reduce dropouts in the Grenada Mission
			  b. Need for more effective approach
			
			Assignment: Read Evangelism, 334-383

TABLE 35

SEMINAR STRUCTURE AND TOPICS
DAY 2

Sessions	Structure	Duration	Topics
1	Song service Devotion Prayer Break	15 min. 25 min. 10 min. 10 min.	The Great Commandment: Its relation to the Great Commission
2	Presentation Break	55 min. 05 min.	Presentation of strategy: Reception service Post-baptismal new member class
3	Presentation Break	55 min. 05 min.	Presentation of strategy continued: Love Spiritual gifts
4	Presentation Questions, discussion Break	30 min. 25 min. 05 min.	Presentation of strategy continued: Small groups and groups visitation Sponsorship plan
5	Presentations Break	55 min. 05 min.	Presentation of strategy continued: Worship service Putting it all together
6	Questions, discussion Call for commitment Prayer session	30 min. 15 min. 15 min.	

Instructors for the Seminar

I will be responsible for planning the seminar and will do so in consultation with the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists administrative officers. I will be the main presenter at the seminars, but pastors, departmental directors, and administrators will be asked to assist in areas where they are competent.

Phase Two: Strategy to Implement in the Church to Reduce Dropouts

Phase Two will involve the establishing and equipping of new members. The goal is to get the entire church body involved in this process. Both the establishing and equipping of the new members will proceed simultaneously.

Every Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grenada should be

a community of believers that strives to fulfill the Acts 2 description of the bride of Christ. . . . To creating a supportive and encouraging place where Spirit-led preaching brings a new, God-focused direction to people's lives; where believers gather in small groups to share their hearts on the deepest of levels; where everyone feels empowered to make a difference through their spiritual gifts; where prayer, worship, and the sacraments are lifted up; where the rich share their God-given resources with the poor, and where people ache so much for their irreligious friends that the church gets strategic and takes risks to reach out to them with the Gospel.[1]

This is the ultimate objective of this strategy. It is to make every church a family, a community of love and fellowship (Acts 2:41-47, 4:32), the body of Christ (Rom 12:4-8, 1 Cor 12:12-27, Eph 4:12), a place where the laity are intentional about helping new members get incorporated into the church. Table 36 shows the components of the dropout reduction strategy to be implemented in the Grenada Mission.

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[1]Lynne Hybels and Bill Hybels, Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 163.

TABLE 36

STRATEGY TO REDUCE DROPOUTS

Component of Strategy	Purpose
Reception service	To make the members' reception memorable to them and give them a sense of belonging
Post-baptismal new-member class	To teach, train, develop friendships, and to promote social activities
Love	To learn to intentionally express love
Spiritual gifts	To identify and use gift/gifts--assign responsibility immediately
Small groups and groups	To build friends, build sense of belonging, receive nurture and fellowship, involve in service, social activities
Visitations	To know spiritual condition and needs, converse, pray, encourage, to have systematic contacts
Sponsorship plan	To help meet the need of new members, build relationships, help them be incorporated into life and ministry of the church
Worship service	To avoid monotony, make service more contemporary and needs-oriented

Description of the Components of the Strategy

All the components will work together as a holistic approach to achieving the goal

of dropout reduction. The emphasis is on the new converts, but certain components will

involve the entire church; this is explained later. The strategy does not seek to cover

every cause for dropout mentioned by the respondents in the questionnaires, but rather it

is targeted toward the major contributors to the problem. The strategy aims at making

every new convert a mature, functioning member of the local church.

Reception Service

Baptism is usually a grand event in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, but much can be done at the "hand of fellowship" event to enhance bonding and receptivity. This should not be placed at the end of the Adventist youth meeting on Sabbath afternoons, as is commonly done. This should be a memorable event in the life of the church and especially the new converts. A special reception service must be held whenever the "right hand of fellowship" is extended to new believers. I recommend that a committee be set up that carries the responsibility to plan for such occasions. It should work in conjunction with the worship committee and the church pastor in planning the content of the occasion. The following elements may be included:

