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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A RATIONALE AND SUGGESTED PROGRAM FOR MINISTERS'
SUPPORT GROUPS FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
PASTORS IN BRAZIL

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

by
Luiz Silva Melo
September 1981

NOTE

This Doctor of Ministry Project report falls under the category described in the Seminary Bulletin as Project II, in fulfillment of requirements for an alternate curriculum plan under which the candidate prepares two related papers--a theological position paper addressing some issue or problem in the church theologically, and a professional paper addressing this issue or problem from the standpoint of ministerial practice.

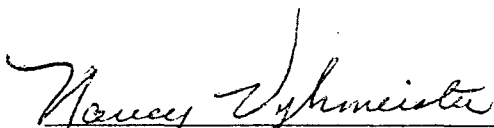
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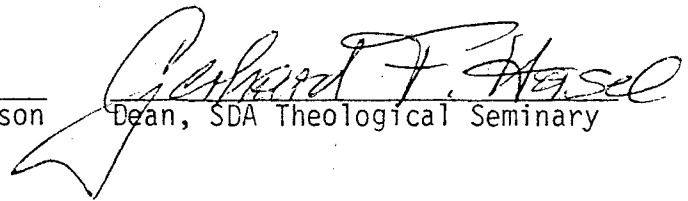
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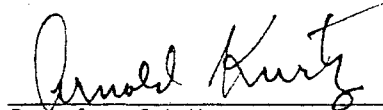
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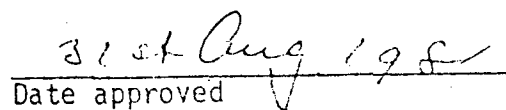
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Date approved

DEDICATION

To all those faithful and devoted Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Brazil who may profit from the concepts expressed herein, this project is affectionately dedicated.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- KJV - King James Version
NIDNTT - The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NIV - New International Version
SDABD - Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary
TDNT - Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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First and foremost I am deeply grateful to the heavenly Father for His abundant loving care and constant guidance.

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I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Arnold Kurtz, Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Dr. William G. Murdoch, Committee Member, and Dr. Werner Vyhmeister for their direction, guidance and counsel in the preparation of this project. I would like to mention particularly the contribution of Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister, who not only was the chairman of my Doctoral Dissertation Committee but also gave unstintingly of her time, counsel and advice in polishing this project.

I am especially grateful to my wife Autonieta who always believed that this project would become reality, and to my children for their endurance while I was studying.

PART I

ASPECTS OF THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF MAN

INTRODUCTION

In the multiple roles of a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)--minister-pastor, administrator, preacher, evangelist, organizer, and husband-father--I have sensed in my own ministerial career the tensions resulting from the conflicts between my own expectations, the expectations of my administrators, my congregations, and my own limitations. In discussing this tension with my colleagues I found I was not alone. They too experienced frustration along with the joy of service. Finally, in reading the literature concerning non-SDA ministers, I saw that we are all sharing a common problem--human beings doing a gigantic task.

Some specific circumstances may add to the problems of Brazilian SDA pastors. (1) They are transferred rather often (about every two or three years) from one district to another. Over the years, colleagues have suggested that this may add to their frustration because they cannot achieve plans, goals, and relationships.

Because he serves alone in a large district, with several congregations, the Brazilian SDA pastor travels frequently and is absent from home much of the time; this contributes to the erosion of his family life.

It is also widely known that in many instances when a pastor is doing his work well, he is transferred to a departmental or administrative position, leaving behind him an unfinished work.

These moves could, on the one hand, produce ministers who are unable to develop long-range plans of their own. On the other hand, they may contribute unwittingly to the stimulation of a promotional ministry syndrome, in which the pastor who does well in the shortest possible time is "promoted" to a departmental or an administrative position, without having had the opportunity to fully develop as an effective local minister.

(2) Many local pastor colleagues, young and old, have also expressed in informal conversations their frustration because they do not have peers to whom they can trust their own personal or professional problems without the fear of being exposed. As a result they are in constant internal turmoil. Others noted with regret that the pressure of the work of the local SDA pastor in Brazil seems to leave almost no time for private devotional life, planning, and study. He rarely interacts with his fellow-workers (peers) or sees them for personal counsel, for professional help, or to exchange ideas. Consequently, he is in constant danger of stagnation in his expected spiritual and professional growth.

Furthermore, after spending eleven and a half years as a district pastor and two and a half years as a mission president in Brazil, I feel (3) that there exists a sort of invisible yet undefined barrier between the local pastor and those in administrative roles that despite all efforts is very difficult to break. Several personal interviews with other pastors have shown that this feeling is widespread. They have expressed concern that something be done to change this situation.

Last but not least, I have observed (4) that a number of

SDA pastors in Brazil leave their families and the ministry. This seems to indicate that some form of assistance needs to be made available.

Studies in group procedures, management by group process, pastoral psychology, Christian ethics, etc., undertaken at the Seminary have provided not only the strong conviction that some help needs to be provided for these ministers but also the idea that the small-group approach would be a most satisfactory solution. The ministerial support group explained in this project is not my original idea; however, it has been adapted to meet the needs of Brazilian pastors.

It must be admitted that the support group will not cure all ills, but it should contribute greatly to ministerial satisfaction. On the other hand, time is needed to acquaint both leadership and ministers with the benefits of such an activity. In order to prove the efficacy of this plan, it needs to be implemented in one or more places so that its positive results may be fully seen.

This study consists in two parts: a theological position paper and a professional paper. The first paper seeks to deal with theological implications of human ministry to others as presented in the Bible--particularly in the New Testament. This includes:

1. A study of the biblical view of man as a social being, from his creation and the dynamics in interpersonal and community relationships.
2. A study of how God has used persons to minister to others.
3. An analysis of several New Testament examples in which

ministers and other people appear to be ministering to other ministers.

The second paper consists of three chapters, the first is a study of ministerial problems--the tensions and frustrations expressed by ministers over their roles, what is expected of them and their own personal limitations, as well as the inadequacy of their preparation. Also included is a review of literature on the formation of ministerial support groups to help pastors solve their problems.

In the second chapter a suggested program for ministerial support groups for Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Brazil is presented. This includes the planning, initiating, and continuing phases of the suggested strategy. The final chapter contains a summary and the author's conclusions.

CHAPTER I

MAN AS A SOCIAL BEING: THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT

In the seventeenth century, poet John Donne wrote:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.¹

Modern authors also write about man as a part of society, as a social being, as inseparable from the other people whose lives he touches.

In this chapter the idea that man is a social being designed to live in companionship with other human beings is developed from the Bible. The first clear indication of this is apparent in the creation story. After giving man a "helper," God instituted families and a community in which man might live with others, receiving and giving help and fellowship.

Because of the limitations of the topic, the social aspect of man's being alone is dealt with. This does not minimize other aspects of his nature. However, the principal focus is on a biblical understanding of man as a social being who needs to live in communion with others.

¹ John Donne, Devotions, ed. Izaak Walton (London: William Pickering, 1840), p. 100.

Man Created as a Social Being

According to the Bible, man has his origin in God.¹ He is a human being created by God--not a product of evolution. He is called "the Son of God."² He came into existence by God's will and intention and not by mere accident. God said: "Let us make man in our image."³

When God finished His work, He rejoiced in His creation; He saw that "it was very good."⁴ Everything was in its place. Nature in all its varied form was of immaculate beauty and perfection. Then, man, the crowning work of the Creator, and "the one for whom the beautiful earth had been fitted up, was brought upon the stage of creation."⁵

In a sense, however, as long as man was alone creation was incomplete. Man, the male, was without his companion to fulfill his social needs. Man was perfect but he was not complete in "the original purpose of the Creator,"⁶ which was to provide a helper for him.

Having endowed him with a social nature the Lord said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him a helper fit for him."⁷ He was to be a social creature, capable of

¹Gen 2:7.

²Luke 3:28.

³Gen 1:26.

⁴Gen 1:31. Cf. Emerito P. Nacpil and Douglas J. Elwood, eds., The Human and Holy (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), p. 75.

⁵Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1945), p. 44.

⁶H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:129.

⁷Gen 2:18.

relationships. God made man different from animals and for a different purpose. Man "was created for fellowship with God"¹ and with angels--fellowship which he undoubtedly enjoyed. But beyond that, God had made man with a desire and longing for the sympathy and companionship of one like himself.

It is important to notice that in Gen 1, where the first and general narrative of creation is found, God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (vs. 26), and after the action is completed the record states: "So God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them" (vs. 27). The Hebrew word here used for man is 'adam', the etymology of which cannot be explained with certainty.² "Predominantly, this word occurs as a collective singular designating a class (as 'man' in English), and therefore can be translated by 'mankind' or as a plural 'men'."³ The term also refers to generic man as the image of God and the crown of creation. 'Adam is also used as a personal name.⁴ The word 'adam does not point out maleness, merely humanness. Male--as distinguished from female--is indicated by the Hebrew word 'ish."⁵

G. E. Wright points out that the use of the word 'adam in the creation story leads to the assertion "that man is social by his

¹E. G. White, Education (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1953), p. 124.

²Fritz Maas, "'adham," TDOT, 1:78. ³Ibid., 1:75.

⁴"Adam," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (1980), 1:10.

⁵Ibid.

very creation."¹ The Hebrew word 'adam used in the creation story is a peculiarly biblical word which appears to designate man in both his individual and collective aspects and can be used for both. In Gen 1 'adam is the general term, but male and female are its components. However, Wright finds that Gen 2 "uses the term in a slightly different manner; the 'adam is not sufficient in himself, woman is his counterpart, and the two together become 'one flesh' (i.e., one person)."² "The social nature of the human individual is thus vividly clear, because by creation he is meant to adjust himself to the 'thou' of the opposite sex. He is incomplete in his individuality; 'it is not good that the man should be alone' (Gen 2:18)."³

Apparently in the first three chapters of Genesis there is a wordplay on "man," "mankind," and the name of the first man, "Adam."⁴ The only two times 'ish appears in those chapters are in Gen 2:23, 24. So, when the Bible says that God created man in Gen 1:26, 27, it is saying that God created both male and female (Adam and Eve), not only a male man.

God saw it was not good that man (the male) should be alone. It was "not advantageous, not wise, not comfortable, not beneficial."⁵ Man as a creature was perfect, but as a being of relationships he

¹G. E. Wright, The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 49.

²Ibid., pp. 45-50.

³Ibid., p. 50.

⁴Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 10.

⁵Clifton J. Allen, ed., The Broadman Bible Commentary, 12 vols. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1969), 1:137.

required a counterpart to be fully complete. God who had created man as an act of love, knowing his intimate desires, feelings, and aspirations, would meet them even before men could express them. So, God provided a "help meet for him."¹

The Creation of a Helper

The Hebrew phrase 'ezer kenegedo', translated as "helper corresponding to him," suggests that the forthcoming helper was to be of similar nature to the man himself, corresponding by way of supplement to the incompleteness of his lonely being, and in every way adapted to be his co-partner and companion. All that Adam's (man's) nature demanded for its completion--physically, intellectually, and socially--was to be included in this person who was to stand by his side.

In this phrase 'ezer kenegedo', two aspects of God's proposed relation between the two kinds of humans can be seen. First, the woman was to be a "helper," one who assists, aids, changes for the better, furnishes relief; in essence, one who renders service.² In the creation story, man is helped by the woman. In the New Testament, it becomes clear that service and help are part of Christian duty. "Bear one another's burdens" is the admonition of the apostle Paul.³

Secondly, woman was to be a helper "meet for him" (KJV) or "appropriate for him." The Hebrew says kenegedo, "as opposite him"

¹ Gen 2:18 (KJV); the NIV reads "a helper suitable for him."

² Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1954), s.v. "help."

³ Gal 6:2.

or "as if against him."¹ The particle ke in Hebrew indicates similitude. Neged means "opposite" or "against." This suggests that woman was to be a kind of counterpart responding to man.² Here the Hebrew word neged signifies properly the front part, what is before, in the face of, over against, towards (i.e., Gen 31, 32; Exod 19:2; 34:14), etc.³

This means a helper who in various ways may assist him or oppose him, and who may at the same time prove a companion able to interchange thoughts with him and in other respects be his equal.⁴ Thus, this helper complements man's moral and intellectual nature, supplies what he needs, and is the counterpart of his being. She is specifically suitable for him. In this sense, she not only assists him but is adequate for him, intellectually his equal, and capable of satisfying his needs and instincts.⁵

Thus, man is to find help from one who is in harmony with his own nature and therefore able to adequately sympathize with him in thought and interests. It is therefore not identity but harmony of character which is suggested.⁶ It is obvious that woman was not

¹ Christopher Wordsworth, The Holy Bible, 8 vols. (London: Rivington's, 1869), 1:17.

² John Calvin, Commentaries, 45 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:130.

³ Wordsworth, 1:17.

⁴ S. R. Driver, The Book of Genesis, 2 vols., Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen Co., 1943), 1:41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:41.

⁶ H. E. Ryle, The Book of Genesis (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), p. 36.

formed simply for the sake of the propagation of the human race. This new creature was to share all man's cares, sorrows, and joys.

The woman was created from a rib of man, from his side, and this has been seen as suggesting that both are to stand equal, side by side, before God. Man was not supposed to dominate woman, and woman was not made to be enslaved or trampled upon by man.¹ "If a man is to achieve his objectives in life, he needs the help of his mate in every way, from the propagating of his kind down through the scale of his varied activities."² The converse is also true-- woman needs man.

Keil and Delitzsch, commenting upon woman's creation from man's rib, state that "she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, and the mode of her creation was to lay the actual foundation for the moral ordinance of marriage."³

Man as Part of a Family

With the initiation of the institution of matrimony, man and woman began to live in a family. Responding to man's nature as a social being, the Creator provided for him the opportunity to develop his social nature in marriage relationship.

Within the family man and woman are linked together in a special way. It was God's design that families, through the marriage relationship, should be the means of ennobling both partners

¹White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 46; cf. Leupold, 1:135.

²Leupold, 1:131.

³C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, 27 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 3:89.

and of facilitating the development of mature, unselfish characters on the part of both parents and children.¹ Within the family, in the daily relationship between man and woman, characters are built and affections molded. The interactions that occur within a family between parents and children prepare them to face life outside the home.² With the establishment of families we see the emergence of societal relationships.

Man in Community

There is no real existence of man apart from the people with which he lives and moves and has his being.³ The basic unit was the family "which merged into the clan without clear lines of demarcation, as the clan merged into the tribe and tribe into people."⁴

Wright points out:

The fact is that the Bible presents no conception of individual man as existing in and for himself, nor does it know an abstract universalism in which the individual's relation to God rather than the problem of society is the focus of attention. On the contrary, the individual was created for society . . . for he is man only in the midst and as a member of a group.⁵

Anderson suggests:

In the Biblical view, man is truly a person only when he stands in a community--in relationship to God and to his fellow-man. When he is isolated from the community, like Cain in his banishment, he suffers the greatest loneliness and misery.⁶

Community is defined as a "psychic harmony of individual

¹E. G. White, Adventist Home (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 99.

²White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 579.

³Wright, p. 47.

⁴Ibid., p. 49.

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 370.

souls, held together by mutual vows in covenant with its Lord and sharing the common blessing which he confers."¹ This harmony of will is not only a simple agreement of a horizontal type but a conforming of all wills to that of the Lord (vertical) in a mutuality of commitment which results in a oneness of heart and life in what Wright calls "a psychic unit. . . ."²

When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, he referred to Jacob's descendants as "my people" and to himself as "the God of your fathers," "the God of Abraham," "the God of Isaac," "the God of Jacob."³ Although Israel came into being as a people when they left Egypt, the Israelites formally became God's people by the covenant at Sinai. God's first concern was with them as a group.⁴ Throughout Israel's history the people as such came first; they acted together.⁵ "The Jew would never be able to conceive of the individual simply as individual. He was the first one of God's people, an Israelite."⁶

H. Wheeler Robinson used the expression "corporate personality" to designate the Israelite sense of community, by which he saw his family, his clan, as well as his nation, as a single person, of which he was only a part. The whole is the person. Thus one member of a clan may be substituted for another; the clan is one large personification, and, conversely, it is totally present in

¹Wright, p. 48.

²Ibid.

³Exod 3:6, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16.

⁴Exod 19:3, 4, 6.

⁵1 Sam 12:1; 1 Chron 13:6; Jer 30:18; 31:1.

⁶Wulstan Mork, The Biblical Meaning of Man (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1967), p. 6.

each of its members.¹ Robinson addressed as proof of corporate personality such instances as a three-year famine which Israel had to suffer for Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites. The atonement which the remaining Gibeonites demanded of David is also proof of this primitive concept of family solidarity;² the practice of Levirate marriage, in which a man is regarded as identical with his dead brother, is another example.³

The tension between the individual and the group or community does appear. The keeping of the commandments entails details of a personal life. Mork says the response to the commandments is personal and springs from a personal love of God.⁴ But from the biblical point of view, "the group is more important than the individual . . . with the important distinction that the individual is still responsible for his own salvation."⁵

In conclusion it may be said that "Biblical man is both corporate and individual, or rather, he is a responsible individual who is a part of the group, whose responsibilities derive from his membership in the group."⁶

The interdependency of the human being is so wide and profound that Montagu expressed it this way: "Man's sense of mutuality and cooperativeness may be suppressed, but so long as man continues

¹H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926), pp. 8, 27-30.

²2 Sam 21:1-9.

³Deut 35:5.

⁴Mork, p. 7.

⁵Ibid., p. 5.

⁶Ibid., p. 13.

to exist, it cannot be destroyed, for these are traits which are part of his protoplasm."¹

From the beginning God in his love provided man with a companion suitable for him, and both were in equal standing before God because man is a social being and cannot exist alone. He needs interaction with his fellows. In addition, "human beings belong to one great family--the family of God. The Creator designed that they should respect and love one another, ever manifesting a pure unselfish interest in one another's welfare."² Furthermore, "the more unselfish his spirit, the happier he is, because he is fulfilling God's purpose for him," to spend his life "ministering to others."³

¹Ashley Montagu, On Being Human (New York: Henry Sherman, 1950), p. 101.

²E. G. White, "Self-Love or Self-Sacrifice," Review and Herald, June 25, 1908, p. 8.

³E. G. White, Counsels on Stewardship (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 25.

