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ABSTRACT

A SMALL GROUP MINISTRY COMBINING HEALTH CONCEPTS WITH
BIBLICAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS-DERIVED PRINCIPLES AT THE
STEVENSVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Patricia Nesbit

Adviser: Michael Cauley

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: AN OUTREACH MINISTRY COMBINING HEALTH CONCEPTS WITH BIBLICAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS-DERIVED PRINCIPLES AT THE STEVENSVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: Patricia Nesbit

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Date completed: September 2022

Problem

There are varied approaches to and models of evangelism and discipleship. Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church had, for many years, held evangelistic series to which the community was invited. At different times they had additionally put on health-related seminars and likewise invited the community. The evangelistic series typically focused on improving one's understanding of truth while the health-related seminars traditionally focused on improving one's physical well-being. Models of outreach which focus merely upon changing intellectual and spiritual understanding based primarily upon teaching church doctrines (traditional evangelistic series) and models that purely and exclusively focus on improving one's physical well-being (health-

related seminars), even in the context of an experiential relationship with Jesus, leave a reservoir of approaches untapped; approaches for whole-person transformation. Deep change is transformational and engages the whole person – spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual facets of personhood. How could a church simultaneously integrate these two models into a single ministry, as did Christ?

Method

An eight-week small groups program was created for the Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church. The program introduced participants to information and principles drawn from (a) CREATION Health to improve their understanding of their physical health and from (b) selected healing narratives of Christ to improve their understanding of their spiritual health. The program additionally combined both in-person group elements with individual one-on-one coaching elements. The goal was to improve participant's understanding of the elements of good physical health and good relational health with Christ. The success of the program was judged on participants self-reporting of perceived improvements in both areas.

Results

At the onset of the project a total of 11 participants initially joined. This number grew to 14 by the end of the eight weeks. All of the participants reported improved understanding of their physical health as well as a deepening in their understanding of Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend. The small group became so well bonded that at the conclusion of the initial eight weeks, they unanimously agreed to continue meeting together.

Conclusions

Copying Christ's method of helping individuals understand both their physical health as well as their relational health with God can result in improving both, with the benefit of also increasing individual's faith, hope, and love. The program revealed that the small group was a success as reported by the participants. As designed and implemented, the small group model with coaching elements created an environment in which participants were able to learn new information and gain insights into their own goals. In turn, they were empowered to make healthier decisions, and experience improvements in both their physical health and relationship with Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend, while also growing in community with each other.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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

by
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September 2022

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“Every Good and Perfect Gift Comes from Above” James 1:17

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO A PLAN TO CREATE A SMALL GROUP PROGRAM COMBINING HEALTH CONCEPTS WITH BIBLICAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS-DERIVED PRINCIPLES

Ministry Context

The Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded in 1965 in Stevensville, Michigan. Having approximately 400 church members, Sabbath attendance is approximately 250 people. The congregation is largely middle and upper middle-class families. Age ranges within the church vary from a large population of infants and children to an equally large number of retired individuals. The church is active in supporting and sending missionaries overseas and is involved in several outreach activities that include evangelistic seminars and health ministries. The church is part of the Michigan Conference and although not directly affiliated with Andrews University, a large number of its members work for the University. I was a member of this church from 2010 to 2015, and was ordained as an elder at this church in February 2012 and served in this capacity for three years. During this time the church coordinated multiple health outreach programs with the intent of helping participants learn and implement principles for optimal health.

Statement of the Problem

Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church is active in health outreach, annually coordinating weight loss programs, health seminars, and participating at the health tent at the local county fair in the summer. The church is also active in evangelism, holding annual seminars and currently employing a Bible worker to do Bible studies and train its church members to do the same. Personal observation reveals that despite the presence of health outreach to restore physical health on the one hand and evangelistic outreach to restore spiritual health on the other, the Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church had no programming that actively integrated these two important ministries into one program.

Statement of the Task

The purpose of this project was to develop, implement, and evaluate a small group ministry that focuses on the integration of physical and spiritual health using both the CREATION Health model and narrative analysis of selected healing narratives of Christ in the Gospel of John, as well as a wholistic model that is focused on both evangelism and discipleship.

Two methods were used to evaluate the project at its conclusion. The first was an assessment questionnaire that was given at the beginning and ending of the eight-week program, and the second was participant self-reporting during the individual coaching and group sessions from the beginning unto the conclusion of the program.

Delimitations

The project was implemented as a small group consisting of 11 adult individuals. These individuals were both from the community as well as from the Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist church.