1. Introduce each new member separately.

2. Allow new believers to give testimonies of how God led them to their decisions and their determination to serve Him.

3. Give old members opportunity to express their commitment to helping new members.

4. Hand out baptismal certificates.

5. Give older members opportunity to pray for new members during the church service.

6. Call for commitment of all to pray daily for new members.

7. Give members opportunity to shake hands, hug, and speak words of encouragement to new members.

8. Have social get-together after the service for refreshments, and interaction.

9. Take photos of the event and ensure each new member receives one.

Post-Baptismal New Member Class

A new members' class is to be established in every church since each church actively participates in evangelism on a yearly basis. This class is to be taught by the pastor, an elder, or other competent person who is to be under the constant guidance of the church pastor. The class is more than a Bible class. Every new member is to be assigned to one of these classes for at least one year after baptism. The class meets on Sabbath mornings during the Sabbath School lesson study time and other arrangements will be made as it is necessary. This class is to be used as a place where new members: (1) are taught the Bible, (2) take inventory of personal resources and gifts, (3) receive training especially in witnessing, (4) are assigned to service, (5) develop friendships, and (6) are given opportunity to fellowship.

Some of the areas to be covered in this class will be determined by the pastor and the class members. The class will cover the following topics and activities in addition to what each pastor will add:

1. Review doctrines: Emphasis to be given to assurance of salvation, healthful living, spiritual gifts, systematic benevolence, missionary work[1]

2. Promote sex education:

    a. Emphasize sacredness of sex

    b. Establish the value of each person in order to develop self-worth

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[1]White, "Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work," 185.

c. Explain effects of sex out of marriage

d. Emphasize the power of God to remove defects of character and to overcome shortcomings, temptations, and peer pressure

e. Establish need for regular prayer, fasting, and meditation if sex is an area of weakness in anyone's life

f. Encourage anyone with such weakness to seek someone to help them pray for victory in that area.

3. Teach how to: (a) pray, (b) fast, (c) study the Bible, (d) have daily private devotions, (e) conduct daily family worship.

4. Help take inventory of personal resources, help identify spiritual gift(s), explain areas of service in the church, assign to service (see section on spiritual gifts)

5. Give history of church--its distinctiveness

6. Teach how to intentionally express love

7. Plan time for social fellowship for the class and spend time each class period allowing members to get acquainted

8. Encourage each member to read Steps to Christ by Ellen White within the first six months after baptism

9. Ensure everyone has a Bible

10. Evaluate members' assimilation experience after six months:

a. Ministry evaluation

b. Number of friends made (5-10 expected in six months)

c. Needs met or not met

d. Evaluation of group experience

e. Spiritual growth

11. Teach soul winning

12. Divide into small groups for fellowship (see section on small groups).

Love

The church is to be a community of love, and that is not optional; it is an imperative. A church community that is rightly described as lacking love is not a true representation of the body of Christ (John 13:35; 15:12-17; Matt 22:37-40; 1 John 4:8). A Christian is one who is filled with love (Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22). God wants him or her to express that love to everyone (John 13:35; Matt 5:43-48; 1 John 4:11). Anyone who becomes part of the body of Christ is right in expecting to be loved, encouraged, and cared for while they themselves do the same to others (1 Cor 14:1).

From the questionnaires conducted in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, lack of love has surfaced as a major dropout contributor. It was also suggested by both the dropouts and the church leaders who participated in the questionnaire as one of the first areas that need addressing as the church seeks to reduce its loss (see tables 28, 29, 33). I believe the problem is a lack of members expressing love rather than members not having love. Lack of love will impact all aspects of the church's operation (1 Cor 13). The objective of this component of the strategy is to teach and seek to get every member to be involved in expressing love as a way of daily living. "People

know they are loved when they see it, experience it, feel it."[1]

The entire church is to be the target of this strategy component. It is also to be an ongoing process. The main channels used to teach the church to love will be sermons, the worship service, small groups, and the post-baptismal new-member class. The entire church is to be targeted through sermons, the worship service, and small groups, whereas in the post-baptismal new-member class all new members will be taught. All are to be taught to express unconditional love.

I recommend the book, Who Cares About Love?[2] as one of the guides to do the training, with each pastor adapting the material or using the material that is needed in his or her particular congregation. Pages 89-102 are to be used in every congregation as they give practical steps to expressing love, namely:

Step 1. Make a "love covenant" with God

Step 2. Identify those who specifically need our love

Step 3. Act first

Step 4. Communicate

Step 5. Empathize

Step 6. Identify a love opportunity

Step 7. Respond with a caring gift

Step 8. Share yourself.