CHAPTER II

SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chapter one discussed the social nature of man as seen in the Bible, especially in the creation narrative. Biblically, man is clearly a being who needs fellowship and is under obligation to serve his fellows. This chapter studies the presence of service and fellowship in New Testament relationships, especially those between ministers of the Word. In addition, and for the sake of clarification, some terms relevant to this topic and used extensively in the New Testament are examined as to their usage within the primitive Christian community.

Greek Words Used to Describe Service and Fellowship in the New Testament

Although several words are used to describe service and fellowship in the NT, the two most common and important to this study are: diakonos and koinōnia.¹

¹Three other Greek words refer to "servant," or "helper" in the Bible. The first is hupēretēs which originally meant a "rower," hence a "servant," "helper," "attendant" ("Diakoneō," The New International Dictionary of New Testament [1975], 3:546). In the New Testament "it normally means the (armed) servant of someone in authority, an officer of a court of law, etc. (e.g., John 18:3, 12, 18, 22; Matt 5:25)" (Ibid., pp. 546-47). In the Jewish Synagogue, the one who had the custody of the sacred books was a hupēretēs (Luke 4:20) ("Minister," The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 3 vols. [1980], 2:1007). Paul used this word to claim a position of servanthood to Christ (Acts 26:16; 1 Cor 4:1) (Ibid.).

The second word is leitourgos (from laos, people, and ergon,

Diakonos

The noun diakonos and its verb diakoneō are most commonly used to convey the idea of "service" and "ministry."¹ Thayer, noting that the origin of this word is uncertain, gives it the following meaning: "one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master; a servant, attendant, minister."² Bauer renders it as "a servant of someone," "a helper."³ Colin Brown

work). It meant to do public work at one's own expense ("Leitourgeō," NIDNT, 3:551). It was a hellenistic term taken over by the New Testament in a Christian sense ("minister," IBD, 2:1007). Even though the noun and its cognate verb are used in the LXX about 140 times, mostly in relation to cultic legislation, in the New Testament they appear only about fifteen times (NIDNT, 3:551, 552). The hellenistic word has a political, almost legal, concept, but in the LXX it is used almost exclusively in relation with religious service. In both cases the service rendered is to the community (*Ibid.*, p. 551). But in the New Testament this word remains "sufficiently fluid" to be used of Epaphroditus as a minister to Paul's wants (Phil 2:25), of Gentile assistance to Jews in material things (Rom 15:27), and of the civil power as the servant of God (Rom 13:6) (*Ibid.*).

The third and last word is doulos, which means "slave," frequently translated "servant" in older English versions (e.g., KJV). However, doulos is to be carefully distinguished from diakonos (Arndt & Gingrich, "doulos," p. 204). Doulos and its cognates appear frequently in the Pauline writings in the New Testament. Out of the 124 instances of doulos, thirty are in Paul. Out of the twenty-five instances of douleuō (serve), seventeen are in Paul ("doulos," NIDNT, 2:595). This word was used to emphasize even more strongly the lowliness of Christian service ("minister," IBD, 2:1006), (i.e., Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Col 4:12; Titus 1:1; James 1:11; 2 Pet 1:1). "Where the emphasis rests on divine lordship, with the correlative concepts of ownership and sovereignty, man's service accordingly is viewed in terms of slavery (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13; 1 Thess 1:9)" ("Ministry," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 5 vols., 4:233). Paul more than once identifies himself as a slave of Christ (Rom 1:1, Phil 1:1) as do other apostolic authors (James 1:1; Jude 1). Paul even uses this word to declare the depths of the divine self-humiliation Christ assured to accomplish His ministry of redemption (Phil 2:7).

¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "Diakonos," A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (1957):183.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, "Diakonos," Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889):138.

³Arndt & Gingrich, "diakonos," p. 183.

adds to the list: "deacon." This word is found twenty-nine times in the New Testament.¹

The verb diakoneō means "serve," "support," "serve as a deacon," and the derivative noun diakonia, which is found thirty-four times in the New Testament, expresses the occupations implied by the verb and is used for "service," "office," "aid," "support," "distribution" (of alms, etc.), "office of a deacon."²

Diakonia then is the distinctive Christian word for "ministry" and diakonos for "minister."³ These nouns and the related verb have a wide range of application in the New Testament. The personal services to Jesus by devout women,⁴ and to Paul by Timothy and others, are described as forms of ministry.⁵ The true disciple of Jesus is also his diakonos,⁶ for Jesus is Master as well as Teacher.⁷ From the beginning, however, the body of Christ had special organs of ministry made possible by endowments of the Spirit,⁸ and all are united in the bond of love.⁹

There were differences of function, indeed, and particularly the distinction between those who were ministers of the Word

¹K. Hess, "diakoneō," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3 vols. (1971), 3:544-46.

²Ibid.

³Acts 1:17, 25; Rom 12:7; Col 1:7; 1 Thess 3:2.

⁴Luke 10:40; cf. 8:3; John 12:2; Matt 27:55.

⁵Acts 19:22; Phil 13.

⁶John 12:26.

⁷John 13:3; 15:15.

⁸Rom 12:6-11; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-30.

⁹1 Cor 12:31-4:1; Col 3:14.

(apostles, prophets, and teachers)¹ and those whose contribution lay in gracious acts of benevolence or in administration.² Whatever might be the varieties of service (and variety is important), the word diakonos covered them all because spiritual qualities outweighed formal status.³

For the ancient Greeks serving was not considered honorable. Ruling, but not serving, was proper to man in Plato's view.⁴ In the opinion of Demosthenes, service acquired a higher value only when rendered to the State, because this service consisted supremely in the education of good citizens.⁵ For the Greeks, service for others did not entail any true, self-emptying for the sake of others, and did not lead to sacrifice. The height of Greek achievement was rulership, not service.

Judaism appears to have demonstrated a little better comprehension of the meaning of service. To the oriental mentality, there was nothing unworthy in serving--especially if the service was on behalf of a great master.⁶ However, this was not always the case. Although Israel had the great heritage of the commandment of Lev 19:8, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," as time elapsed, the idea of service gradually came to be seen not as sacrifice for others but rather as a meritorious work before God. "Finally,

¹Acts 6:4; 1 Cor 12:28; 2 Cor 3:6; Eph 3:6f.; 4:11.

²Acts 6:1f.; 9:36; Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 12:9f., 28.

³1 Cor 12:5. Cf. R. A. Bodey, "Ministry," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia on the Bible, 5 vols. (1975), 4:233.

⁴Herman W. Beyer, "diakoneo," TDNT, 10 vols. (1976), 2:82.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

there arose in Judaism the idea, which is so obvious to the natural man, not to accord service, especially service at table, to the unworthy."¹

When Jesus came to the world, His view of service differed a great deal from the current concept of His contemporaries. His concept of service appears to restore the original intent of the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18). This commandment and the commandment to love God he saw as constituting the substance of God's will, for the ethical conduct of His followers.² In so doing, Christ seemed to have cleared away the distortions which the concept of service had undergone in Judaism.³ For Jesus, service included many different activities such as giving food and drink, extending shelter, providing clothes, and visiting the sick and prisoners. "The term thus comes to have the full sense of active Christian love for neighbour and as such it is a mark of true discipleship of Jesus."⁴

To the early church the fellowship of the common meal, which involved serving at table (Acts 6:1), remains basic for the understanding of diakonia in the New Testament. "The breaking of bread" in private homes, the agape feasts in which the rich cared also for the poor,⁵ and the house-churches exemplify the meaning of this word.⁶

¹ Ibid., p. 83.

² Ibid., p. 84; cf. Luke 10:25-28; Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5.

³ Luke 22:24-30; cf. John 13:13-17.

⁴ Beyer, "diakoneō," p. 85.

⁵ 1 Cor 11:17-34.

⁶ 1 Cor 16:15.

Diakonia also included the service extended from the local church to needy churches elsewhere.¹ The spiritual and physical diakonia of giving and receiving takes place in acknowledgment of the sacrifice of Christ.²

In Acts 6:1-6 only the words diakoneō and diakonia are used; diakonos as a title seems to be avoided by Luke.³ This suggests that the early church was not primarily interested in a special office, the diaconate, but was concerned first with service. Over time, however, this changed and the understanding of the term diakonos became more connected to the ecclesiastical position.⁴

Paul expanded the concept of diakonia even further. He saw the whole of salvation, God's diakonia in Christ for and among men, expressed in the diakonia of the apostles, that is service in Christ. The ministry (diakonia) of reconciliation had begun⁵ and this service had been extended to the apostle, who as Christ's ambassador proclaimed, "Be reconciled to God."⁶ "Hence the term diakonia can be used as a technical term for the work of proclaiming the gospel;"⁷ and even more, for Paul, the whole church becomes a body for service in the world.⁸

It is possible that in the New Testament the meaning of

¹Acts 11:29; 12:25; 2 Cor 8:3f.; 9:1-5.

²2 Cor 8:9; 9:12-15.

³Hess, 3:548, cf. TDNT, 1:90.

⁴Ibid.

⁵2 Cor 3:7, 9.

⁶2 Cor 5:18f.

⁷NIDNTT, 3:549.

⁸Eph 4:1-16.

diakoneō had been derived from the person of Jesus and His gospel, for "to serve" became a term denoting loving action for the brother and neighbor which in its turn is derived from divine love and also describes the outworking of koinōnia (fellowship) which is explained below.

Koinōnia

Koinōnia is an abstract Greek term that comes from koinōnos and koinōneō and denotes "participation," "fellowship."¹ It expresses a two-sided relation in which emphasis may be on either the giving or the receiving, and thus means: (1) "participation," (2) "impartation," (3) "fellowship."² Koinōnos means "fellow," "participant," and "it implies fellowship or sharing with someone or in something" and is thus constructed most often in the absolute.³ Koinōneō means: (1) "to share with someone in something which he has," "to take part," and more rarely, (2) "to have a share with someone (to be fellow) in something which he did not have," "to give a part," "to impart."⁴

The word koinōnia is absent from the gospels but it is a typical Pauline term, occurring thirteen times in his writings. The same is true of the verb koinōneō.⁵ In the book of Acts it can be clearly seen that the meaning of koinōnia comprehends more than meetings for social objectives. It was a special type of fellow-

¹"Koinōnos," TDNT, 3:798.

²Arndt & Gingrich, "koinōnia," p. 439.

³"Koinōnos," TDNT, 3:797.

⁴Ibid.

⁵"Fellowship," NIDNT, 1:641.

ship, a participation, communion, and sharing with one another in redemptive love under the Holy Spirit, the source of which was undoubtedly the love of God.¹

In the New Testament it is possible to see that true koinōnia is rooted in a depth of fellowship with God as Father.² The Fatherhood of God has significance for those who are in the family of God through the new birth. Christians must continue to walk in the light to enjoy this fellowship. They are also called to fellowship with the Son³ which may include the koinōnia of His sufferings⁴ and his glory.⁵ Finally, they are to experience fellowship with the Holy Spirit.⁶

Perhaps the most beautiful expression of koinōnia in the New Testament is found in the celebration of the Eucharist. Paul "makes highly significant use of koinōnia for the fellowship which arises in the Lord's Supper."⁷ For Paul koinōnia here is the experience of an inner union with Christ, and this was for him the important thing in the celebration.⁸

This service reinforces the community's life bound together into one body by Christ. It perpetuates the oneness of the community. This communion is the community's experience in affirming

¹ Ibid.

² 1 John 1:3, 6.

³ 1 Cor 1:9.

⁴ Phil 3:19.

⁵ Phil 3:10; Rom 8:17.

⁶ 2 Cor 13:14.

⁷ Friederick Hauck, "Koinōnia," TDNT, 3:805.

⁸ Ibid.

Christ as their unifying agent--their Lord.¹ The Lord's Supper reinforces man's relationship with Christ and with one another in a beautiful mutuality. Koinonia in the New Testament presupposes mutuality, reciprocity, and love as its essential characteristics. From the Christian point of view, they are implicit in the true koinōnia. Love being a principle,² and not only an emotion, one is constrained to share, to give, to serve. Those who are recipients of this divine love are likewise moved to partake of the blessing bestowed upon them without asking for rewards or expecting favors.

From the beginning the early church experienced mutuality of service and loving fellowship.³ The Cenacle, the place of Jesus' Last Supper with the disciples, became a place where a real fellowship developed among them and deepened with time. There not only the twelve disciples but also the brothers of Jesus and the women, as well as others who had the same ideals, and hopes, met regularly.⁴ Those days before Pentecost were days of personal heart-searching and prayer for the promise of the heavenly gift.⁵ Christ's followers were thus drawn together into unity and fellowship.

This new and developing community⁶ had the privilege of experiencing koinōnia through a mutuality of service and fellowship

¹Hyun Chul Shin, "Koinonia in the New Testament with an Investigation of the State of Koinonia in Seven Korean Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the United States" (Doctor of Ministry project report, Andrews University, April 1979).

²Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), p. 551.

³John 20:19; 26.

⁴White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 37.

⁵Acts 1:14, 15.

⁶Acts 2:41.

in a visible way after the receiving of the Holy Spirit. They had the glorious news of Jesus' salvation to share with others as well as the opportunity to share their earthly possessions.¹ Divine love was reflected in that community. Common meals were enjoyed with "gladness and singleness of heart."² It is proper to infer that as the believers sought to serve and share what they possessed, they were happy to be fulfilling Christ's will and enjoying the blessings of sharing.

In the New Testament, the reality of loving fellowship in the one body, the church, includes suffering together and rejoicing together,³ understanding the love of Christ together,⁴ showing compassion for the poor,⁵ having a sympathetic relationship of the strong to the weak,⁶ bearing each other's burdens,⁷ and sharing mutual dependency with concern for the interests of others.⁸

In the New Testament the Greek word allēlōn (one another) is mentioned fifty-eight times. Getz notes that Paul used the term allēlōn forty times in his writings.⁹ The word points to mutuality and mutuality of ministry in its multiple forms:

Love one another--Rom 13:8.

Greet one another--Rom 16:16.

Care for one another--1 Cor 12:25.

¹Acts 2:42-47.

²Acts 2:46,47.

³1 Cor 12:26.

⁴Eph 3:17.

⁵James 2:5.

⁶Rom 15:1; 1 Cor 8:7ff.

⁷Gal 6:2.

⁸Phil 2:4.

⁹Gene A. Getz, Building Up One Another (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1977), p. 4.

Be servants of one another--Gal 5:13.

Bear one another's burden--Gal 6:2.

Forbear one another--Col 3:13.

Forgive one another--Col 3:13.

Pray for one another--James 5:16.

Be hospitable to one another--1 Peter 4:9.

The community of faith of the New Testament included many different kinds of people. Paul wrote: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."¹ Koinōnia was not limited by nationality or race, by social status or by sex. Paul also wrote to the community that "nobody lives for himself,"² thus indicating that fellowship and service to all the brethren was part of the Christian's duty and the true way to greatness.³

Special Examples of Fellowship and Support

Within this NT framework of mutual service and fellowship, in which all members of the community were to participate--for their love for each other was to be the true sign of their discipleship,⁴ some special examples of fellowship and support deserve to be examined.

Jesus and the Disciples

Perhaps the prime example of mutual fellowship and support among ministers of the Word was the relation between Jesus and his

¹Gal 3:27.

³Matt 20:25-28.

²Rom 14:7.

⁴John 13:35.

disciples. One of the reasons given for the selection and ordination of the twelve was "that they might be with him."¹ Christ revealed the key to effectiveness in reaching people for eternity: "Heaven's best gift, coming to show the totality of God's love, began by forming a sound fellowship of twelve men."²

It was God's plan to show his love through the love of his Son who would teach his followers to have love for one another. His love would unite his followers, and the world would see that love in action. Jesus called his disciples and taught them so that they could be sent as his witnesses to declare to the world what they had seen and heard from him.³ They were to be workers together with God; they were to be his witnesses, "to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him."⁴

The Savior lived in intimacy with his disciples during his earthly ministry on earth. His main concern was to prepare them spiritually for the great task before them after his departure. Jesus' friendship and intimate association with the disciples day by day helped change them from rough illiterate fishermen to men of persuasion and power of the Word.⁵

Each disciple, with his individual characteristics, was the object of the Master's attention. Patiently he ministered to

¹Mark 3:14.

²Douglas Cooper, Living God's Love (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1975), p. 138.

³Luke 24:44-49; Acts 4:33.

⁴Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 291.

⁵Matt 4:18-22; Acts 4:13, 20.

each one according to his personal needs. Even though his love was ministered equally to all in the group, Peter, James, and John seem to have belonged to a more intimate circle of relationship with Jesus. Even in this intimate circle, John "came more into sympathy with Christ, and through him the Saviour's deepest spiritual teaching was communicated to his people."¹ At the other extreme was Judas who enjoyed the privileges of discipleship but finally turned traitor.

Jesus taught not only in spiritual matters but in the practical things of life in such a way that Master and disciples mutually supported each other. Human as he was, Jesus felt the need of their support; often he obtained it. For example, once the disciples went to procure food for the Master.² In another instance it was the Master who prepared them a meal.³ Jesus also invited them to rest apart for a while⁴ because they were so involved in many activities and had had little time for themselves. Certainly this was an occasion when they shared the events and experiences of his ministry on behalf of mankind in the quietness of a separated place.⁵ It was in a secluded and quiet place that the Master prepared his disciples for the mission ahead.⁶ In that close association with his disciples Jesus had the unique opportunity

¹White, Desire of Ages, p. 292.

²John 4:31-34.

³John 21:7-15.

⁴Mark 6:30-32.

⁵Mark 6:30.

⁶White, Desire of Ages, p. 291; cf. Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16.

to prepare them for the great future commission¹ and gave them the assurance that the Holy Spirit would accompany them and strengthen their hearts.²

This little group of twelve individuals in close fellowship experienced the love of God in such a way that years later John would recommend to the church that they do the same: "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another."³ Christ foresaw that this circle of loving fellowship which he had generated among the eleven through the years would become a great drawing, compelling demonstration to the world and to the universe that the love of God could actually become permanently embedded in human hearts. This became the moving force in human lives that drew people to him.⁴ Although he was the divine Son of God, Christ mingled with mankind in such a way as to develop a depth, quality, and warmth of human fellowship never before seen. He also ministered as no one had done, and his example will be remembered and emulated forever.

Paul and Barnabas

Barnabas first appears as a man separated from material things and willing to give everything he owned for the advance of the kingdom of God.⁵ Little is known about his early life. An old

¹ Matt 24:13; 28:18-20.

² John 20:21, 22; Acts 1:8; 4:20, 31.

³ 1 John 1:7.

⁴ Cooper, p. 140.

⁵ Acts 4:36, 37.

tradition mentions his name among the seventy sent by Jesus.¹ He was known as "Joseph" and then received the surname "Barnabas" from the disciples. From then on he was known as Barnabas,² which means "Son of Consolation" (KJV), "Son of Encouragement" (RSV).

Although his origin is unknown, his moral and spiritual qualities were plainly known and recognized both within and without the Christian community. He was known as "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," and a successful evangelist,³ traits that gave him influence and leadership⁴ in the early church.

His first concern with the apostle Paul was on the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem three years after Paul's conversion,⁵ when the church was still shaken by the persecutions and feared to recognize Paul's conversion as genuine. The story shows the love, kindness, initiative, and power of conviction demonstrated by Barnabas as he introduced the apostle to the church and urged them to accept Paul as a true brother in Christ.⁶

It is possible that Paul was attracted to his genuine Christian spirit of service, his risking his name and reputation for the cause he knew was right, his love and sincerity for the truth. Paul saw in him a genuine son of God in whom he could trust and on whom

¹"Barnabas," Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD) (1960), p. 115. Cf. Luke 10:1.

²Acts 4:36.

³Acts 11:24.

⁴Henry E. Jacobs, "Barnabas," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 4 vols. (1979), 1:432.

⁵"Barnabas," SDABD. Cf. Gal 1:18.

⁶Acts 9:26, 27.

he could count. From then on it seems that a solid friendship between them was born. This relation became a support in the ministry of the missionary journeys which they undertook.

Some time later, Barnabas, sent by the leaders of Jerusalem, looked for Paul and they formed an excellent missionary team. Barnabas was the man of experience and Paul the beginning minister. The results of their teamwork soon became apparent as many were added to the church.¹ There must have been excellent communication, friendship, and mutual support between the two for it says in the biblical records that in Antioch they stayed "for a whole year."² When the specter of hunger hovered over the Judean region, the church, seeing such a spirit of labor and fervor in the two, sent them to Jerusalem with contributions to alleviate the hunger of the Christians in the capital.³ When they came back to Antioch they were set apart by the church through ordination and were consecrated as missionaries⁴ who labored as they were led by the Holy Spirit.⁵ Although there were disagreements of opinion between Paul and Barnabas regarding John Mark's participation in the second missionary journey, each one continued doing his evangelism in different directions, and Paul later mentions Barnabas' name in his writings.⁶

¹ Acts 11:20-26.

² Acts 11:26.

³ Acts 11:27-30.

⁴ Acts 12:1-3.

⁵ The list of the "prophets and teachers" at Antioch (Acts 13:1) implies that Barnabas was the acknowledged leader. On several occasions Luke uses the order "Barnabas and Paul," 13:2-4, 7, which may denote his leadership. In verses 43, 40, 50, Luke plainly marked the recession of Barnabas to second place with only one exception in 14:12.

⁶ 2 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1, 9, 13; Col 4:10.

Paul and Barnabas are a good example of mutual ministerial support in the New Testament. Although there are no specific data about their interrelationship, what is recorded reveals that they shared journeys, preaching, visitations, and study of the Word as gospel ministers. Even after having divergent opinions, they supported each other for years. This helped their own spiritual growth as well as the growth of the church.

Paul and Timothy

Paul, a zealous Pharisee,¹ who had been transformed by a heavenly vision to become a "chosen instrument" of God,² was introduced to the Christian community by Barnabas³ with whom he traveled to many places. He was more than an earnest missionary. A man of vision, he prepared and participated in the preparation of several young men for the ministry,⁴ among them, Timothy. Timothy was half Jewish and half Greek.⁵ Apparently he and members of the family had been converted by Paul on his visit to the city of Lystra.⁶

On his second missionary trip, after he separated from Barnabas, Paul took Timothy with him as an apprentice missionary.⁷

¹Acts 22:12; 23:6; 26:5. ²Acts 9:15. ³Acts 9:26, 27.

⁴In Acts 12 John Mark is found traveling with Paul and in the next chapter (13:5) John is mentioned as a fellow minister. In Gal 2:1 Titus is mentioned as another who accompanied Paul in his ministry. Paul traveled with Silas also (Acts 15:40; 16:19; 17:10), participating actively in the ministry.

⁵Acts 16:1.

⁶Acts 14:8-18; cf. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:1, 5; "Timothy," SDABD, p. 1098.

⁷Acts 16:13.

Although Timothy was then young, he had already gained an excellent reputation among the Christians of his city and neighborhood.¹ Paul has seen that "Timothy was faithful, steadfast, and true."² These qualities now were shown to be real as they faced together the difficult labor. Paul identified Timothy as a "fellow-worker."³

During this initial missionary trip, Timothy had the opportunity of learning many lessons in his close association with the apostle. He witnessed conversions, expulsion of devils, opposition to the apostles, imprisonment, and liberation. It is undeniable that as a young minister and in fellowship with the zealous apostle to the Gentiles, his heart was strongly united to Paul's and they had mutual support in the service of the Master.⁴ The love between them grew to such a point that Paul said that Timothy was his "own son in the faith."⁵ As a disciple, Timothy was always ready to learn and "constantly sought Paul's advice and instruction."⁶ Such lessons were learned and practiced.

Several times Timothy worked apart from the great apostle, but later he was united with him again. Paul's letters to Timothy show his affection for his young friend. One can infer that both loved each other and helped each other mutually in the proclamation

¹ Acts 15:2; cf. White, Acts of the Apostles, 203:3.

² White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 203.

³ Rom 16:21.

⁴ White, Acts of the Apostles, pp. 211, 233.

⁵ 1 Tim 1:2. In Thess 3:2 Paul describes Timothy as a brother.

⁶ White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 205.

of the same ideal. Such was Paul's interest in Timothy that later he wrote two letters giving him loving instructions on how to conduct the church of God.

When in his second imprisonment, Paul wrote to Timothy urgently desiring his presence because he felt lonely and longed for the fellowship of his "dearly beloved son."¹ "Paul and Timothy were bound together by an affection unusually deep and strong,"² and "the fellowship between the two had grown stronger, deeper, and more sacred."³ "In his loneliness and solitude Paul longed to see him."⁴ It is not known if Timothy managed to get there in time to comfort his old friend, his father in the faith who was facing the impending martyrdom. The imprisonment and liberation of Timothy mentioned in Heb 12:13 is unknown and may or may not have been the time when he went to visit Paul.⁵ It is known, however, that these two servants of God loved each other deeply. The occasions that they are mentioned together confirm their interdependency, which resulted from the close fellowship they enjoyed. Theirs was a good example of mutual ministerial support.

The NT, then, shows the importance of diakonia (service) and koinōnia (fellowship) within the early community. All, regardless of nationality, social status, or sex, were to share in the blessings

¹2 Tim 1:2.

²White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 458.

³Ibid., p. 499.

⁴Ibid.

⁵B. Van Elderen, "Timothy," Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 1975, 5:753.

of mutual assistance and joyful partnership, both in spiritual and material matters.

The association of Christ with the twelve disciples is a more specific example of mutual ministerial support. Jesus wished to be surrounded by men who would support him. At the same time, he offered the rich gift of Heaven to those who were close to him during his earthly ministry.

Further examples of ministerial support are afforded by the relation between Paul and Barnabas, and later, Paul and Timothy. By sharing together the toil and the rewards of their ministry, each enhanced the gifts of the other, comforted and, in turn, was comforted, and increased the effectiveness of their individual efforts.

PART II

A SUGGESTED PROGRAM FOR MINISTERS' SUPPORT GROUPS
FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PASTORS IN BRAZIL

INTRODUCTION

Part One of this project presented theological and biblical perspectives on the concept of man as a social being. As such man is to live in community, giving and receiving fellowship and service. Both the Old and New Testaments contain many examples of close friendships, but it is in the New Testament that we see clearly the special interdependence of those who were entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel.

On the basis of this biblical precedent, Part Two explores both the need for and current attempts to form Ministerial Support Groups (MSG) for the express purpose of helping ministers cope more effectively with the problems in their churches and within their own personal lives. Chapter III, the review of literature, which is brief includes most of the pertinent material regarding MSG. Although the growing recognition of ministerial problems has demonstrated the need for MSGs, the difficulties of establishing and operating them and the recency of the idea limit their number. They are, so to speak, yet in the future.

Considering what has already been done to establish MSGs, and in the light of the situation of the Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist Church, chapter IV presents a strategy for the formation and continuation of mutual-support groups of pastors in Brazil. This strategy was chosen after reading extensively about the

MSG concept and how it is applied in North America and is adapted in light of the known situation which exists in Brazil. Some special considerations and practical suggestions are also given.

Chapter V contains the summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER III

THE MINISTER'S DILEMMA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Because man is a social being, as was shown in chapter I, he can never function properly in isolation. As was noted in chapter II, there was, in New Testament Times, close interaction between missionaries and apostles; they often worked together and there are notable examples of missionary pairs such as Paul and Barnabas or Paul and Timothy. In view of this established social nature of man and the New Testament precedent of ministerial fellowship, this chapter explores first the problems facing ministers today and then presents the possible solution to their need through the formation of mutual support groups.

The Ministerial Dilemma

This section reviews the frustrations, needs, and problems of ministers both from a personal perspective and from a study of literature on ministerial needs.

The Author's Experience

As a Seventh-day Adventist minister in Brazil, one often feels the tension between the ideal and the real. The church members expect the minister to be nearly perfect. The church administration expects the minister to run his church in an efficient manner, meeting all the church's goals--both financial and

evangelistic. At the same time, the minister is to be a gentle yet strong, compassionate yet bold--the leader of his congregation. His preaching should be such that everyone sits spellbound and goes away blessed for the week. However, the man who must do all this is only human.

Often the pastor feels very much alone with his many problems. He feels he cannot afford to show weakness to his congregation for whom he must be a tower of strength. There is no one with whom he can share the burden of being a human pastor. Some pastors admit they have problems and seek to face them. Others try to forget or bury them by spending long hours at work in their ministry. In either case, the feeling of aloneness in meeting pastoral problems is real and is often a contributing factor to discouragement.

Other Brazilian pastors who are personal friends have also expressed concern regarding the lack of mutual interaction among ministers. Yearly workers' meetings have the time well filled with meetings and committees so that there is not much opportunity for conversation and interchange among pastors. The rest of the year is filled with traveling, preaching, baptizing, organizing, supervising schools, building, and solving problems. Each pastor in his district has little or no occasion for meeting others with the same mission, task, and goals.

These same Brazilian pastors have expressed great interest in the development of some kind of system whereby pastors would meet periodically in small groups to have social interaction and to discuss their mutual problems, seek guidance, and exchange ideas

with their peers. They feel that such a plan would contribute to their professional growth and pastoral effectiveness. In any case, it would provide an outlet for pent-up emotions and allow for a growing understanding of shared problems.

A study of the literature indicates that the Brazilian pastors are not alone in sensing a need for some kind of mutual support among ministers. The next section deals with a review of literature on this matter.

Literature on Ministerial Problems

This section presents findings from several studies regarding ministerial aloneness, stress, and frustration. The first group of studies describes frustrations due to the role of the pastor, the second deals with problems related to insufficient or inadequate preparation.

Ministerial frustration due to the pastor's role

Mills and Koval surveyed 5,000 Protestant clergy and found that "nearly three out of four" pastors experience stress in their ministry in the form of anguish, frustration, confusion, worry, bewilderment, depression, sadness, sorrow, hurt, and fearfulness. All these are generalized feelings of distress.¹ In addition, 25 percent of the ministers surveyed reported "doubts about their

¹Edgar W. Mills and John Koval, Stress in the Ministry (Washington, D.C.: Ministries Study Board, 1971), quoted in Duane Meyer, "A Professional Support System for Clergy," (doctoral dissertation, Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, April 1975), p. 2.

competence, feelings of helplessness or personal inadequacy," and "another 4 percent described a sense of failure, defeat, shame or guilt."¹

In spite of these findings, Mills and Koval noted that the Protestant clergy "have a comparatively uncomplicated stress profile, emphasizing inadequate compensation, work frustration and, to a small degree, family unhappiness," in comparison with Roman Catholic clergy who "not only have sharper stress profiles but the severity of their problems is complex."²

In another study, undertaken by the United Methodist Church among younger clergy of the denomination, Mark Rouch concluded that "a mounting body of evidence indicates that many ministers experience what may be called 'crisis periods' in their careers. At these times they often undergo considerable stress."³ At the conclusion of his article, Rouch remarks that "the minister as a professional does need support" to "develop personal resources, and . . . to engage creatively in ministry."⁴

Yoshio Fukuyama studied a large group of ministers of the United Church of Christ. His main concern was the preparation of ministers for their roles in a changing society.⁵ He noted that the problem may be defined "in terms of the church's confusion about the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 2. 3.

³Mark A. Rouch, "Young Pastor Pilot Project: An Experiment in Continuing Education for Ministry," Journal of Pastoral Care 25 (March 1971):4.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

⁵Yoshio Fukuyama, The Ministry in Transition (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), p. 2.

nature of the ministry, the identity crisis of clergymen, or the failure of seminaries to train pastors for the parish." Fukuyama even suggested that today ministers are uncertain about their calling.¹

Another problem that adds to the crisis of the ministry is the minister's vocational anxiety about his work because of the conflicting expectations of ministers and churches. Fukuyama found that "the minister and student are primarily oriented toward cognitive and action programs, while the laity consider organizational activities to be the most important."²

Thus the minister may not be prepared to fully meet the needs and expectations of the parish. The ministers reported spending more time in activities for which they were not prepared than in those for which they felt well trained. Ministers are prepared to be preachers, teachers, and counselors, but in reality they spend most of their time in administration and have little time for sermon preparation, meditation, study, etc.³

While our data suggest a serious crisis in vocational commitment, we believe it is rooted primarily in the location and style of the minister's work rather than in his personal commitment to his profession. He is anxious about his vocation because he is uncertain about the institution in which he does his work. . . .⁴

A study made by Gerald Jud, Edgar Mills, and Genevieve Burch deals with pastors who have left the ministry of the United Church of Christ. This study indicates a situation similar to that noted by Fukuyama.

¹ Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

³ Ibid., pp. 12-17.

² Ibid., p. 11.

⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

The evidence of this study suggests that ministers enter secular employment not because they do not want to be ministers but rather because of a growing inconsistency between the imperatives of faith, family, church, and society. As changes occur at these various levels, steady pressures of many kinds create intense strains which the minister is unable to reduce and which create in him a growing frustration. The decision to move out of church employment most often results from a losing struggle to maintain integrity of performance in a fragmenting job. . . .¹

These authors note some of the reasons for ministers' leaving their churches.

The thesis that runs throughout this book is that the combined impact of changes in church, society, family, and faith system has produced in many ministers a delicate balance of hope and frustration which makes them vulnerable to tipping point experiences, and that out of this situation many have moved to a redefinition of self or of ministry which leads to career-change decisions. It is our further conviction that this situation is widespread in the ministry today and that ex-pastors are in many cases not the castoffs of a stable system, but the bellwethers of massive changes yet to come.²

At the conclusion of this study about former pastors, the authors affirm:

The problems pointed to here are massive. We are aware that the study has simply documented that of which many leaders were already aware. But awareness is not enough. What are we doing about the problems? Of course, all denominations are doing something. But the work is going on piecemeal. . . . A lot of goodwill, keen minds, and millions of dollars will be needed to face the problems to which this study of the ex-pastors has pointed.³

Writing from a practical viewpoint, based upon more than thirty years of ministry as pastor and superintendent of a metropolitan district of a large Protestant denomination, Ray Ragsdale analyzes the mid-life crisis of the minister. He notes that this

¹Gerald J. Jud, Edgar W. Mills, and Genevieve Walters Burch, Ex-Pastors: Why Men Leave the Parish Ministry (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), pp. 90-91.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 131.

crisis has four dimensions: physical, career, marital-family, and meaning. All of these aspects of life are intertwined and each affects the other.¹ Ragsdale points out that the minister is a loner because the pastor is supposed to give counsel and be a helper; but when he himself needs to seek help for his problems, where can he go? "Not to an ecclesiastical superior!" affirms Ragsdale.² He suggests that those who dare to discuss their problems with the administrator probably feel "It is possible to share where I am with my ecclesiastical superior, but I do it with my eyes wide open to the risks."³

Ragsdale further notes that: "Most ministers want peer approval, but they are full of peer fear."⁴ He also says that they need to lose the fear of their colleagues through a more constant and closer involvement. They need to see themselves as they really are and to have a more accurate idea of how they are seen by their colleagues. Ragsdale says that "Clergy persons without at least one good friend in ministry with whom they can be utterly honest about their deepest feelings walk a lonely road."⁵

In discussing the physical aspect of the mid-life crisis, Ragsdale notes that ministers may be going through the "metapause," a time when they are asking questions about themselves. At the time of the "metapause" a man may suffer from various physical symptoms, often related to the fear of losing sexuality, hormonal imbalance,

¹Ray W. Ragsdale, The Mid-Life Crises of a Minister (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978), p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 22.

³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴Ibid., p. 24.

⁵Ibid.

weight problems, the fear of aging, etc. At this point, men may become vulnerable to extra-marital affairs. In no way is a minister to be considered entirely different from other men and thus be immune to these problems.¹

Divorce and separation are increasing among clergymen. Ragsdale notes some reasons. For instance, while the minister continues "progressing" in his career and profession, his wife often becomes stagnant, as it were. From this situation frustration, an inferiority complex--on the part of the wife--a loss of intimacy, and unhappiness may arise.² Vital communications for the couple are damaged and the couple become two strangers in their own home "and the isolation eventually leads to alienation."³ On the other hand, the workaholic-type minister leaves scars on his whole family he neglects. He, then, is perplexed because he does not know how to handle his children and his shame at the same time.⁴

Ministerial frustration due to inadequate preparation

In the mid 1950s, Samuel W. Blizzard studied the function of urban clergy.⁵ He found that the change in culture has resulted in a change in what people expect of the minister. In the past the minister "has performed his functions as a general practitioner," but "now, increasingly, he is expected to be a specialist."⁶ The

¹ Ibid., pp. 31, 39.

² Ibid., p. 56.

³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 63, 64.

⁵ Samuel F. Blizzard, "The Ministry's Dilemma," Christian Century, April 25, 1956, pp. 508-10.