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[1]Win Arn, Carroll Nyguist, and Charles Arn, Who Cares About Love? (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, [1986]), 125.

[2]Ibid.

Spiritual Gifts

Every child of God has a spiritual gift/gifts given to him/her by God for the profit

of all (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10). The church then should be a community where every

member is involved in service using his/her gift/gifts. The pastor is to do what his gift

calls him to do which is to equip the church for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-13).

"The best pastor is . . . one who makes sure each member has a ministry and is working

hard at it."[1] It means therefore that the church has the corporate responsibility for

ministry. All have ministries, and they should be given the opportunity to carry them out.

The goal of this component is to get each member to become involved in a

ministry or ministries in accordance with his/her gift/gifts and thereby share the

responsibility for pastoral care and nurture, and not to leave it to the clergy. It is also to

get this component introduced into every church since the research reveals that this is

neglected in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists (see table 22). Figure 1

explains the goal and biblical basis of the spiritual gift component of this strategy, which is

to equip everyone for service.

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[1]C. Peter Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), 133.

| Entire church given gifts by God, each has a ministry 1 Cor 12 | God expects → | Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/teachers to equip church Eph 4:11, 12 | Purpose → | Equipped church all do ministry (pastor & laity), build Body of Christ Eph 4:12 |
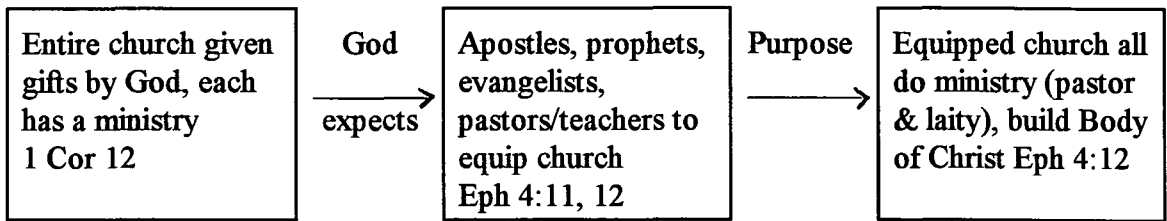
Fig. 1. The purpose of spiritual gifts, and the responsibility of pastors and evangelists to members.

"The church of Christ is organized for service. Its watchword is ministry. Its members are soldiers, to be trained for conflict under the Captain of their salvation. Christian ministers . . . are not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister."[1] Following the above model will result in the empowerment of the church. Empowerment takes place "when pastors and church leaders delegate responsibility for ministry to their people and actually allow them to execute it."[2]

Each pastor will be exposed to tools that will be in the form of spiritual inventory like the "Wagner-modified Houts chart,"[3] and "The new spiritual gifts inventory" by Roy Naden.[4]

In the post-baptismal class all new members are to be assisted in identifying their

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[1]Ellen G. White, <u>A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education: Selections from the Writings of E. G. White</u> (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, [1954]), 17.

[2]Gary L. McIntosh, <u>The Exodus Principle: A 5-Part Strategy to Free Your People for Ministry</u> (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 5.

[3]Wagner, 237-259.

[4]Roy Naden, <u>Your Spiritual Gifts: The New Spiritual Gifts Inventory</u> (Berrien Springs, MI: Instructional Product Development, 1990).

gifts. This will be done after the new members are taught about spiritual gifts which should be presented within the first three months of the class. The following is the suggested method:

1. Use a spiritual gift instrument to help identify gifts in the class.

2. Visit all new members at home within one week following the day of the gift inventory. Hold a one-on-one conversation to find talents, abilities, previous involvement in church, and interest of the member. Discuss gift-inventory results.

3. Together with the new member find a place of service and involve members immediately based on gift/gifts, talents, abilities, and interest.

4. Evaluate members' progress during later home visitations.

There must be training for any assignment that requires it. There must be openness to creating new ministries if the needs exist among the new converts. The section titled "Small Groups and Groups" discusses how to begin new groups or ministries.