⁶ Ibid., p. 508.

congregation wants a professional organizer, an efficient manager, and not a mere amateur in the church business.¹

Blizzard found that the ministers in the United States . . . face a basic dilemma. The theology they hold and the seminary instruction they received place the roles they perform in the parish in one priority order. But they actually spend most of their time doing those things they feel are least important. Denominational goals and programs and local parish needs determine the use of their time. But these activities bring the least satisfaction. Hence the various offices of the ministry are normatively in one order of priority, and functionally in another order of priority. Therefore there is much ambivalence about those offices.²

Blizzard's study revealed that most of the time of the minister is spent in things that he enjoys least, and the things that he enjoys most use the least time. Thus Blizzard concludes:

The roles a minister performs in present-day American society are basically equivocal. On the one hand, the church has a traditional set of norms by which he is expected to be guided. On the other hand, the parishioner has a set of functional expectations by which the minister's professional service is judged. This is the minister's dilemma. He faces basic ambiguities in performing the practitioner role.³

Further discussing the problems of urban ministers, Blizzard writes:

The ministry is a free profession with a diffuse role definition in a voluntary institution. Diversity of role performance and lack of clarity in role expectations is to be expected. In the case of the urban minister the situation is magnified by the number of people each minister serves and the long hours he works. It is also exaggerated by the heterogeneous features of urban life and the mobility of the population. Hence urban ministers must minister to people on the basis of relatively short acquaintances and secondary groups, rather than face-to-face relations. The resulting wear and tear on the professional leader is apparent. This seems to indicate a need for a more probing understanding of the stresses, tensions, and conflicts in the ministry than clergy

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 509.

and laymen in the church have yet displayed. The future of the church may stand or fall on the mental health of the clergy.¹

Whether institutional, personal, or occupational, the role of the minister has been the source of ambiguity and misunderstanding. One of the problems is the pastor himself. Glasse calls for a more realistic approach to the ministry:

Pastors enter the ministry in response to global goals: building the kingdom, saving souls, helping people, responding to "the call," etc. But in the practice of ministry they find themselves confronted by very specific and concrete situations. The relationship between the global goals and the nitty-gritty of daily procedure is not always clear.²

Two studies have noted the problem of frustration caused by inadequate preparation of Seventh-day Adventist ministers. Don Jacobsen surveyed SDA Theological Seminary graduates and found that although they felt they had a good preparation in the theoretical aspects of ministry, especially as related to Bible doctrines and SDA theology, they felt much less comfortable in the practical aspects of ministry.³ Comments written by ministers he surveyed suggest that ministers would feel more comfortable in their ministry had their theological training been oriented more toward applied theology.⁴

A study of 800 SDA Theological Seminary graduates conducted

¹Ibid., p. 15.

²James D. Glasse, Putting It Together in the Parish (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 70.

³Don Jacobsen, "Preparation for Ministry: A Study of the 1969-1973 Graduates of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan," (D.Min. dissertation to Howard University, Washington, D.C., August 1974), pp. 47-54.

⁴Ibid., pp. 61-76.

by Edward Dower found similar results to those noted by Jacobsen. Ministers surveyed expressed not only their satisfaction with theoretical knowledge obtained but also their frustration over insufficient practical preparation for the ministry.

Two points Dower specifically noted were: (1) "There is a substantial imbalance in the area of preparation between the practical pastoral skills and doctrinal-biblical knowledge items";¹ and (2) "the greatest discrepancies between the perceived need or use in the practice of ministry and the perceived preparation for ministry exist among practical pastoral-skill items."²

A Possible Solution

The first part of this chapter describes the findings of several studies regarding ministerial frustration, aloneness and feelings of inadequacy. The problem is real. This second part of the chapter looks at the use of mutual-support groups as a means for diminishing the level of frustration, thus augmenting the level of pastoral efficiency.

Selected References to Ministerial Support Groups

The literature on MSG is scattered. Attempts at organizing these groups are reported in journals, in dissertations, and on cassettes. Frequently, their existence is simply mentioned and

¹Edward L. Dower, "A Needs Assessment of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary's Master of Divinity Program as Perceived by the Graduates, Faculty, Students, and Employers of Graduates," (Ed.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1980), p. 139.

²Ibid., p. 140.

one is left to wonder who initiated them, how it was done, and what the purposes and benefits of the program are. The names by which organized groups of ministers have been known are various. Some are called "Peer Group for Professional Colleagues," others as "Pastor's Buddy," "Parish Clergy Group," "Colleagues Group," "Clergy Groups," or even "Redemptive Group." Wolf prefers the designation "Clergy Support Group,"¹ emphasizing the word support due to the meaning that it carries. Each group has its particular preferences which are expressed in the name. Some do not worry about naming the group, although they enjoy excellent camaraderie and Christian companionship. Some of the programs noted are fully described; others are mentioned only.²

¹C. Umhau Wolf, "Clergy Support Groups," Thesis Theological Cassettes 6, No. 4, P.O. Box 11724, Pittsburgh, PA, May 1975.

²Some mentions of MSG activities are as follows: (1) Cecil Osborn of the Yokefellows, Inc., in Burlingame, California has been conducting groups for ministers for several years. This organization also offers printed material for those willing to begin one. (Yokefellows, Inc., 19 Park Road, Burlingame, CA 94104.) (2) Umhau Wolf, a pastor in Ohio, has been conducting and participating in support groups for clergy for several years. (C. Umhau Wolf, "Clergy Support Groups," Thesis Theological Cassettes 6, No. 4, May 1975.) (3) John Claypool in his book The Preaching Event (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1980), pp. 73-77, mentions his participation in sharing groups with interdenominational ministers in Louisville, Kentucky. (4) Lancaster [PA] Theological Seminary (United Church of Christ) teaches peer-group experiences, both theoretically and practically, to seminarians. (5) The Alban Institute (Mount St. Alban, Washington, D.C., 20016), a nondenominational institution will publish a report in the summer of 1981 regarding experiments being conducted on clergy support groups. (6) L. S. Gifford, Secretary, Kansas SDA Conference, to Benjamin C. Schoun, D.Min. student at Andrews University and SDA pastor, May 1, 1981, reveals that several pastor-support groups have been established through the pastor's own initiative. The conference administration is aware of and pleased with these groups and is encouraging their formation. (7) Bennett J. Sims in an article "Continuing Education as a Peer Support Experience in the Dynamics of Change," Pastoral Psychology 22 (March 1971):39-43, 66, describes a pilot plan for

James Glasse, who pioneered the new resources for pastors, saw them develop across the country. The Northeast Career Center in Princeton, New Jersey, was the pioneer effort. Under the direction of the Reverend Thomas E. Brown, this center has charted the course for a whole new movement.¹

E. G. Bratcher, who spent two years researching the problems of the minister, concluded his study with the recommendation of a significant program of continuing education, plus special programs designed for young pastors.² He recommended a center for the ministry which would operate year around. A minister could go for one day, two weeks, or three months and receive the personal and vocational help needed regardless of the amount of his formal theological training or his status as full or part-time employment.³

There is wide agreement today on the value of collegial groups as an excellent way toward encouraging professional self-development. Wayne Dates sees it as a positive way to strengthen

clergymen that started in 1967. Its main objective was to explore change in the minister's life through continuing education in a support group. Sims is the Continuing Education Program Director at Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, VA. (8) Gary Halbrook, a pastor in Urbana, Illinois, in "Benefits of a Support Group," Church Administration 22 (October 1979):17-19, describes the benefits that can be attained in a minister-support group to which he belongs.

¹A Career Development Council has been organized to coordinate the work of these centers. For information about these centers and their services, pastors may write to Lancaster Career Development Center, P.O. Box 1529, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 17604. See also Glasse, Putting It Together in the Parish, p. 42.

²E. B. Bratcher, "Carry One Another's Burdens and Your Own," Fulfillment in Ministry, p. 24.

³Idem., "Centers for the Ministry," Fulfillment in Ministry, p. 170.

the marriage relationship or to build a continuing life-support group for the pastor and his wife.¹ Another organization, the Academy of Parish Clergy, is seriously using models of collegiality in their efforts to help members in their quest for professional self-development and excellence.²

Other research points to the needs for a person-to-person relationship. The counselor to pastors and their spouses is invaluable to meet their particular career needs.³ Duane Meyer suggests a "do-it-yourself" program in which clergy can

(1) affirm this commitment to their profession and undergird their efforts to plan successfully to carry that commitment out with purposefulness, (2) experience a community of peers as colleagues through which feelings of isolation and loneliness can be reduced or destroyed, (3) offer opportunity to experience and understand leadership responsibility in the creation of Christian community, (4) develop a context in which sharing of expertise and skills in the practice of ministry can add to the educational level and skill development of fellow clergy without excessive financial cost, (5) provide an experiential workshop for developing administrative ability that can increase the satisfaction received from work often held in low esteem, and (6) be a testing ground for the realistic possibility for ecumenical relationships of significance among clergy who serve a variety of congregations within a community.⁴

In the appendix to his dissertation, Meyer gives a word-for-word transcription of the first three sessions of his program.⁵

¹Wayne W. Dates, "The Minister's Family in Church Relations," Search 5 (Summer 1975).

²Glasse, p. 43.

³Mark Rouch, "An Overview of How Other Denominations Are Providing a Total Support System for Ministers," Fulfillment in Ministry, p. 54.

⁴Duane Meyer, "A Study of Professional Support Systems for Clergy," (D.Min. dissertation, Eden Theological Seminary, Saint Louis, Missouri, April 1975), pp. 119, 120.

⁵Ibid., pp. 127-208.

This program was also produced on cassettes by Ministers Life Resources.¹

What Is an MSG?

Considering what has been said about the minister's need for association with other ministers, and in view of what the literature has to say about MSG, the task now is to describe what is meant by MSG as used in this paper.

Objectives of the MSG

The principal objectives of the MSG should be (1) to stimulate, strengthen, and undergird the pastor's practice of the ministry; (2) to help the pastor to see himself as he is, to appreciate himself, and to be himself; (3) to give an opportunity for personal growth and learning in a friendly and trusting atmosphere; (4) to provide an occasion for deepening friendship and camaraderie with colleagues; and (5) to provide a setting for continuing education and professional development.

An MSG works on the principle of sharing and building strengths. It supports the pastor to pursue the task of the ministry that God has laid upon him by developing effectively his professional skills within the community he serves. However, an MSG is not a panacea, a do-all, to cure all the ills of the SDA churches and leadership. However, it is a step toward good things and depends in a great measure on the level of understanding among

¹ Duane Meyer, "How to Set Up Your Own Local Support Group," Minneapolis: Ministers Life Resources, 3100 W. Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55416. Thesis Theological Cassette Series, 1974 (1 cassette).

individuals. It is expected to be a two-way road--the pastor is supported by his colleagues, and he supports them in exchange.

As already noted, such a group might have one of many different names. The name is certainly not the most important aspect of the group. However, the name Ministers' Support Group, or some variation thereof, seems to give the clearest indication of the function of the group--to provide mutual support (helping, upholding, maintaining, giving courage) for the ministers involved.

Membership of the MSG

Two important questions must be answered: Who should belong? How many people should be involved? An MSG is a professional group made up solely of pastors, that is, those who are leading out in the activities of a church (in Brazil, this would probably be churches and/or companies). The pastors involved in the MSG would share common problems and have common objectives. The MSG would give these professionals an opportunity to discuss and analyze their sometimes stressful and intricate church problems and look for solutions. Because the MSG is not a social group, wives and families would not be included. This would not exclude female ministers, per se. At present there are no SDA women ministers in Brazil. Whenever there are, these should be included.

The MSG would not be open to administrators, departmental directors, teachers, or other denominational workers because their interests and problems differ from those of the pastors. Also, the presence of administrators could be a problem because they

are used to administering and may even, perhaps, attempt to dictate. Likewise, pastors who are used to taking orders from their superiors might feel uncomfortable in a situation where all are functioning as colleagues and peers.

Experience with support groups suggests that there should be no more than ten participants in a group. In some Brazilian cities it would be possible to find that many pastors in close geographical proximity. In many other cases, however, there are far fewer pastors living and working in an area small enough to permit regular interaction. This happens when the pastor has more than one church and several companies under his care. This can happen in a city where ten or twelve organized churches have only three or four pastors.

Any city or area where three or more pastors live in relative proximity an MSG can be formed. A group with fewer than three pastors usually lacks the motivation to continue. On the other hand, an area with more than eight or ten pastors would do well to form two groups, because a large group takes a great deal of time to come to a consensus and to make decisions. With three as a minimum and ten as a maximum, an ideal support group would have five to seven members.

Pastors who live and work in rural areas a great distance from their colleagues--and there are many of these in Brazil--obviously miss the benefits of the regular interaction of an MSG. Appendix C gives some suggestions that could benefit rural pastors.

Summary

Based on personal experiences and on literature concerning ministerial problems, the frustrations and special, definite problems common to all ministers in today's churches have been discussed.

The most common source of frustration is the discrepancy between the real and the ideal--what the minister can do and what he would like to be able to do. The second serious problem is what the church administration and congregations expect from a pastor which he may be neither inclined nor prepared to do. The minister often finds himself spending the greatest part of his time doing what he likes least--usually administration.

According to several studies, the seminary preparation of ministers may be partly to blame for the unease experienced. Ministers feel they have prepared for one set of tasks, but in real life, must perform another. In any case, the studies reviewed note ministerial unrest and seem to agree that the life of a minister today is very stressful. The situation would appear to demand some kind of help for those ministers.

As a response to the needs of the ministers, various attempts have been made to form different types of support groups for ministers in which they would have an opportunity to interact and share their problems in a joint search for solutions. The literature on these groups was briefly reviewed and a list of references given.

The basic objectives for the formation of a Minister's Support Group (MSG) were given as: (1) the stimulation and

strengthening of the pastor's practice of ministry; (2) the opportunity for personal growth and learning in a friendly and trusting atmosphere; and (3) an occasion for friendship and camaraderie with ministerial colleagues. The MSG of concern in this paper would be made up of SDA ministers who have pastoral responsibilities in the same city or within close geographical proximity. It would not include administrators nor teachers, wives nor children. It would consist ideally of five to seven pastors, with a minimum of three and a maximum of ten members.

The strategy for the formation of such groups in Brazil is undertaken in chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF MINISTERIAL SUPPORT GROUPS IN BRAZIL

The main concern of this chapter is to describe the steps necessary to plan, initiate, and continue Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Support Groups in the Brazilian setting. However, in order for the reader to become acquainted with the situation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil, certain statistical information regarding the church and its ministerial force is provided as an introduction to the strategy.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil

The information taken from several SDA statistical sources and presented in this section has been designed to acquaint the reader with some important aspects of the Brazilian church life, especially as they relate to the ministers. Figure 1 shows a map of the South American Division and shows, in particular, the three Brazilian Unions.

Table 1 presents basic data regarding the number of church members, organized churches, and ordained and licensed ministers in the three Brazilian Unions. It also shows the total population and the size of the area of each of the unions.

Based on the data in table 1, the ratio of churches to

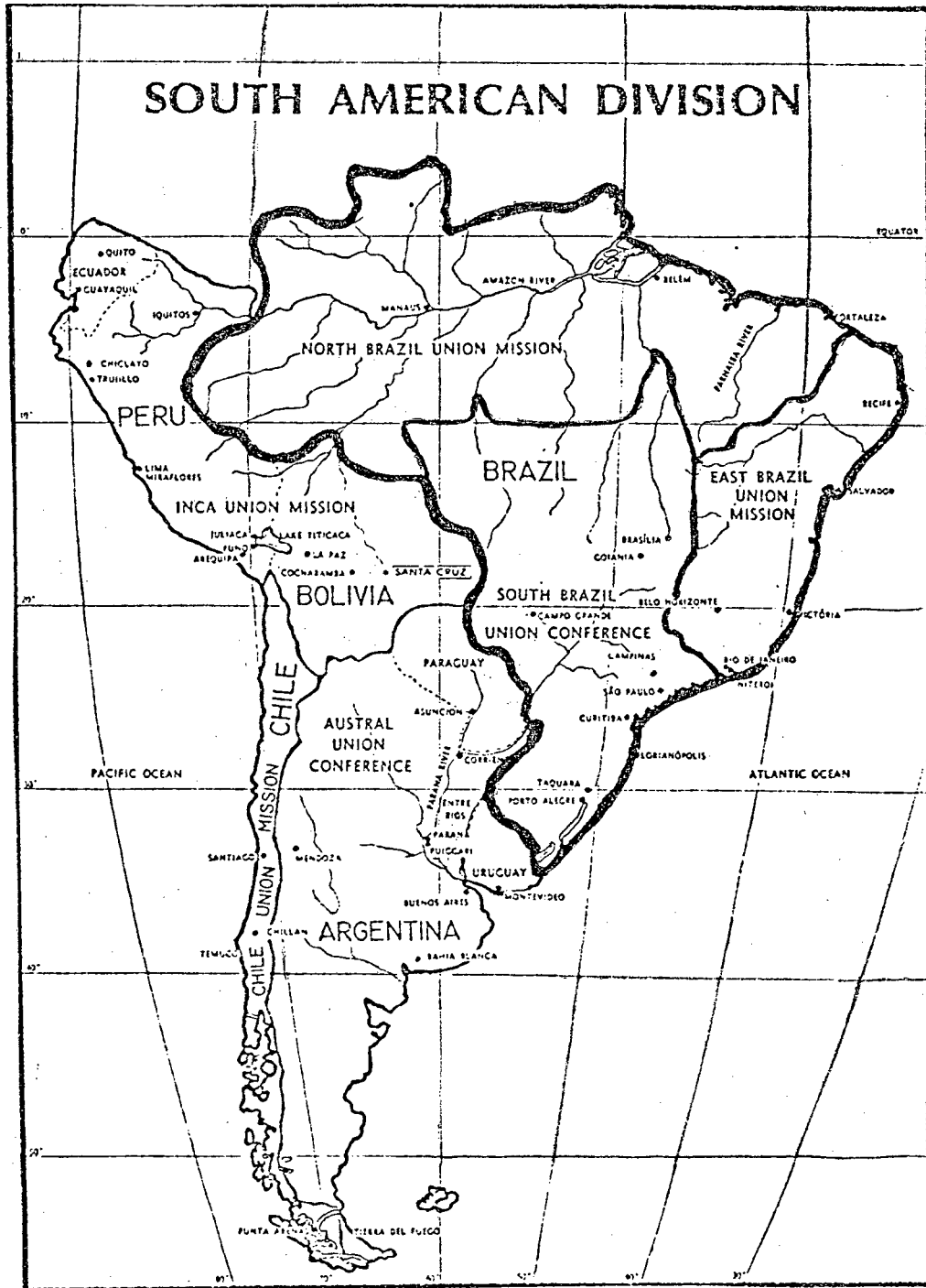


Fig. 1. South American Division

TABLE 1

THE THREE BRAZILIAN UNIONS OF SDA

Unions	Members	Churches	Ministers	Population	Area Km. ²
East	94,520	297	291	51,926,000	1,495,456
North	51,907	93	76	16,648,400	4,306,113
South	152,006	461	305	54,286,700	2,705,075
	298,433	851	672	122,861,100	8,506,644

SOURCE: 118th Annual Statistical Report, 1980 of G.C. of SDA; SDA Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981).

ministers in the East Brazil Union (EBU) would be 1.02 churches per pastor; in the North Brazil Union (NBU) would be 1.22 churches per pastor; and in the South Brazil Union (SBU) would be 1.51 churches per pastor. However, these figures are unrealistic; they do not include the companies nor do they discriminate between pastors and administrators or other ordained church workers. For the same reasons, the number of members per pastor and the number of members per church would also be unrealistic.

A brief discussion of the situation in each union, using additional data, follows.

East Brazil Union

The East Brazil Union consists of nine states with a population of nearly 52 million. Here the SDA church has nine conferences and two missions. The membership of 94,520 is distributed among 297 organized churches and 678 companies under the

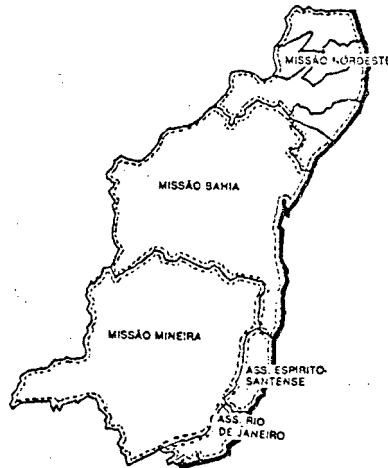


Fig. 2. East Brazil Union

leadership of 291 pastors.¹ As may be expected, the membership is larger in the cities, especially in and surrounding the state capitals. In this union the membership is concentrated along the coast, especially in Rio de Janeiro in the south, but also in Salvador and Recife in the north. The interior capital of Belo Horizonte also has a large number of members. The data give 549 inhabitants for each SDA member, obviously this rate is not uniform throughout the EBU. Cities are located along the coast, especially in the southern part of EBU. The northern and interior parts of the union have smaller population and fewer church members; in addition, transportation is more difficult and people tend to be poorer.

In this union, approximately 40 percent of the ordained ministers are in administration. This would mean that there are

¹Data as of June 30, 1980. Agenda (Sao Paulo: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1981), p. 87.

some 120 ministers doing pastoral work among 94,520 members, a ratio of 787 members per pastor. At the same time one should note that these 120 are pastoring a total of 975 churches and companies, an average of eight congregations per pastor.

The EBU also operates three hospitals, one senior college, four secondary schools, and numerous elementary schools.

North Brazil Union

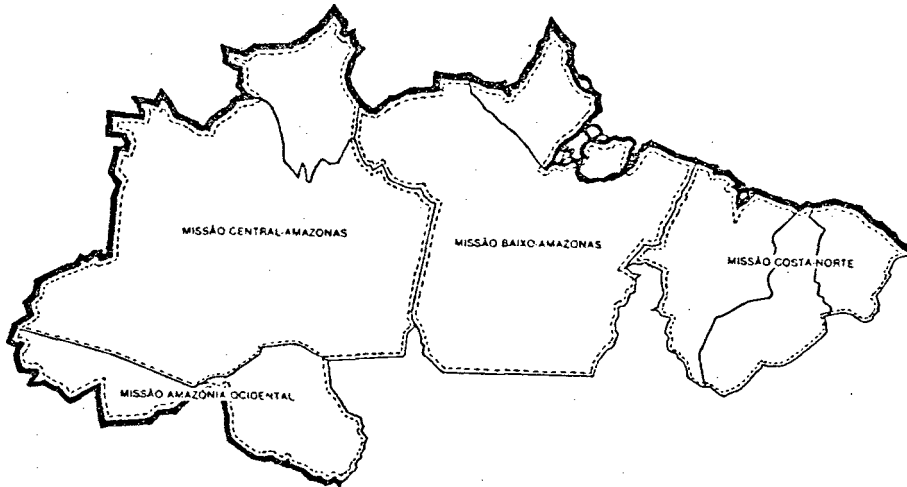


Fig. 3. North Brazil Union

The North Brazil Union includes six states and three territories with a total population of 16,648,400 in about 51 percent of the national territory. In this large, but not densely populated, territory the SDA Church has only four missions with a total membership of 51,907, or one SDA for every 320 inhabitants. There are ninety-three churches and 537 companies with 51,907 members under the leadership of seventy-six pastors.

The geographic area in this union is characterized by contrasts. Amazonia, the green region with thick jungles and

hundreds of rivers and a small, scattered population, occupies the northern part. The eastern part, the poorest in the nation, is plagued by droughts. Population is concentrated in major centers (capitals) such as Manaus, Belem, St. Luis, Teresina, and Fortaleza. Transportation is tremendously difficult, particularly in the Amazon region.

About 45 percent of the ministers of this union are in administrative positions. This leaves each pastor with 1,360 members under his care in an average of seventeen congregations.

The author personally ministered in two missions of this union for fourteen years (1966-1979). It should be emphasized that the three or four churches and the ten or more companies assigned to each pastor are widely scattered geographically. It is also noted that the average age of the NBU pastor is younger than that in the other unions.

The NBU has one hospital, several clinics (some mobile), three secondary schools (two of which are agricultural training schools), and a small number of elementary schools.

South Brazil Union

The South Brazil Union is comprised of the most populated and developed area of the country. Its territory consists of seven states and one federal district (the national capital), with a total population of 54,286,700. The SDA church has organized four conferences and four missions with a membership of 152,006-- or one SDA for every 357 inhabitants. There are 461 churches and 1,021 companies under the direction of 305 ministers, about 35

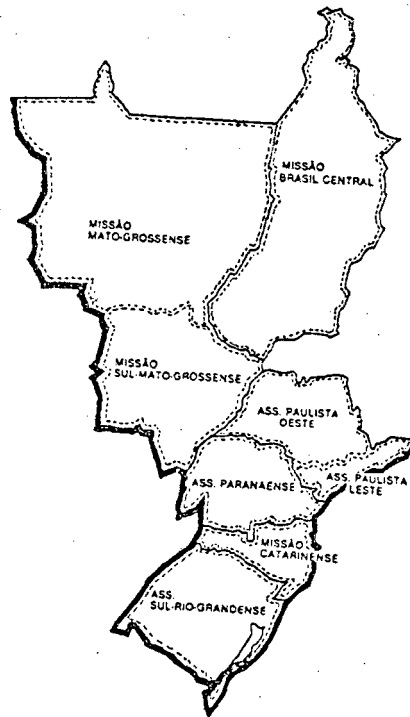


Fig. 4. South Brazil Union

percent of which are in administration. This means that each pastor has some 844 members under his care and is responsible for an average of some eight congregations.

The southern part of this area of the country is the most populated and industrialized area of Brazil. It is also the richest part with industry and agriculture bringing in the most money. The northern part of the union is less populated and poorer than the south. The membership of the SDA church is largely concentrated in the state of Sao Paulo and along the southern coast. The standard of living in this area is high and city churches have many well-to-do and professional members. Relations between the church and the state and federal government are

cordial. Seventh-day Adventists are well accepted and recognized by the population in general.

The Strategy

The strategy suggested here for the development of MSGs has been developed especially with the Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist pastors in mind. It has taken into account not only the American literature on the Ministerial Support Group but also the attitudes of Brazilian pastors which, on some matters, may differ from the American norm. It has also taken into consideration the fact that communications may not be as readily available as they are in the United States. However, it is felt that in most of the areas where there are concentrations of SDA pastors the plan could be implemented without major difficulties.

The local conference ministerial association secretary is usually the person who would take the initiative to form these groups. However, the prerogative should not be limited to one officially designated person. Ministerial Support Groups could appear spontaneously in any district and be organized by any pastor who has the necessary leadership skills to coordinate such a group.

The steps are here presented in a simple, practical way. This should make it relatively easy for anyone, even a pastor without specific training in group procedures, to initiate a support group. It is understood that in many cases the initiator may, for reasons of his own, vary some of the steps. This is acceptable and in many cases desirable. Although for the sake of simplicity, the procedures are written in prescriptive language,

it must be understood that this is merely a suggested plan which is open to changes whenever circumstances should so warrant. The strategy is divided into three stages: planning, initiation, and continuation.

Planning

Several matters should be taken into consideration when planning an MSG. Items of major interest might be those to be invited, the location for meetings, frequency and length of meetings, the time of the first meeting, the agenda for the first meeting, and the necessary arrangements with the administration.

Composition of the MSG

The initiator needs to consider the number and location of SDA pastors in the city or district. If there are too many for a group--more than ten, which would only happen in the largest of Brazilian cities--some type of limitation will need to be set. There must be no choosing of close friends or favoritism, for that could harm the MSG from the start. Therefore, if the group needs to be limited, it is best to do this by geographical location.

Those invited, then, would be a group of three to seven church pastors who live and work in close proximity and could easily meet at the designated time and place.

Frequency and length of meetings

The MSG needs to meet on a regular basis in order to achieve optimum results. A two-week interval between meetings is approximate. It is fairly easy to remember a regular every-other

week appointment. At least, the initiator can plan for this frequency and suggest it to the group who ultimately makes the final decision.

Meetings should be long enough to make them worthwhile, but not so long that the ministers become tired. Three hours is suggested as an appropriate length. After the group is functioning, the members themselves can decide on the preferred length of the meeting.

Location

The meeting should be held in a place easily accessible to the majority of the pastors who make up the group. It should be free of distractions and interruptions and away from noise, traffic, and telephone calls. It must be comfortable but not conducive to sleepiness. There should be fresh air, light, sanitary facilities, and drinking water. The chairs or seats should be arranged in a circle so that members face each other directly and eye-to-eye contact is possible. Although tables in the room may be useful, a central table is not desirable.

Some groups may prefer to meet in one of the rooms at a church. In some cases the sanctuary itself may be used. Some may feel that the church environment would enhance the atmosphere of the meeting; others may think it more convenient to meet at a house. This is acceptable too as long as the family activities do not interrupt or distract from the meeting. Perhaps a club room or even a classroom would serve the purpose and may be the most convenient for the group. The pastor who issues the invitation

for the first meeting seeks the best possible locale. Hopefully, the same place may be used for subsequent meetings.

Some may think it best to meet some place in the country. While this is possible, initiators should beware that such a setting might transform the meetings into social gatherings. A social aspect might cause the group to die out because very busy pastors might feel guilty for engaging in recreation or socializing--especially without the family.

The time

The time for beginning and ending the first meeting must be clearly stated in the invitation and be adhered to. The group itself decides the best time for the following meetings. They must also determine the length of succeeding meetings. These should be group decisions, not leader decisions.

Some groups choose to meet in the afternoon or evening; others prefer the morning hours. The advantages of morning hours is that everybody is physically rested and minds are fresher for the meeting. Besides, the Brazilian pastor traditionally dedicates morning hours to personal devotion, study, and meditation. Since this meeting would contribute to his personal growth, the use of study time would be appropriate and he would yet have the afternoon and evening hours open for visitation and outreach activities.

The agenda of the first meeting

The complete meeting should be carefully planned beforehand. The contents of this first meeting are described in detail below.

Arrangements with the administration

Although the MSG is not a formal activity of the conference, and official permission is not essential, it would be good for the initiator of such a group to explain the whole project to the conference president or secretary. In this way the MSG could receive the support of the administration. It is mostly a matter of courtesy to present the idea to those in authority. Also, suspicions regarding activities of pastors would be avoided by presenting the plan beforehand.

Initiation of the Program

The first invitation

Once the planning stage has been accomplished and the initiator has determined the pastors to be invited and the time and place of the first meeting, the actual invitation takes place. There are several means of extending this invitation.

Personal invitation

Since the initiator knows his ministerial colleagues and lives where he can see them personally, he may be able to present the plan face-to-face and invite them personally. When the initiator approaches his colleague with the invitation, he must give clear, basic information: purpose of the meeting, time and length of the meeting, and place of the meeting. This is not the time to go into many details, but basic questions should be answered. The personal invitation should take place three to four weeks before the date set. A reminder note should be sent a week before the date of the first meeting.

Telephone invitation

Whenever the pastors, both the host and those to be invited, have telephones (although many Brazilian homes have telephones, some do not), the invitation may be given by phone. However, it must be remembered that it is easier to reject a telephone invitation than a personal one. A written reminder should be sent a week before the first meeting.

Written invitation

A written invitation giving the main idea of the meeting, the location, day, and hour of the meeting, and its duration can be made in a brief letter to the colleagues. A written invitation has the advantage of being easier to remember. It can be used when there is no telephone or when the pastors are not easily accessible.

Some may wish to use a small card printed with a picture or logo and including the information regarding the meeting. There is no fixed and rigid rule about this. The degree of friendship shared determines the formality of the message. The more natural it is, the better. Nothing should be done to give the idea that the meetings are obligatory, rigid, or formal. No pastor should feel forced to attend. Again, it is advisable to send a written reminder one week before the first meeting.

Other forms of invitations

Invitations could also be given when ministers are gathered for workers' meetings or when a visiting administrator summons them for an exchange of information and plans. In the Brazilian setting, a birthday party of a relative, when all local pastors are

invited, might be a convenient opportunity for the initial invitation. Creativity is most successful. Those who have uncommon ideas should not be afraid to use them. Avoid any ideas that might intimidate any person and cause him to withdraw.

First meeting

The first meeting is of great importance. To great measure the success of the existence and continuity of a MSG may depend on it. This section describes in detail the format and activities that might be used for first meeting.

As the ministers arrive, they should be warmly welcomed. In Brazil, custom would dictate vigorous handshaking and back-slapping. The warmth of the greetings helps to set the tone for a friendly atmosphere in which open communication may take place.

When all have arrived and have taken their places in the circle, the coordinator begins with prayer. He may also ask one of the pastors to pray. Afterwards he explains the basic purpose of the meeting: the organization of an MSG. He should explain the objectives of the MSG: fellowship with ministerial colleagues; an opportunity for discussing problems in their churches, communities, or families; a chance to help each other by sharing concerns and solutions.

The coordinator then explains that in order to make the MSG functional, the group needs to agree on time, place, frequency, location, and duration of the meetings. They also need to decide whether or not any other colleagues should be invited. Finally, an agenda for the meetings should be developed.

The attitude of the coordinator should be relaxed yet enthusiastic. He should allow for questions and answer them honestly and to the best of his ability. There should not be anything hidden or unclear about the meeting. In order to help the ministers enjoy the group activity and learn from them, some group exercises are valuable.

Activities

Several group activities are listed and described here. Additional activities may be found in appendix B.

Group carousel. This activity is an ice-breaker. Its objective is to reduce anxiety and create enjoyment. It also helps the getting-acquainted process, assists in the recognition of the place stereotyping plays in first impressions, shows the difference between thinking and feeling, and encourages total participation. The details for this exercise are found in appendix B.¹ Questions and comments should follow this activity and once it has been completed, a few minutes should elapse before continuing with the next exercise.

Unfolding. This is another verbal exercise which helps in the getting-acquainted process. It also provides an initiation into self-disclosure, helps set the communication tone at a feeling level, and assists in developing relationships. Again, the exercise should be followed by questions and comments.²

¹The complete exercise with explanations is in appendix B and is compiled from: Kenneth T. Morris and Kenneth M. Cinnamon, A Handbook of Verbal Group Exercises (Kansas City, MO: Applied Skills Press, 1974, 3rd printing, June 1974), pp. 186-88.

²See appendix B.

By this time, the group should feel quite comfortable with each other. It is a good time to have a break with a refreshing fruit drink. At this time the participants presumably will be able to talk freely with others.

Trust-level disclosures. This exercise should help the participants understand self-disclosure and trust. Every step should be followed naturally, but with careful explanations. The coordinator must be careful to not impose his will on any one member. His understanding of group dynamics and the fact that he belongs to the group is of great value. The exercise is completed by questions and comments on what has happened.¹

The setting of objectives

Once these exercises have been completed, the atmosphere is presumably ripe for the expression of expectations from the MSG. Some ministers may have theological problems; some may want help to deal with particular administrative problems; others may want to share their frustrations. At this time, the coordinator hands out slips of paper and asks each participant to write down three objectives he would like the MSG to meet. After these slips are collected, the list should be written on a blackboard or flip chart. The participants should then be asked to arrive at a consensus of the objectives they consider most important for the group.

For the validation of objectives, one might lead the group to agree to retain any objective on which 80 percent of the participants agree. Those with less support will not be considered

¹Ibid.

primary objectives. To alleviate discouragement of those who made the eliminated suggestions, it should be made plain that future meetings will consider a list of different objectives and concerns.

When the list of agreed-upon objectives has been made, it is good to have these written down and to have the list signed by each group member. This then becomes the list of common goals and objectives for the group.

The setting of limitations

It may be wise to follow the same procedure used for selecting goals for making a list of unacceptable topics, behaviors, or procedures for the group. In this way the group arrives at a consensus regarding those matters which at the moment they feel are not appropriate for their meeting. If time is limited, this task may need to be left for a second session. In some ways it is best to end on a positive note with the goals the group expects to achieve, the benefits they expect to obtain, and the topics they expect to deal with to aid in their growth.

Final evaluation

Just before the conclusion of the meeting, use one of the evaluation forms in appendix A. Time should be given to comment and share ideas on what has happened. At the end of the meeting, remind the participants of the time and place for the next meeting. The formal meeting comes to a close with the joining of hands in a prayer circle.

Continuation of the MSG

If the first meeting has been well organized and has met the needs and expectations of the participants, success is partially assured. However, there are several important considerations regarding succeeding meetings that should be discussed at this point: the contents of further meetings, attitudes to be developed and fostered in the group, the function of the coordinator, a group agreement, the setting of rules, the use of consultants, and the evaluation of the MSG.

Content and format of MSG meetings

The initial agenda or list of goals and objectives for the MSG is determined at the first meeting. This agenda lists those topics or problems the pastors consider most pressing. It is the basis for the construction of further meetings. However, each meeting needs to be carefully planned with time for varied activities. Some suggested features for the MSG are: prayer, Bible study, discussion of common problems, planning for joint church activities, presentation of book reviews, and continuing education.