Small Groups and Groups

The objective is to get every member into a group where he or she can build friendship, receive nurture, feel a sense of belonging, have fellowship, be involved in social activities, be involved in service, and experience love and support in the church. Since every member is placed in a Sabbath school class in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, the first goal is to seek to make every Sabbath school class an effective group.

Teachers will be trained in how to make their classes more relational, ways to
encourage more fellowship and social interactions, the need for class projects or class
ministries, the need to make contact with missing class members an imperative, and the
need to meet at least once monthly in a different member's home for prayer, sharing, and
social get-together in the form of having refreshments together and interacting with each
other. The Sabbath School Department of the Grenada Mission can assist with this
training.

All the new members in the post-baptismal new-members class are to be strongly
encouraged to participate in a small group for a minimum of six months. Divide all new
members who agree to participate into groups of fewer than twelve. Twelve is the upper
limit for an effective small group since the group dynamics change after that number of
persons.[1] Group leaders are to be chosen from among the group and trained. The leaders
are to be trained by modeling. All the leaders are to be placed in groups of twelve or
fewer, and the pastor is to model how the small groups will operate and give the leaders
the opportunity to practice. Where there is more than one group of leaders, the training
can be done together but the practicing is to be done within units of twelve or fewer
people. The basic training for small groups by Lyman Coleman[2] is recommended for the
training of the small-group leaders.

Third, in addition to the various groups in the church, the formation of new ones

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[1]Lyman Coleman, <u>Basic Training for Small Group Ministry in Your Church:
Serendipity Video Training Series</u> (Littleton, CO: Serendipity House, 1995), 11.

[2]Ibid.

should be encouraged. These groups can take the form of share-and-care circles, meals on wheels, prison ministries, hospital ministries, singles groups, etc. As was mentioned under the section on spiritual gifts, any area of ministry that surfaces as a need among the new members should be encouraged. The whole church should be constantly reminded that if the Lord impresses a ministry upon them, they are to contact the church's leadership for help in organizing it. The following is a guideline for starting new groups. It is taken from Suzanne G. Braden,[1] and I recommend its use:

1. Make a prospect list.

2. Talk with the people and analyze their needs, interests, concerns, and hopes. What would they like to do or study? What day and time is best for them?

3. Call the people concerned together to discuss the possibility of the group or ministry.

4. Decide on support for the group. Aim at a nucleus of five or six to get started.

5. Set time and place for the group to begin meeting.

6. Help the group secure the best available leadership.

7. Help the group choose its curriculum.

In addition to the above, training should be provided where it is necessary and a proper record kept of the group's activities.

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[1]Suzanne G. Braden, The First Year: Incorporating New Members (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, [1987]), 60-61.

Visitation

Many of the dropouts listed visitations as one way the church can reduce its loss.

Many of the authors reviewed in chapter 3 of this dissertation listed visitations as a means

of reducing dropouts. In the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists this is an area

that needs vast improvement (see table 22). The reason is that the church depends on the

pastor mainly to do the visitations. This must stop! The church must take the

responsibility together with the pastor for visitations. Ellen White wrote:

> Men of the best ability should be chosen to help in the effort. They should enter
> heartily into the work of visiting and holding Bible readings with those newly come
> to the faith, and with those who are interested, endeavoring to establish them in the
> faith. . . . One or two men should not be left alone with the burden of such a
> work.[1]

White also admonished that, like the apostle Paul did, new members are to be visited often

to see how they are doing.[2]

The following is a suggested approach to the visitation of new members:

1. Divide the church territory into visitation districts.

2. All elders and elders in training, all deacons and deacons in training, and all

deaconesses are to be encouraged to be part of the weekly visitation program of every

church. Members with the gift of encouragement or who love to care for others are to be

approached one on one and encouraged to join the visitation team. These visits are not to

replace the pastor's visits.

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[1]Ellen G. White, "Notes of Travel-5, " Review and Herald, March 2, 1905,
8-9.

[2]White, Testimonies, 5:256.

3. Assign visitation teams to every visitation district.

4. Members are to visit two by two.

5. Visitations are to be on the same day of the week for all teams as far as possible.

6. The pastor is responsible for supervising the visitation program and assigning new members to be visited by the teams.