Prayer

Prayer could be a regular feature in an MSG. Group members have time and opportunity to pray for themselves and each other as long as they wish, but nobody should be pressed to do it, even though ministers are expected to be men who pray constantly. When a colleague has an urgent need, when a problem is bothering one of the group, there, among friends, they have the occasion to seek the Lord for help.

On the other hand, the group meeting could provide an excellent occasion to pray for others in their parishes that are struggling with difficulties of which the pastor is aware. It may be an opportunity to pray for specific subjects, people such as the authorities, the administration, the pastors' families, etc.

The position for prayer and the person who prays should be chosen on the spot with total agreement of participants. Sometimes the ministers might pray in groups of two or three; sometimes they might all kneel in a circle and have one or more prayers. Everyone is free to suggest the way the group might pray. No one in the group should pray who does not feel like doing so. Prayer means heavenly power and ministers need that in their daily ministry.

Bible study

The study of a Bible topic, a biblical theme, or a theological issue should always be welcome in an MSG. This may be done as a regular feature, spending one hour on a chosen biblical subject or however the members choose. The field is wide open. It may be wise to schedule the subject beforehand so all may prepare; it is also good to determine who will present the study. Ideas about how, when, and who will do it are decided by group members and innovations should not threaten anyone. When everyone participates in deciding which biblical subject to study, it becomes clear which subjects are relevant. Often in a given situation a minister could face particular pressures regarding doctrinal issues. In MSGs the pastors have a golden opportunity to clarify through

Bible study the theological doubts that may arise. Sometimes a text could be read and after meditation everyone in the group could share his particular insights gained through it.

Discussion of common problems

Common interests and common problems soon arise. The MSG is a good place to discuss them together in order to seek the best solutions. This may well become the most important part of the whole session, because once the members have discovered several things in common, they can join forces to solve their problems. Frank, open discussion of the subject from everyone's perspective is of enormous help and may be more fruitful than anticipated. It is true that not all will always agree on the solutions, but when there is good interaction without time pressure and several heads work together on the same issue, the result may be very rewarding.

In a ministry as varied as that of a Brazilian pastor, it is almost certain that in each session someone with a burden will be needing and looking for help. (And everyone in the group must remember that this is the most important feature; this is top priority in an MSG.) At such a time the agenda may be put aside so the person in need may open his heart, share his burden with his true friends, and be confident that they will listen attentively and support him in the best possible ways.

Planning for joint church activities

Even though an MSG is not supposed to be a planning committee, its members may use some time on certain occasions to do

occasional planning for their church communities. These plans might include: pulpit exchange; joint endeavors such as recreational programs or picnics with church members or with other ministers' families; joint meetings such as a monthly youth program in other churches, at a club, in the park, or at the beach. Evangelistic endeavors might also be included in this planning. Ideas for community celebrations, church anniversaries, musical festivals, competitions, Bible tournaments, Bible Day, Independence Day, Mother's Day, Week of Prayer, and so on, could be shared jointly by pastors who plan for their church activities in an MSG.

Presentation of book reviews

If there is enough common interest and agreement, an MSG might select a member each month to present a book review. The book should be carefully chosen and be of interest to the entire group. This activity stimulates intellectual interest in topics pastors want to explore but for which they have no opportunity. Copies of the book review may be made for each member. (Members should agree who pays the expenses also.) Time should be given to discuss doubts and questions that may arise during the book review.

Continuing education

The possibilities for continuing education in an MSG are unlimited. Since everyone is unique and has his own talents and abilities, each pastor may find that the MSG is the place to share skills to benefit his colleagues. Knowledge may be shared on how to preach outstanding expository sermons; how to conduct Bible studies for specific people or groups of people; how to counsel a

dying person and his relatives; how to minister to the elderly; how to minister to the homosexual; or how to successfully conduct a school board. The list can be expanded. This sharing of expertise might keep the members interested in the group and their ministry will benefit from it. Even some knowledge of biblical languages (Greek, Hebrew, etc.) could be taught.

One of the more useful methods for group learning in the area of pastoral ministry is the case study. Because many pastors may not be acquainted with the method, the first time the initiator, or person familiar with the case-study method, should present a case which may be discussed by the group. After that, pastors should be encouraged to prepare a one- or two-page case study for presentation and discussion,¹ reporting a pastoral problem and how they have handled it.

Although the coordinator may plan the program quite precisely, he must still be aware of the needs of the participants. Some days there may be reason to discard the prepared program in order to meet a specific need. The key word is "flexible planning"-- a plan that exists but can be changed to suit the specific occasion.

Attitudes to be fostered

The MSG is not only a means of imparting information. In fact, it is much more an attitude-changing enterprise. There are several attitudes that should be encouraged and developed among the ministers. In order for the ministers to feel the support of

¹Regarding the case study method to be used in continuing education, see Glasse, pp. 84-105.

their peers, perhaps the most important attitude that needs to be developed is that of openness--the freedom to express one's ideas without fear of being rebuffed or rejected. The corollary of this is the ability to accept differing opinions and positions.

Freedom of expression

Everyone in an MSG should feel free to express his thoughts, externalize his feelings, and expose his needs. He must learn that he is among friends who like himself, have ideas to share with and ideas to learn from others. Initially it may take some time to acquire this freedom, but as the group grows in mutual self-understanding and mutual cooperation through group activities, its members will feel more free to express themselves. The freedom of expression in the group gives the opportunity to everyone to make suggestions regarding the format of the group, the content of the meetings or subjects shared, or even whom he thinks should or should not belong to the group. There is also room to suggest changes.¹

Sometimes the relationships among group members may become tense and expressions of anger or fear may surface because of some extreme internal pressure. Time should be used to deal with these problems and everyone is invited to collaborate. The freedom that exists in an MSG should draw persons closer to each other and help those in need to find fulfillment. Distrust needs to be banished

¹Regarding the freedom of expression in group interaction see Philip A. Anderson, Church Meetings That Matter (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1965), pp. 28-30; Norman E. Wegmeyer, The Art of Christian Relationships (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), pp. 30-35; David W. Johnson, Reaching Out, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), pp. 89-91, 93, 94, 159-61.

from the group. The social atmosphere in an MSG should be one of trust, camaraderie, and Christian love.

Ability to listen

Listening plays a very important role in communications and is thus very important in an MSG. Listening is basic to building good and lasting relationships. Since an MSG is designed to build good relationships among people, listening is fundamental. Listening is the ability to pay attention to what another person is saying in words, tone of voice, facial expression, or any sort of body language. Listening should be done attentively, with interest in what the other person is saying or trying to express. Listening is an art and each MSG member would do well to exercise it. As one listens "with the heart" to another's needs, both may be drawn closer as real friends and help can be found. Many times to listen means to keep silent, but most of the time a few key reactions such as the nodding of the head, the look in the eyes, words that show the conversation is being followed will serve to enhance the dialogue.¹

These positive attitudes are an integral part of the success of the MSG. They become ingrained in the participants. However, in many respects, the formation of those helpful attitudes is a function of the coordinator.

¹For more information regarding the acquiring of listening skills see Robert C. Leslie, Sharing Groups in the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 150-53; Johnson, pp. 109-21; 131-34; 171-81; and Wegmeyer, pp. 74, 75.

Functions of the coordinator

Because of his work the pastor is the leader of his family, his church, and, to some extent, of the community. Leadership is implicit in the pastor's role.

An MSG also needs some sort of leadership in order to come to existence and to continue functioning. The pastor who took the initiative to form the group may well become its leader or coordinator, at least at first. However, since an MSG is composed of leaders (pastors) who meet for experiencing and deepening their fellowship, it is advisable that no one person be responsible for leading every meeting. The coordinator, either the initiator or one of the pastors in the group, should be a natural leader, familiar with and willing to take the responsibility for fostering achievement of MSG goals. His function is not to dictate but to coordinate the meetings in such a way that all may participate openly. Thus interaction and trust can gradually grow and deepen within the group.

The environment must be one of Christian camaraderie and nobody should be intimidated by any colleague who wishes to dominate the conversation in the group. To this end, it is wise for one person--a facilitator or coordinator--to lead so that there is no struggle for power or leadership. The leader of the MSG must learn to share his leadership. However, when leadership is shared a willingness to follow on behalf of the rest of the group must be demonstrated so that leadership roles are not constantly challenged.¹

¹William Clemmons and Harvey Hester, Growth Through Groups (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1974), p. 105.

Usually the initiator is the ideal person to coordinate the initial meeting and, perhaps, the following two or three sessions. He has access to resources and ideas not available to the others and is the one to get the MSG started. However, since leadership is to be shared after two or three meetings, another person may be chosen by the group to take over the leadership for a stated length of time. In some cases two persons may be chosen to work together. Experience in dealing with people and a practical knowledge in the field of group dynamics are important criteria in the selection of a leader-coordinator. He should be a person who can express himself clearly yet tactfully. He should not be chosen for political reasons or for his age--a tempting factor in Brazilian society where age is much respected. Above all, the coordinator should be one who is willing to share his leadership with the other leaders.

The MSG coordinator should assume full responsibility for the meeting he has agreed to lead. He should plan it flexibly, make sure of the physical arrangements, have a program ready, and be ready to serve the group and not dominate it. He is responsible for the atmosphere and information which should contribute to the growth of the entire group during its time together.

The setting of rules

Robert Leslie points out that "one of the qualities that makes a group worth participating in is a note of informal spontaneity where people are encouraged to be themselves in their own characteristic way." He also said that "the fastest way to kill

such a mood is to hold to a rigid structure that is posted and followed rigorously. The worst way to begin a group is by announcing ground rules."¹

In spite of the truth of Leslie's statements, each group needs some rules or guidelines to direct it to desirable goals and to protect each member from being hurt. Furthermore, in groups led by non-professionals there is a greater need for rules or, as Leslie prefers to call them, "guidelines,"² than in groups with professionally trained leaders. The rules should be suggested for enabling group process and not for regulating or governing behavior. They should provide a general sense of direction without limiting the dynamics of the group. Nevertheless, they are necessary, and it is necessary that all members agree to them because it is around these guidelines that each group develops. They form part of the basic group contract or agreement.

The rules should be few and simple; following them closely can eliminate most of the problems in small groups. They can and must be introduced in the first meeting of the group at the best moment possible, "when they are relevant to the discussion,"³ and the more specifically they can be developed "the more successful the group will be."⁴

Each member should contribute to the establishment of rules for the group and agree upon them. Newsprint or a black

¹Robert C. Leslie, Sharing Groups in the Church (New York: Abington Press, 1971), p. 138.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Clemmons and Hester, p. 109.

board can be used to write down the suggested rules.

Following are examples of some rules that could be agreed upon.

1. Be on time for all group meetings
2. End the meeting on time
3. Stay for the entire meeting
4. Do not dominate the conversation; and give everyone an opportunity to speak
5. Keep discussions on the right track
6. Do not whisper in the group (If someone has something to say, it should be said to the entire group.)
7. Keep absences to a minimum
8. Keep group business confidential (What is said in the group must remain there.)
9. Listen to what is being said (If you do not understand something, say so; you owe it to yourself and to the group to be clear on all points.)
10. Participate; there are no spectators in the group
11. Focus on affirming people, not on destroying them
12. Do not leave a person hanging at the end of a session (Allow time to clear up any agenda items, if possible.)
13. Be flexible, even with your rules
14. Start and close the meeting with prayer
15. Pray for one another during the week days.

These are suggested rules. Rules for any MSG must be original for that group. They can be modified, deleted, or augmented. Some of the most important rules of an MSG are those that

provide support among colleagues; those that promote growth in closeness and friendship in an environment of frank loyalty and confidentiality.

The group agreement or contract

As the members of the group gather for the first time they may have mixed feelings about what to expect. However, as they discuss their expectations and agenda and build their own rules, they can see the future better and some of the fear vanishes. Once the rules are presented, they should be agreed upon. Generally it is best to take a consensus of the opinions of those present. In a small group, all should agree to every rule. Rules not agreed upon should be set aside for further or later discussion.

The agreement upon the rules is called "group contract." The group agrees on what to do. Sometimes groups prefer that this agreement be written and signed by each member. Others may agree to keep the rules of the group on their word alone. However, even in this case, a written list should be kept as a reminder of the agreement. When agreement on rules is not reached at the first meeting, it "will evolve as the group continues to build relationships and a new level of trust and risk emerge."¹ As soon as definite rules are chosen, members should make their agreement. All this helps the group to function in an atmosphere of love and fellowship. The earlier they agree, the better.

Some important elements should be considered in the making of an agreement in order to help the group to function efficiently:

¹Ibid., p. 109.

1. The purpose of the group. Everyone in the group should know the reason for the existence of the group. An MSG formed by a pastor for pastors needs to have a purpose, and that should also be the purpose of each member. The members choose the purpose and agree on it. Each individual has his expectations, and all must agree that this group should meet their specific expectations. If they do not agree on this, frustration may separate them instead of unite them. Clarifying the purpose does not guarantee harmony or agreement, of course, but it helps to accept it or reject it.

2. The size and composition of the group. In a city where the pastors agree to have an MSG they must have enough colleagues to participate. Three or four are too few and twelve are too many. The suggestion for an ideal MSG is five to seven, but the group should agree on this after weighing the pros and cons. The composition is almost settled since an MSG is set up by SDA pastors of any age and excludes administrators, departmental directors, and teachers.¹ The pastors share their experiences and affirm each others' qualities concerning their pastoral ministry.

3. The time factor. Time is a very important element in a group agreement. All should agree on the best hours for all members, the beginning and stopping time, and all honor them. To avoid conflicts, members need to agree in advance on the number of meetings per month, the length of each meeting, and the day of the week.

4. Leadership. It is essential to agree about some kind

¹See the reasons on pp. 55-56.

of leadership or to name the coordinator. Some ministers, unaware of leadership styles, could come into the group expecting to be regarded as the "expert leader."¹ In an MSG any one could be the coordinator, but those with expertise should have the preference for the first three meetings.²

6. Group rules. Rules make up a very important element for the life of any group. Most successful groups have agreed upon some common rules observed by all members. Rules help to build and maintain cohesion in a group³ and encourage trust. They mean that something is expected from each member and, consequently, each member has to invest something in the group. Rules should never be imposed upon the group but should rather emerge by consensus.

Consultants

At times the group may be faced with some problem they cannot solve, which may even threaten the life of the group. Sometimes the group may wish to deal with a subject surpassing their own expertise. At that time, a consultant, one who is an expert on the problem facing the MSG, may be called in. The consultant may be a physician, a psychologist, a family counselor, or a lawyer. In any case, he or she has knowledge the whole group, or at least some of its members, need. Above all else, the consultant should be the best person available, preferably a Christian. Upon agreement,

¹Clyde Reid, Groups Alive--Church Alive (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 41.

²See pp. 83-84.

³David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, Joining Together (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 248.

the group will invite the chosen consultant to give advice or expertise and interact with them for their benefit. The group should agree beforehand whether they want to deal with the subject in depth or receive just general information followed by a session of questions and answers. Since the consultant does not belong to the group, a deep involvement is not expected, but one should expect confidentiality.

Many such contributions can be sought without any expense; many professionals in the community are willing to interact with a group of pastors. If the consultant requests a fee, the pastors should agree on the financial question before making a contract.

Evaluation

Evaluation is "the process by which members of a group review how helpful or fruitful a meeting has been."¹ Anderson puts it this way: "It is the appraisal of a meeting by the members."² Most meetings tend to be evaluated in an informal way, this happens in the conversations after the meeting is over. The members share their opinions as they talk after the regular meeting; some may go home dissatisfied. This kind of evaluation seldom helps the group because the judgments are made and kept outside the group. A more fruitful kind of evaluation is one that is planned and done by the group before concluding the meeting. Anderson states that "evaluation should be a regular part of the meeting."³

¹Reid, p. 56.

²Phillip A. Anderson, Church Meetings that Matter (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1965, 8th printing, July 1972), p. 47.

³Ibid., p. 49.

In an MSG an evaluation should be an integral part of each meeting. It may be done orally by the members near the end of the session or by a checklist.¹ The group should agree on the type of evaluation they use. If they agree on a checklist, they should agree when to do it and allow enough time for it. Each member should have a copy of the checklist and mark each item. He should not put his name on it. He should be honest and sincere. After everyone has finished, the papers are gathered and tallied on the blackboard. Thus the results are known by all and all have a profile of the group evaluation of the meeting.

As the meetings progress and it becomes clear that there may be other aspects to be evaluated, the checklist should be modified as needed to suit the group members. Improvement is always helpful. This is a learning process and there is no one right method. No one is infallible, and everyone needs daily reform and renewal. A constant evaluation keeps each on the right track and helps the members to learn from past mistakes.

In the words of Anderson, "honest evaluation requires trust, humility, and repentance--none of which are easy attitudes of mind to achieve."² It costs something, but the results are rewarding. "Evaluation," says Anderson, "is absolutely necessary" for group life, because "the unexamined group life is not worth living."³ Many groups become valueless and are sterile because of the lack of evaluation. Although this takes time and may even be a risk, it results in a growing fellowship within the group.

¹For examples of evaluation checklists, see appendix A.

²Anderson, p. 58.

³Ibid.

Another way to evaluate the meeting would be to ask everyone to evaluate it in one word, either positive or negative. That word is written on the blackboard and then a few comments about why that word was chosen are expressed. This method is called word-association¹ because each word reflects honest feelings and can reveal important data about the meeting. Evaluation need not be complex or difficult and cannot be imposed upon a group which does not wish it. However, some form of structured evaluation benefits any group.

A few samples of evaluation instruments appear in appendix A. These may be used and adapted for any meeting of an MSG.

Special Considerations

Obviously, it is impossible to foresee everything that might happen to an MSG. Nevertheless, this last section considers some questions that may arise. The answers given cannot be considered definitive, but yet they should prove helpful in enabling any group to function more effectively.

The possibility of an inter-denominational MSG

Often the legitimate question of admitting non-SDA ministers to the MSG arises. This may happen because after a while some pastors of other denominations hear what is happening and ask some of their SDA colleagues if they could join them. Perhaps an SDA minister would like to have one of his non-SDA pastor friends join this group. Or some rather adventurous pastors would like to see

¹Reid, p. 59.

what their peers think of inviting pastors of other denominations to expand their friendship in the community. The idea is not bad in itself, nevertheless a few important things should be carefully considered before any step is taken to include pastors from other churches.