7. Written reports of each week's visitation are to be given to the pastor.

8. The pastor is to follow up on problem cases reported.

Everyone participating in the visitation is to be trained by the pastor in how to make home and hospital visits. The home visitation training must include the following elements:

1. Purpose of visits--to know spiritual and physical needs, to pray with, converse, make friends, encourage, and study the Bible when necessary

2. Listening skills

3. Making needs referrals.

Sponsorship Plan

This plan is being used in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists under the name of the "buddy plan." This can be very effective in assimilating new members especially during the early months. The problem with this plan in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists is that it is not well-organized. The sponsors do not have clear guidelines as to what their responsibilities are to these new converts. The purpose here is to clarify the objective of this component, give suggestive guidelines for the sponsors to follow, and encourage its implementation in every church.

Objective

The objectives of the sponsors are to help meet the new member's material and spiritual needs and to help him or her assimilate into the church body more easily. The length of the sponsorship will be one year, although the sponsor may choose to continue longer.

Suggested guidelines for sponsors include the following:

1. Get acquainted; build trust and friendship.

2. Introduce new members to friends and other members.

3. Ensure the member attends church services and help him or her with transportation where necessary.

4. Make friendly visits to member's home occasionally.

5. Visit the member promptly when he or she misses church.

6. Be watchful for material needs or other problems the member faces.

7. Invite regularly to have meals together especially on Sabbaths.

8. Invite to social events or have friends invite him/her.

9. Monitor involvement of the member in church life.

10. Refer problem/problems you are unable to handle to the pastor.

11. Pray daily for the new member and for God's guidance in your ministry to him or her.

Guidelines are to be given to sponsors so that they may know what is expected of them. Members who have the gift of encouragement or who enjoy caring for others should be those mainly targeted to be sponsors.

Worship Service

In many of the churches in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists the church services are too stereotyped. There is a lack of creativity in the worship services of most of the churches. They follow slavishly the booklet entitled "Order of Service" given to them by the organization, and the elders fill in names on Sabbath mornings. The church services need to be given more thought, to be made more contemporary, and contain more creativity. The dropouts in this study who were mainly young people (see table 3) listed the church being boring as one of their reasons for leaving. They also listed making the church services more contemporary as a means to reduce loss.

The following recommendations are some of the areas to be addressed in the worship service:

1. Include more singing, and include contemporary songs and music with the purpose of encouraging more praise and thanksgiving in the worship service and to cater for different music tastes.

2. Increase congregation participation:

a. Responsive readings in the litany (this is rarely used in the Grenada Mission)

b. Call to the altar for prayer

c. Allow time in prayer for members' silent petitions

d. Include children's story--call them to the front

e. Encourage members' testimonies sometimes

3. Include drama occasionally.

4. Include more personal interaction such as handshakes, holding hands in prayer.

5. Change responses instead of the same ones year after year.

6. Preach sermons that meet people's needs and that are Christ-centered, giving a constant God-focused direction to the lives of all present.

Expected Results

I anticipate that each new member will feel a sense of belonging, will have a ministry, will feel loved and express love unconditionally, will be involved in a group, will have a minimum of five to ten friends within the first year, and will grow spiritually with the implementation of all the above components of the strategy. Each new member will be made a disciple of Christ and not just a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This will reduce the yearly dropouts in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists and will contribute to greater church growth.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The yearly baptism of hundreds of new members into the Seventh-day Adventist

Church in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists is presenting the church with a

challenge to retain them. The Grenada Mission is experiencing its greatest loss from

among single, young adults, male and female members with educational achievements

equal to or less than the secondary-school level. The thirty-five factors given by the

dropouts as contributors to their leaving the church were categorized into seven areas:

sexual sins, relational problems, external influences and pressures, worship and nurture,

problems with church standards and practices, problems of assimilation and acculturation,

and socioeconomic status. The area of relational problems emerged as the major

contributor since it composed 41.9 percent of the factors given. This study revealed the

need for a more effective strategy to assimilate new members if the church wants to

reduce its losses. "Pickett's studies published in 1933 show conclusively that the motives

from which unbelievers turn to Christian faith play a smaller part in developing Christian

character than good postbaptismal care."[1]

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[1]Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, rev. and ed. by Peter
C. Wagner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1990), 248.

The factors contributing to dropouts that were identified in this study and the suggestions to reduce dropouts that were received from both the dropouts themselves and church leaders helped to formulate the approach for the dropout-prevention strategy presented in this study. The emphasis of the strategy is on empowerment of the laity and decentralizing ministry and pastoral care.

The eight-component strategy presented in this study is to be a springboard for further study in assimilation in the Grenada Mission. It is to focus attention on a new approach in pastoral care and ministry that will result in a greater retention of converts.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Although church dropout is a problem throughout the Caribbean Union and the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day adventists, this study was limited only to the Grenada Mission. It has brough to focus the need for an holistic approach to the issue of church dropout prevention. This approach must include both pastor and laity who are to be *intentional* about assimilating new members. The pastors are to spend more time on what their gifts require them to do, which is to equip the laity. The laity are then to fulfill their God-given ministries and build up the body of Christ. The strategy presented in this dissertation is intended to do this.

This dissertation will provide the pastors in the Grenada Mission with new insights on the dropout problem, new tools to prevent dropouts, and a new approach in seeking to engage the entire church in ministry and nurture. It is my expectation that this study will

be used as a training guide in the Grenada Mission and to some extent in the Caribbean

Union of Seventh-day Adventists.

APPENDIX

FORMER ADVENTIST QUESTIONNAIRE

Your response will contribute to identifying the main causes for membership loss through dropout in the Grenada Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. It will also help in finding corrective measures that will be suggested for implementation so that the problem of church dropouts can be more effectively addressed. Please answer all questions.

1. What was your religious affiliation before becoming a Seventh-day Adventists?

    1. Roman Catholic
    2. Anglican
    3. Baptist
    4. Pentecostal
    5. Methodist
    6. Church of God
    7. Other _____
    8. No affliation

2. Do you have any Seventh-day Adventist relatives? Please state number if your answer is yes.

	1. Yes	2. No	3. Number
1. Father	_____	_____	_____
2. Mother	_____	_____	_____
3. Brother	_____	_____	_____
4. Sister	_____	_____	_____
5. Spouse	_____	_____	_____
6. Son	_____	_____	_____
7. Daughter	_____	_____	_____
8. Aunt	_____	_____	_____
9. Uncle	_____	_____	_____
10. Other	_____	_____	_____

3. Please indicate how long you knew members of the Seventh-day Adventist church before you were baptized?

    1. _____ day/weeks
    2. _____ month/months
    3. _____ year/years

4. Who influenced you the most to become a Seventh-day Adventists? <u>Circle your answer</u>.

    1. I was raised as a Seventh-day Adventists.
    2. Parents
    3. Brother/sister
    4. Other relatives
    5. Friend
    6. SDA Church member
    7. SDA pastor
    8. Evangelist
    9. Other (please specify) _____

5. What influenced you the most to become a Seventh-day Adventist?

    1. SDA Radio program
    2. Correspondence course
    3. Fellowship I found among its members
    4. Evangelistic crusade
    5. Other (please specify) _____

6. Did any of the following events disturb your life within six months prior your baptism?

    1. Death of spouse   Yes   No
    2. Divorce   Yes   No
    3. Marital separation   Yes   No
    4. Death of close family member   Yes   No
    5. Personal injury or illness   Yes   No
    6. Marriage   Yes   No
    7. Fired from job   Yes   No
    8. Retirement   Yes   No
    9. Dream to join Church   Yes   No
    10. Other _____

7. If you answered yes to any section of the previous question please indicate the ones that influenced your decision to become an SDA member _____

_____

8. Was <u>it your own decision</u> or <u>were you pressured</u> to make the decision to become a member of the SDA Church?