1. Denominational differences become less important when one believes in one God, Creator of mankind, and all human beings as created equal as brothers and sisters. However, the beliefs held by different denominations which should unite them as "brothers" and "sisters" are the very ones that separate them. The greatest reason for this is that the different interpretations of Scriptures by different denominations keep them apart.

The difference in doctrinal beliefs is a common denominator which separates denominations, peoples, and pastors. When people identify their beliefs with a certain denomination, they defend both at the same level. So pastors, loyal to their own beliefs and those of their denominations, and aware of the loyalty pledged to them, are kept separate from their colleagues of other denominations. Although friends, ministers of different denominations obviously hold different doctrines.

2. The different denominational background of each pastor influences him in the way he sees and treats his fellow ministers of another denomination. Very seldom can the barriers built over years be easily broken down. It seems that in Brazil both SDA pastors, in general, and non-SDA ministers may have a long way to go in that direction.

3. The strong prejudice between peoples of different

creeds, as well as between their minister leaders, keep them apart in Brazil. Many years will pass before they can freely fellowship together, despite their differences in beliefs, if indeed this can happen.

4. The church people react negatively to the pastor who wants to have close fellowship with pastors of another denomination. Probably, even if they do not say so directly, their attitude may be withdrawal from him and from the church. Although this may be seen as a strong prejudice, few pastors would want to risk alienating their congregation for the sake of making non-SDA friends.

5. Furthermore, it is rather doubtful that the SDA church administrators would be sympathetic to an interdenominational MSG. They like to feel that their pastors are faithful to their organization and obey the orders and commands of their superiors. The administrators may fear the possible loss of their ministers by associating with men of the same professional level from another denomination. They may even think that the desire for such a group suggests SDA pastors have too much time on their hands. In any case, a clear approval should be obtained from administrators before embarking on this type of interdenominational fellowship.

6. The Brazilian SDA pastor presently does not have this kind of close friendship and fellowship with pastors of other denominations. It would not be easy to start such a group with the other pastors since they do not have one of their own.

7. The level of fellowship between SDA and non-SDA pastors probably could not be a deep one; it would be limited by the

factors mentioned above. For that reason, this kind of group would not be of a great value.

On the other hand, some advantages of a mixed MSG might be the following:

1. An interchange of ideas among the clergy of several denominations could widen their vision and the caring for each other as human beings.

2. New friendships could be developed at a deeper level thus helping to break down old prejudices.

3. New insights in the Bible truths could be gained as they share their own points of view.

4. New approaches to solve the problems of the community might be found.

As may be seen, this subject is difficult. Any group of ministers that wants to engage in an interdenominational support group should weigh carefully each argument or give answers to questions that may arise before they take any further step in that direction.

While the possibility of a mixed MSG must be kept open, the Brazilian SDA pastors must first form their own MSGs throughout the country and enjoy a closer fellowship in the years ahead, supporting each other rather than engaging prematurely in something they are not prepared to enter into.

Other kinds of MSG

Just as the MSG is designed to be helpful for pastors, such a group may be beneficial to administrators, teachers, and pastors'

families. Those who share the same profession, goals, and ideals can profit from a close and regular interaction. These people should form their own support groups. In some instances those who belong to another branch of denominational work may participate occasionally in the MSG. However, as a rule, it is best for the MSG to be limited to those active in ministry.

A group of ministerial families could be organized with a different approach, emphasizing particularly the social and friendship aspects of relationship. The children should be included in the group and be integrated into the group activities. As the families share their concerns, they destroy the barriers of prejudice and fear and become more kind and helpful to each other. They are prepared to assist each other in time of need and accept the children of other ministerial families. The family interaction should include parents and children of both sexes and all ages.

It is suggested that when the ministers' families feel the need for this kind of fellowship, they should plan a picnic and exchange ideas as to what they could do in order to start a support group themselves. Several of the suggestions given in this paper could be used. However, they should look for more specific family-oriented topics such as home and family, etc.

A support group among ministers' families would enhance communications at home among all members, keep them more closely united, and strengthen them to face the pressures from outside. Thus, the children would have more support and guidance from both parents, and the families would see each other as an integral part of the community in which they live and love, not as

competitors struggling to survive or, what is worse, to be the greatest or best ministerial family.

Some may ask what the administrators would think or say concerning these groups in which they are not included. The best policy is to go to them and explain the goals and purposes of the group and how it will be organized. Ideas should be exchanged with them and any shadow of doubt that may arise clarified. Usually, they encourage such a close fellowship. Obviously, administrators expect loyalty from the ministers. That loyalty includes not criticizing them or talking behind their backs.

Should the MSG fail to reach its objectives, the administrators may have reason for concern. If they sense any disruption or negative influence, it is well within the scope of their duty to call the participants, particularly the coordinator, to task. Hopefully, this will not occur.

Summary of practical suggestions

It is generally easier to tell others what to do rather than to do it oneself. Nevertheless, there are several suggestions that may help those participating in an MSG. Obviously, these are suggestions and are not absolute rules.

1. Keep the needs and interests of the group members as the most important thing in an MSG. Make every possible effort to meet them. After the participants have clearly identified and expressed their needs, believe what they say and try to meet them.

2. Accept each colleague as he is. Remember that you, too, want to be accepted as you are. Even if you are not easily accepted

at the beginning, in time you will be and by the way you treat your colleagues you are modeling your relationship with them.

3. Do not attempt to dominate the group. Each one may be a potential leader and some may be better than you. Allow everyone to take part in the session by giving and receiving data, information, and support. This is not a place for competition but for sharing and caring.

4. Listen attentively and with understanding to what your colleague is saying to you or to the group. It is comforting to see and to know that you are among friends that really care about you and are making efforts to understand what you want to share.

5. Use every way possible to gradually build trust among members. Confidence begets confidence. Take the first step in that direction. Support comes after trust.

6. Be committed to the agreed purpose of your group. Keep it always before you. Be faithful to it.

7. Do not establish yourself as the authority on all matters that may come before the group. Let all members share the decisions by keeping a democratic spirit in the group. Allow another freedom to do, but do not press him to do it. Do not be afraid to be involved with each other at a deep level. This unites a group closely. Intellectualism could kill your group sooner than you think.

8. By all means, encourage all your colleagues to express themselves. You are there to say what you want to say and receive the support that you need. They too are in the same situation.

9. Do not allow one or two persons to dominate the conversation. Encourage and urge the silent colleagues to participate.

They may have ideas and/or needs from which all members can profit.

10. Be sure that everyone knows each other thoroughly. Take the necessary time to achieve this. If your group is tempted to grow bigger, do not hesitate to divide it. In large groups the individual can easily hide and not participate.

11. Accept any expressions of hostility as natural and understand that your friend needs your help. Be supportive of him.

12. Do not use your group to lash out against supposed "injustices" of the administration. Your group is meant to be supportive of each other as colleagues and not to solve the problems of the administration. If you were an administrator you would certainly understand their actions better. You are expected to be loyal, not judgmental.

13. Find out and express sincerely the good qualities of your friends. Honesty is always a good policy for pastors too!

14. Avoid gossip in your group as if it were the plague and never be the one responsible for its emergence or propagation, rather work always for its death.

15. Remember that you are unique and God loves you the way you are. Therefore, treat your colleagues the way God is treating you. Nobody ever has been killed by love, but thousands die daily for want of it.

Other suggestions could be added to the list, but these are basic. Those interested in forming an MSG should use their imagination in looking for ways to improve the functioning of their group.

A fitting conclusion for this chapter is taken from a small

plaque at Southwestern Medical Clinic in Berrien Springs, Michigan. It is a prayer by an unknown author: "Lord, give me the ability to see talents in unexpected people, and grace to tell them so."

Summary

This chapter first presented data about the three unions of the SDA church in Brazil, along with a few geographic characteristics of the country, to give a better understanding of the suggested strategy for an MSG among SDA ministers.

The suggested strategy is presented in three parts: (1) the planning phase, which takes into consideration the location and time for the meetings, the setting up of the agenda and arrangements to be made with the conference; (2) the initiation phase, which discusses the initiation of the MSG and includes ways to present the first invitation, details of the first meeting with its several activities, and the setting of objectives, limitations, and its evaluation; (3) the continuation phase with suggestions concerning the content of format--the place of prayer, Bible study, the discussion of common problems, the planning for joint church activities, book reviews in the program--and the attitudes to be fostered in those groups--such as the freedom to express one's self and the ability to listen to one another. This section also notes the function of the coordinator, the procedures for setting rules and obtaining agreement, suggestions regarding the use of consultants and ways of evaluating the groups.

In addition, it is suggested that MSG should be limited to SDA pastors and that the formation of other kinds of groups might

be eventually considered. Finally, a list of practical suggestions is presented.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

Part I of this project discussed aspects of the social nature of man as presented in the Bible; man created by God was designed to live in companionship with other human beings.

Chapter I showed man as a social being in the following ways:

The creation story indicates that man should not live alone and thus a being like himself, a helper, was given to him to stay at his side and to be his companion. God linked man and woman in marriage, thus creating the family which is a place where human beings can develop their humanness in a balanced way, through daily relationships, mutuality, and cooperativeness. Besides the small family circle, man was to expand his relationship by interaction with other individuals. Thus the community emerged with its duties and privileges. In spite of being an individual, responsible to God for his actions both as an individual and identified with the group to which he belongs, man is seen as a part of the larger community.

Chapter II dealt with relations in the New Testament. The New Testament study showed that man is constantly involved with one another in fellowship and service. Two Greek words related to the subject were examined. Diakonia and its cognates were found

to describe the service expected of Christians to their fellows. The word conveys the idea of voluntary ministry and service, both in spiritual and physical realms. Koinōnia expresses the idea of fellowship and partnership, both in spiritual matters and in the physical aspects of life. These two words are prominent in the description of the relations among believers.

Fellowship among Christian believers in the New Testament was seen to be inclusive. Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, laypersons and clergy were to form part of the fellowship of the Christian community. Upon each lay the obligations of this mutual society; for each were its privileges.

Furthermore, in studying service and fellowship in the New Testament, it was noted that among those who ministered the Word there was mutual ministerial support. Jesus and his disciples, Paul and Barnabas, and Paul and Timothy were examples of a mutually supportive relationship, based on love, for the benefit of those who ministered the word.

In view of what was presented in Part I, Part II deals with some common problems that pastors face in the ministry today and presents a possible solution.

Besides personal experience, several sources from related literature are reviewed. The literature agrees regarding the frustration and tension resulting from the ideal versus the real in the ministry. The expectations of congregation and administration often demand from the minister more than he can give. Sometimes pastors feel their seminary training has not prepared them entirely for what they must do in the parish ministry. A possible

solution to this problem may be the formation of Ministerial Support Groups (MSG).

The strategy suggested in this project is designed particularly for SDA ministers in the three Brazilian unions described.

The strategy for an MSG is presented in three parts: the planning, the initiation, and the continuation. The planning phase includes subjects such as the location and time for the meetings, the agenda of the first meeting, the arrangements with administration, the way to invite pastors (personally, by telephone, in writing, or other forms). For the initiation phase detailed description of the activities of the first meeting is given. Included are: group activities, the setting of objectives, limitations, and the final evaluation.

The next section is concerned with the continuation of MSGs and included these subjects: the content and format of MSG meetings (the use of prayer, Bible study, discussion of common problems, etc.); attitudes to be fostered (freedom to express without being rejected and the ability to listen); functions of the coordinator; setting of rules; the group contract; the use of consultants, and finally, the evaluation.

Under the title "special considerations," suggestions are offered regarding the possibility of an interdenominational MSG as well as MSGs for other kinds of workers and one including families. Practical suggestions are offered concerning this kind of group whose goals are sharing, caring, and personal growth.

Conclusions

In this paper, it is recognized and accepted that what the Bible teaches regarding the social nature of man as created by God, the provision of the family as a stable way to build noble characters through loving interactions, and the need for community where people care for one another. This kind of interaction was effective in the life of Christ and the disciples and in the early Christian community where the relationships among them were lived in loving fellowship and non-calculated service for one another.

It is also firmly believed that the Christian ministry now faces unexpected challenges in the parish, difficulties that are not easy to cope with, and that result in an increasing amount of stress and frustration. Pastors in such a situation may find a positive source of strength by participating in MSGs.

The long range objectives of this enterprise are to enhance the friendship of SDA pastors in Brazil, to deepen their level of trust with each other, and to break down such barriers such as competition, jealousy, struggle for promotions, etc. that may exist among clergy. As ministers come to know each other better, they will be more efficient in their vocation and profession, as well as in their family relationships. A happier pastor is the one who knows his limitations and can use all his resources creatively to meet his expectations and the expectations of the administration and other people. An MSG should help him to achieve this goal.

Since this sort of support group is nonexistent in Brazil, but many pastors have confidentially expressed the need for such

a close fellowship among them, it is firmly believed that these programs would help pastors meet their needs. Thus it is earnestly recommended that support groups should be made known and be available to all Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Brazil as well as the leaders of the local Seventh-day Adventist organization. Plans should be made to support such an initiative among pastors willing to enter into such an adventure. It is expected that a more stable and fruitful ministry will result as the MSG mutually strengthens the pastors.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX A
EVALUATION FORMS

FORM 1

END-OF-MEETING SUGGESTION SLIP

1. How did you feel about this meeting? (Check)

No good__ Mediocre__ All right__ Good__ Excellent__

2. What were the strong points?

3. What were the weaknesses?

4. What improvements would you suggest for future meetings?

F1 (You need not sign your name)

¹Forms 1-5 taken from: George M. Beal, Joe M. Bohlem and J. Neil Raudabaugh, Leadership and Dynamic Group Action (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1963), pp. 291-95.

FORM 2

END-OF-MEETING SUGGESTION SLIP

1. How did you feel about this meeting? (Check)
No good ___ Medicare ___ All right ___ Good ___ Excellent ___
2. The amount of planning for this meeting was
About right ___ Too little ___ Too much ___
3. The total program depends on group members
Too much ___ About right ___ Too little ___
4. What were the most important ideas you gained from this session?
5. What improvements would you suggest to make the next meeting more effective?

F2

(You need not sign your name)

FORM 4

END-OF-MEETING SUGGESTION SLIP

What is your over-all rating of today's meeting for each of the items? Please circle appropriate number.

	Very Low	Low	Av	High	Very High
1. Physical arrangement and comfort	1	2	3	4	5
2. Orientation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Group atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
4. Interest and motivation	1	2	3	4	5
5. Participation	1	2	3	4	5
6. Productiveness	1	2	3	4	5
7. Choice of methods	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following questions:

- How would you rate this meeting? (Check)
No good Mediocre All right Good Excellent
- What were the strong points?
- What were the weak points?
- What improvements would you suggest?

F4

(You need not sign your name)

FORM 5

END-OF-MEETING EVALUATION

- | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Were you interested in this meeting? | Very much _____ | Quite a bit _____ | Some, but not much _____ | Very little _____ |
| 2. Did you feel that the group was interested in this meeting? | Very much _____ | Quite a bit _____ | Some, but not much _____ | Very little _____ |
| 3. Did you learn any new facts or get any new ideas? | Yes, many _____ | Quite a few _____ | Some, but not very many _____ | Very few, if any _____ |
| 4. Did you change any of your previous opinions as a result of this meeting? | Yes, many _____ | Quite a few _____ | Some, but not very many _____ | Very few, if any _____ |
| 5. Were your previous opinions confirmed or strengthened? | Very much _____ | Quite a bit _____ | Some, but not much _____ | Very little _____ |
| 6. Did you think the group accomplished anything as a result of this meeting? | It certainly did _____ | It probably did _____ | I doubt if it did _____ | It did not _____ |
| 7. Was there enough preparation for the meeting? | More than needed _____ | All that was needed _____ | Should have been more _____ | Should have been much more _____ |
| 8. Was there enough opportunity for discussion? | Too much _____ | All that was needed _____ | Should have been more _____ | Should have been much more _____ |
| 9. Would the meeting have been better if some parts had been left out? | Certainly _____ | Maybe _____ | Probably _____ | Definitely not _____ |
| 10. Did you find the social atmosphere of the meeting congenial and enjoyable? | Excellent _____ | Quite good _____ | All right _____ | Definitely not _____ |
| 11. Do you have suggestions (about techniques, materials, etc.) for improving future meetings? (Use other side of page if necessary.) | | | | |

CHRISTIAN GROUP LIFE*

This is a checklist to help you evaluate your meeting and to increase sensitivity to some of the relationships in the life of the Christian community of faith.

Check the number on the rating scale that corresponds to your evaluation of the meeting in each of the following cate-

gories. For example, if you feel that responsible participation was lacking, check 1; if you feel that responsible participation was present, check 7; if you feel that the responsible participation of the group was somewhere in between, check an appropriate number on the scale.

<p>A. RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION was lacking. We served our own needs. We watched from outside the group. We were "grinding our own axes."</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>A. RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION was present. We were sensitive to the needs of our group. Everyone was "on the inside" participating.</p>
<p>B. LEADERSHIP was dominated by one or more persons.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>B. LEADERSHIP was shared among the members according to their abilities and insights.</p>
<p>C. COMMUNICATION OF IDEAS was poor, we did not listen. We did not understand. Ideas were ignored.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>C. COMMUNICATION OF IDEAS was good. We listened and understood one another's ideas. Ideas were vigorously presented and acknowledged.</p>
<p>D. COMMUNICATION OF FEELINGS was poor. We did not listen and did not understand feelings. No one cared about feelings.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>D. COMMUNICATION OF FEELINGS was good. We listened and understood and recognized feelings. Feelings were shared and accepted.</p>
<p>E. AUTHENTICITY was missing. We were wearing masks. We were being phony and acting parts. We were hiding our real selves.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>E. AUTHENTICITY was present. We were revealing our honest selves. We were engaged in authentic self-revelation.</p>
<p>F. ACCEPTANCE OF PERSONS was missing. Persons were rejected, ignored, or criticized.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>F. ACCEPTANCE OF PERSONS was an active part of our give-and-take. We "received one another in Christ," recognizing and respecting the uniqueness of each person.</p>

<p>G. FREEDOM OF PERSONS was stifled. Conformity was explicitly or implicitly fostered. Persons were not free to express their individuality. They were manipulated.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>G. FREEDOM OF PERSONS was enhanced and encouraged. The creativity and individuality of persons was respected.</p>
<p>H. CLIMATE OF RELATIONSHIP was one of hostility or suspicion or politeness or fear or anxiety or superficiality.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>H. CLIMATE OF RELATIONSHIP was one of mutual trust in which evidence of love for one another was apparent. The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed.</p>
<p>I. PRODUCTIVITY was low. We were proud, fat, and happy, just coasting along. Our meeting was irrelevant; there was no apparent agreement.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p>	<p>I. PRODUCTIVITY was high. We were digging hard and were earnestly at work on a task. We created and achieved something.</p>

¹ Philip A. Anderson, Church Meetings that Matter (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1972), pp. 50-52.