    1. My own decision
    2. Pressured but I agreed
    3. Pressured but reluctantly agreed
    4. Did it to please parents, friends or other
    5. Other _____

9. The instruction you received in SDA belief and standards before you joined church was:

    1. Very adequate
    2. Quite adequate
    3. Satisfactory
    4. Unsatisfactory
    5. Very unsatisfactory

10. How committed were you to the church after you joined it?

    1. Very committed
    2. Fairly committed
    3. Not very committed
    4. Don't know

11. Did you experience any of the following after baptism?

1. Participation in church activities	Yes	No
2. Continual instruction	Yes	No
3. Attended a seminar on spiritual gifts	Yes	No
4. Involvement in helping others	Yes	No
5. Pastoral visitations	Yes	No
6. Members support and encouragement	Yes	No
7. Church adhered strictly to teachings and doctrines	Yes	No
8. Life had greater meaning	Yes	No
9. Assurance of life after death	Yes	No
10. Great desire to share the good news of salvation	Yes	No
11. Received training for service	Yes	No
12. Opportunity was available for you to	Yes	No
receive training for service	Yes	No
13. Involvement in fellowship group	Yes	No
14. Regularly returned tithes and offerings	Yes	No

12. Please rate yourself at the time that you were most committed to the church by circling the appropriate answer.

1. Prayer	Daily	Every few days	Never
2. Personal Bible study	Daily	Every few days	Never
3. Witnessing to others	Daily	Every few days	Never
4. Involvement in church life	Active	Seldom involved	None
5. Church attendance	Regular	Irregular	Never

13. How would you describe the fellowship you found in the Seventh-day Adventist Church after you joined?

1. Very warm and many friends
2. Very warm and few friends
3. Little fellowship and few friends
4. No fellowship and no friends
5. Other _____

14. On a scale of one to five, please rate the following relationships and attitudes you found among members of the church.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Uncertain	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. They love each other	1	2	3	4	5
2. They cared for each other	1	2	3	4	5
3. Critical of others	1	2	3	4	5
4. Understanding and forgiving	1	2	3	4	5
5. Cold and unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5
6. Hospitable	1	2	3	4	5
7. Willing to sacrifice greatly for God	1	2	3	4	5
8. Willing to obey what they believe	1	2	3	4	5
9. Eager to share the good news of salvation	1	2	3	4	5
10. Other _____					

15. How long did you consider yourself to be a church member?

    1. Under 1 year
    2. 1-5 years
    3. 6-10 years
    4. 11-20 years
    5. More than 20 years

16. What word best describes your feelings at the time you stopped attending?

    1. Bitter
    2. Frustrated
    3. Guilty
    4. Relief
    5. Angry
    6. Rebellion

17. Please list the ten things that influenced you the most to stop attending or drop out of church? Start with the one that most influenced you to the one that least influenced you.

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
    4. _____
    5. _____
    6. _____
    7. _____
    8. _____
    9. _____
  10. _____

18. Please list all efforts made to bring you back into fellowship. (Example pastor's visit)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19. What are the chances that you might become a regular, active member again?

    1. Highly likely
    2. Likely
    3. Don't know
    4. Highly unlikely
    5. Unlikely

20. What can the church do to retain its members?

    _____

    _____

    _____

21. If there was <u>one thing</u> that could have helped you to remain in the church, what would this have been?

    _____

    _____

    _____

22. Describe your present personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

    1. Strong   2. Weak   3. None

23. Gender   1. Male   2. Female

24. Age group

    1. Under 20
    2. 21-25
    3. 26-35
    4. 36-50
    5. 51 and over

25. Marital status

    1. Single
    2. Married
    3. Separated
    4. Divorced
    5. Widowed
    6. Other

26. Educational level achieved

    1. Primary
    2. Vocational Institute
    3. Secondary
    4. Institute for Further Education
    5. Teachers' College
    6. Undergraduate college degree
    7. Graduate degree
    8. Other _____

28. Yearly individual income:

    1. Under $5,000
    2. $5, 000- $9,999
    3. $10,000-$14,999
    4. $15,000-$19,999
    5. $20,000-$29,999
    6. $30,000-$40,000
    7. Over $40,000

CHURCH PASTORS, LAY EVANGELISTS AND
PERSONAL MINISTRY LEADERS
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you consider to be the most important reasons why people dropout of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Most dropouts of your congregation takes place at what period in the experience of the members?

   (1) Soon after baptism
   (2) A number of years after baptism
   (3) Other _____

   _____

   _____

3. What post-baptismal strategy does the church or churches where you function use to prevent dropout?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. What do you think can be done to help prevent dropout beyond what you are already doing?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

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