APPENDIX B

GROUP EXERCISES

GROUP CAROUSEL

Subsidiary Goal(s)

- a. To facilitate the getting acquainted process.
- b. To recognize the place stereotyping plays in first impressions.
- c. To recognize the difference between thinking and feeling.
- d. To encourage participation.

Group Application

Ten members or less.

Application Variables

Time unlimited, depending on group size. With ten members the time required would be twenty to thirty minutes. The exercise is 100 percent verbal.

Administrative Procedure

a. At the first session, before any member interaction has occurred, the coordinator tells the group: "We will engage in an icebreaker exercise. Each member will have a turn to be the center of a group carousel. The member remains stationary, facing another member. He tells the member 'I think you . . . and I feel' The outer group then moves to the right until another member is opposite the center member. He repeats the statement, the group carousel will continue until the inner member has made a statement to each member. Then another member goes to the center. We will carousel until every member has been in the middle."

b. The coordinator asks for a volunteer to start the group carousel. The volunteer stands in the middle of the circle and the exercise begins.

c. The coordinator will have to be sure that each member shares a thought and feeling with every other member.

Suggestions for Coordinator Process

Concentrate on the following during processing:

a. How did you feel when you first stepped into the center?
How did you feel as the carousel continued?

b. What did you learn about the effect of stereotyping on your first impressions of others? Did you experience difficulty separating thoughts from feelings? Why?

c. What did we learn about ourselves? Were we seen the same or differently by the inner members? What accounts for the differences between first impressions?¹

¹Adapted from: Kenneth T. Morris and Kenneth M. Cinnamon, A Handbook of Verbal Group Exercises (Kansas City, MO: Applied Skills Press, 1974), pp. 186-88.

UNFOLDING

Subsidiary Goal(s)

- a. To provide an initiation into self-disclosure.
- b. To set the communication tone at a feeling level.
- c. To recognize the differences between thinking and feeling.
- d. To begin developing relationships and building rapport.

Group Application

Ten members or less. To be used at the first meeting.

Application Variables

One to one and a half hours. The exercise is 100 percent verbal. Each member will use five or six minutes. A stopwatch is needed.

Administrative Procedure

a. The coordinator presents a (brief) lecturette on the need to get to know each other. He stresses that knowing another goes beyond knowing facts about him. Self-disclosure is covered as a means to letting others get to know you.

b. He explains that the session will be spent getting to know one another through an unfolding process. Each member will have five minutes to let others know him. The first three minutes he will introduce and talk about himself. The fourth minute he is to relate what his happiest or saddest life experience has been. The fifth minute he is to share his immediate feelings with the group.

c. The coordinator keeps time. He may start the exercise by introducing himself, talking of himself, sharing his happiest or

saddest life experience, and revealing his feelings.

d. All members take a five-minute turn. The coordinator should make sure the fifth minute of each presentation is conducted at a feeling level, not a thinking level.

Suggestions for Coordinator Process

Concentrate on the following during processing:

- a. Why did some of us have difficulty in talking about ourselves for three minutes?
- b. Did you have difficulty revealing your feelings? How did you cope with them?
- c. Who don't you feel you know yet? Why?
- d. Who do you feel particularly close to? Why?

¹Morris and Cinnamon, pp. 175, 176.

EXERCISE: TRUST LEVEL DISCLOSURES

The purpose of this exercise is for members of the group to disclose to one another their perceptions of the depth of the trust level in their relationship. Once this information is out in the open, the members of the group can discuss how trust could be increased in their relationship. Openly discussing issues concerning one's relationships is perhaps the most effective way to increase the closeness of the relationship. The procedure for the exercise is:

1. Pick the individual whom you trust least in the group and pair off with him.

2. For fifteen minutes, share your perceptions of why the trust level is low in your relationship. Try to avoid being defensive or hostile. Try to understand as fully as possible why the other person feels the way he does.

3. For the next ten minutes, share your impressions of how the trust level in the relationship can be increased. This may involve stating how you are going to behave differently or how you would like the other to behave differently. Be as specific as possible.

4. Answer the following questions with your partner:
 - a. To what extent is the lack of self-disclosure by one or both persons contributing to the relatively low level of trust in the relationship?
 - b. To what extent is the lack of communicated support and acceptance by one or both persons contributing to the relatively low level of trust in the relationship.

5. Now find the person in the group whom you trust the most. Pair up with her.

6. For fifteen minutes, share your understanding of why the trust level is high in your relationship. Try to understand as fully as possible why each of you feel the way you do.

7. For ten minutes, share your impressions of how the trust level in the relationship can be increased even more. This may involve stating how you are going to behave differently or how you would like the other to behave differently. Be as specific as possible.

8. Answer the following questions with your partner:

a. To what extent is the level of self-disclosure by one or both persons contributing to the relatively high level of trust in the relationship?

b. To what extent is the communication of acceptance and support by one or both persons contributing to the relatively high level of trust in the relationship?

Note: In this exercise it is possible to focus on two important aspects of building and maintaining trust in a relationship. The first is the risk you and your partners took in self-disclosure. The second is the response you and your partners made to the other person's risk taking. Both the risks and the responses are crucial elements in building trust in a relationship.

The response you make to another person's risk taking is crucial for building trust in the relationship. The other person will feel it is safe to take risks in self-disclosure to the extent

that she feels she will receive support when necessary and acceptance rather than rejection. To ensure that the relationship grows you should:

1. Make sure the other person feels supported for taking the risk.

2. If you disagree with what he is saying, make sure that it is clear that it is his ideas you are rejecting, not him as a person.

3. Make sure you disclose your perceptions and feelings about the relationship. Always reward openness with openness when you are dealing with friends or individuals with whom you wish to develop a closer relationship.¹

¹David W. Johnson, Reaching Out (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), pp. 65-67.

HERE'S HOW I SEE MYSELF

The primary goal for this exercise is to facilitate the exploration and identification of each member's self-concept.

Subsidiary Goal(s)

- a. To encounter the self-disclosing process.
- b. To compare one's self-concept with other member perceptions.
- c. To give and receive feedback.

Group Application

Ten members or less. To be used only with groups with adult members after considerable rapport and a climate of care, warmth, and concern has been established.

Application Variables

Five to ten minutes per participant. The exercise is 100 percent verbal.

Administrative Procedure

- a. The coordinator asks for a volunteer who is willing to reveal his self-concept and receive feedback as to how other members see him.
- b. The coordinator tells the volunteer to respond for three to five minutes and to use the statement "I see myself" as many times as he can. If the member stops after a minute or so, the facilitator urges him to continue, saying "I don't believe you've exhausted responses. Keep going."

c. After the member has finished, the coordinator asks that other members provide the volunteer with feedback as to their perceptions of him. He tells them to complete the statement "I see you" to the volunteer for three to five minutes. If they stop before three minutes, he urges them on, saying, "I don't believe we've exhausted responses. Keep going."

d. The exercise is repeated until all members who wish to participate as volunteers have had the opportunity to do so.

Suggestions for Coordinator Process

Concentrate on the following during processing:

a. What kind of perceptions were shared by the volunteers? For example, thoughts, feelings, values, facts, etc? Why did you share the perceptions you did?

b. What kind of feedback did you receive? Did it support your self-concept? If so, how? If not, why?

c. Why did you experience difficulty in talking about yourself for three minutes? When I pushed you on, how did you feel?

d. What were your feelings during the two stages of the exercise? How did you cope with them?

Variations

a. Whenever a member appears to be having difficulty revealing himself, exhibits a negative self concept, is failing to receive feedback, is non-participative, etc., he is asked by the coordinator to spend three minutes responding to the statement "I see myself."

b. The rest of the members then spend three minutes providing feedback to him, using the phrase "I see you."

¹Adapted from Morris and Cinnamon, pp. 261-62.

EXERCISE: STRENGTH-BUILDING

Accepting and appreciating yourself is related to being aware of your strengths and assets. We all have many strengths. We all have strengths we are not using fully. We all can develop new strengths. A strength is any skill, ability, talent, or personal quality that helps you be effective and productive. You increase your self-acceptance as you become more aware of your strengths and develop new ones. The more you see yourself as having real skills, abilities, talents, and other personal strengths, the more you will value and accept yourself.

In this exercise you will concentrate on identifying your strengths and determining how they can be used most productively to build personal relationships. The objectives of this exercise are to increase your self-acceptance through the increased awareness of your strengths and to increase your awareness of how your strengths can be used to develop fulfilling relationships with other individuals. In this exercise you will be asked to discuss your strengths openly with the other group members. This is no place for modesty; an inferiority complex or unwillingness to be open about your positive attributes is not a strength. You are not being asked to brag, only to be realistic and open about the strengths that you possess. The procedure for the exercise is:

1. Think of all the things that you do well, all the things which you are proud of having done, all the things for which you felt a sense of accomplishment. List all your positive accomplishments, your successes, of the past. Be specific.

2. Divide into pairs and share your past accomplishments with each other. Then, with the help of your partner, examine your past successes to identify the strengths you utilized to achieve them.

3. In the group as a whole, each person should share the full list of his strengths. Then ask the group, "What additional strengths do you see in my life?" The group then adds to your list other qualities, skills, characteristics that you have overlooked or undervalued. The feedback should be specific; that is, if one member tells another he has a strength, he must back his feedback up with some evidence of behavior that demonstrates the strength.

4. After every group member has shared her strengths and received feedback on what further strengths others see in her life, each member should then ask the group, "What might be keeping me from utilizing all my strengths?" The group then explores the ways you can free yourself from factors that limit utilizing your strengths.

5. Think about your past successes and your strengths. Think about how your strengths may be utilized to improve the number or quality of your close relationships. Then set a goal for the next week concerning how you may improve either the number or the quality of your close relationships. Plan how utilizing your strengths will help you accomplish this goal.

¹David W. Johnson, pp. 176-77.

EXERCISE: REINFORCING ANOTHER
PERSON'S STRENGTHS

The objective of this exercise is to give you practice in reinforcing another person for behaving in ways that demonstrate one of his basic strengths or attempt to overcome a barrier to expressing his strengths. The procedure is:

1. Think of a person you know (1) whose relationship skills you could help improve; (2) who lacks the self-confidence to use his relationship skills, or (3) to whom you would like to express more support. On a sheet of paper, describe this person's basic strengths.

2. What are the barriers that keep this person from expressing his strengths in interpersonal situations? List them on a sheet of paper. Examples of possible barriers are a lack of self-confidence, fear of rejection, fear that friends will think he is foolish, wanting to be overly nice, or lack of self-acceptance.

3. What possible strengthening consequences could you give this person? Examples of possible strengthening consequences are expressing warmth, acceptance, encouragement, understanding, self-disclosure about your positive reactions to his behavior, and many of the other behaviors that have been discussed in this book. List the behaviors you could engage in that are possible strengthening consequences.

4. Reviewing what you have listed in steps 1, 2, and 3, write out a series of behavioral objectives for your interactions with the person for the next week. Such a list should include a statement that describes the countable behavior on the part of the other person, indicates the desired change in the countable behavior,

and specifies countable behavior by you to provide a strengthening consequence. An example of such a behavioral objective is: increase the number of times John initiates a conversation by expressing warmth toward him immediately after he does so in my presence.

5. Review your objectives. It is important that they are not attempts to manipulate the other person but rather expressions of support for behaviors you feel will help the person express his strengths or eliminate barriers to showing his strengths. Your objectives should reflect a sincere attempt to be supportive, not an attempt to remake the other person. On the basis of your review, rewrite any objectives that may seem more manipulative than supportive.

6. In the group as a whole, discuss the objectives you have listed. Review what you wrote on steps 1, 2, and 3 in order to provide background for the objectives written in step 4. Help each other increase the specificity and concreteness of your objectives. Support new ideas for strengthening consequences for each other; help each other write new objectives that may be more effective in helping the other person.

7. During the next week, keep the record sheet that follows. Bring the sheet back to the group meeting and discuss the results. Is there any relationship between the number of strengthening consequences you engaged in and the number of times the other person engaged in behaviors that demonstrated his strengths or attempts to overcome barriers to the expression of his strengths?

¹Ibid., pp. 188-89.

RECORD SHEET: REINFORCING ANOTHER PERSON'S STRENGTHS

Number of Times Other Person Engaged in Behavior to be Increased	Number of Times I Engaged in a Strengthen- ing Consequence
--	--

Day One

Day Two

Day Three

Day Four

Day Five

Day Six

Day Seven

EXERCISE: REINFORCING YOUR OWN STRENGTHS

In addition to reinforcing another person's strengths, you can set up situations in which your own behavior gets reinforced. Through such reinforcement systems you may maximize your strengths and facilitate the development of your interpersonal skills. The process is the same as reinforcing another person's behavior; when your behavior is followed by a strengthening consequence, you will tend to repeat the behavior. The more immediately the strengthening consequence follows your behavior, the more likely you will be to repeat the behavior in the future. If you consistently receive a strengthening consequence immediately after engaging in the behavior you will increase the number of times you engage in the behavior at a rapid rate. To maintain the frequency of your behavior, it is better to receive strengthening consequences immediately, but inconsistently. When you have important goals you are trying to accomplish, it is often helpful to find ways of receiving reinforcers for engaging in the behavior that will help you accomplish your goal.

The objective of this exercise is to give you an opportunity to use reinforcement theory to increase the number or quality of your strengths in relating to other people. The procedure for the exercise is:

1. Set a goal for increasing the quality of your relationship with one or more people.
2. What specific behaviors will you have to engage in to accomplish your goal? What specific behaviors will indicate that the goal is accomplished?

3. What personal strengths will you utilize to accomplish your goal?

4. What are the barriers to your using your strengths to accomplish your goal?

5. Review what you have written for steps 1, 2, 3, and 4. Set a series of behavioral objectives for yourself. Make sure that they are countable and have direction.

6. In the group as a whole, review each person's objectives. Set aside some time during the next several group meetings to review each member's progress toward accomplishing her objectives. All possible support should be given to the members of the group who make progress toward achieving their objectives. It is the support and praise of the group that will serve as the major strengthening consequence for engaging in the behavior that helps to accomplish your objectives.

Summary Questionnaire: Reinforcing Your Own Strengths

1. My long-term objectives for building better relationships are:

2. My short-term objectives for building better relationships are:

3. The strengths and skills I will use to accomplish my objectives are:

4. The way in which I will know when my objectives are accomplished is:

5. The system of reinforcement for the behavior I engage in to accomplish my objective is:

¹Adapted from David W. Johnson, pp. 189-91.

YOU GAVE THE GROUP AND ME . . .

The primary goal for this exercise is the facilitation of the closure experience, or the last group meeting, at which members will be ending (closing) the group. This exercise could be truly a peak experience for the group.

Subsidiary Goal(s)

- a. To give and receive feedback
- b. To end the group on a positive note
- c. To establish feelings of worth in members
- d. To achieve a peak experience.

Group Application

Ten members or less. To be used with groups at the last session.

Application Variables

Thirty minutes. The exercise is 100 percent verbal.

Administrative Procedure

a. The coordinator stops the group about forty minutes before ending time and tells them they will engage in a closure exercise in which they will have the opportunity to thank each other for contributions made to the group and to each other.

b. The members stand in a circle, with arms around each other's waists. One member steps into the center, facing any individual he desires. He receives feedback from that member, then turns and faces another member and receives feedback. This process continues until he has faced and received feedback from every member.

c. The members in the circle, when faced by the member inside, are to say "You gave the group . . . and you gave me . . ." The member may reply in whatever fashion he deems appropriate.

d. Each member takes his turn in the center until every member has received feedback from every other member.

e. If no processing is to occur, tell the group to mill and express their feelings for each other in whatever fashion they so desire.

Suggestions for Coordinator Process

Concentrate on the following during processing:

a. What did you learn about your contributions to the group and its members that you did not previously know?

b. How did you feel as you were receiving feedback? How did you feel giving it?

c. If there is anyone you wish to give further feedback to, do it now. If there is anyone you wish to receive further feedback from, ask for it now.

d. If you have processed, implement step now.

Variations

Each of the following phases may be substituted for the original, thereby creating a new closure variation:

Variation I. a. In step c substitute: "If I could take a personal quality of yours, and make it mine, I'd take . . ."

Variation II. a. In step c substitute: "I love you because . . ."

Variation III. a. In step c substitute: "When I first met you I thought . . ., and now I know . . ."

¹Adapted from Morris and Cinnamon, pp. 331, 340-41.

APPENDIX C

SUGGESTIONS FOR MSG FOR PASTORS WHO WORK IN
SURROUNDING CITIES AND FOR THOSE WHO
TRAVEL OFTEN

There are, in Brazil, many instances when the pastor lives in a place where he cannot have the privilege of interaction with any colleagues. Usually, that happens in small cities or towns at some distance from the capitals, cities of quite a large population and usually church district headquarters.

A pastor living less than thirty miles from a neighboring pastor, could start an MSG. He would need to locate all the pastors within an appropriate radius (some thirty miles, perhaps) and then decide on the most accessible, central location for all of them. Then he should contact the others, explaining the program, to see if they would like to participate in an MSG.

They could use the several suggested ideas given in this paper. Much planning for their particular situation would precede the launching of a plan. Possibly they might agree to meet less often than their city colleagues. While the suggestions for city pastors is that they meet every other week, those who live farther from each other might meet every third week. This must be thought through thoroughly before any decision is taken. The satisfaction of spending a morning with ministerial colleagues will be worth the expense and bother of traveling.

For those who travel often overseeing a large district the same steps could be taken. It will be harder to determine the date for the first meeting, but after that they can work out an acceptable

schedule. Probably a meeting every third week would be possible. However, a monthly meeting may be better than nothing.

Emergencies will happen and some pastor will miss a session, once in a while, but that is a risk that must be taken. The nearest colleague should be the one to contact the one who missed the meeting and share with him what happened in the last session. This will keep his interest in the group high and will avoid for him a long lapse between sessions.

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