Description of the Project Process

To accomplish the goal of creating a small group program that introduced both physical health concepts as well as spiritual health concepts, the project studied relevant literature in two categories: First, Christ's healing narratives in the Gospel of John viewed through the lens of narrative analysis. The theological reflection focused on four main healing narratives of Christ: the healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, the healing of the nobleman's son, the woman caught in adultery, and the resurrection of Lazarus.

Second, current literature in the areas of restoration/wholeness, evangelism, discipleship, small groups and coaching.

The insights gathered from these two categories provided the foundation for the creation of an eight-week small group program. that looked to emphasize Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend with facts about health and its improvement.

Implementation

The project was implemented in a small group that met every Wednesday evening for eight weeks. Though 11 participants initially signed up for the small group, others joined part way through the eight weeks, with 14 participants actually completing the

program. Participants were able to schedule individual one-on-one goal-oriented coaching sessions every other week for the duration of the program.

Summary

Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church is a vibrant congregation that intentionally plans health-related outreach events for the community. This project sought to develop a small-group program that intentionally introduced participants to (a) Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend and (b) physical health-related information and principles.

Underlying the program's development and implementation was the thought that Christ's method of combining physical healing with the gospel could be a successful outreach model for churches today. The primary indicators of success are improvements in attendee's physical health as well as in their understanding of and relationship with Christ, as self-reported by the individual participants.

The present dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 1 explores the need for an outreach program that combines physical health concepts with biblical principles about Christ. Chapter 2 discusses Christ as creator, redeemer, healer and friend. Chapter 3 examines literature relevant to evangelism, discipleship, small groups and coaching. Chapter 4 details the project development. Chapter 5 looks at the implementation of the project. Chapter 6 evaluates the implementation, outcomes and conclusions regarding the project and offers recommendations based on the lessons learned.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON CHRIST AS CREATOR, REDEEMER, HEALER AND FRIEND

In all of creation there is a longing for that which may seem unidentifiable and unattainable and can leave many groaning and suffering in despair, anxiety and apparent hopelessness. The Bible frames this groaning as a desire for revelation and restoration. Romans 8:22-25 communicates to us that there is a divine process in which creation finds itself, literally and figuratively, that in the end can lead to the complete satiating of what we long for. Paul the apostle describes it like this:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

In this description, Paul identifies that this groaning is felt by the whole of creation, and that there are those that have the “first fruits of the Spirit” that have a knowledge that is attached to an expectation and a hope. In my work as a chaplain and a pastor I have seen that the most essential ingredient that a person needs to be resilient and not enter into despair is hope.

Paul outlines that this hope is connected to a longing and a knowing. In my ministry, I have seen that many people have a knowledge of God, but many do not have

an experiential personal relationship with God. Similarly, in my own personal journey of faith, I found that growing up in my faith tradition I had a knowledge about God and Christ, but I did not understand who Christ was to me personally as my Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend. Through the kindness of others coming alongside of me and sharing with me passages of scripture, and their own personal testimonies, I was led to a personal understanding of Christ's love and what he has done for me. Through community, mentorship and reading about Christ's life, death and resurrection I came to a place of hope and understanding not only about who Christ is, but who I am in Christ.

The purpose of this study is to explore and present Christ's identity as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend as evidenced in four of Christ's healing narratives in the book of John. It is also to trace the divine process of a person moving from knowing about Christ, to having an encounter with Christ in which they are invited to choose to trust/believe in Christ's words, and thus gain a deeper experiential and personal knowledge of him as the foundation of their hope.

In this study, I will be using narrative analysis as a tool for understanding four selected healing narratives of Christ. Each narrative contains evidence of Christ's identity as either Creator, Healer, Redeemer or Friend, and also helps us identify a divine process by which an individual moves beyond having merely a knowledge of Christ to having a deeper experiential relationship with him.

Biblical Narrative Analysis

The books of the Bible include a variety of literary genres. A biblical narrative can be defined as a passage that consists of dialogue between two people. Analyzing a passage based on the literary features specific to its genre helps us to gather additional

meaning from the passage. I have chosen to use biblical narrative as a base for this study, centering around Christ's healing narratives, because it is in the verbal exchanges between Christ and those he is interacting with where we can identify the divine process of a person moving from a superficial knowledge of Christ, to that moment when they have the choice to believe/trust Christ's words, and as a result come to a deeper personal relationship with Christ.

The four narrative passages in the book of John that I will be analyzing are: (a) Christ as Creator: John 5:1-18; The Healing of the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda. (b) Christ as Healer: John 4:43-54; The Healing of the Nobleman's Son. (c) Christ as Redeemer: John 8:1-11; The Woman Caught in Adultery. (d) Christ as Friend: John 11; The Resurrection of Lazarus.

The analysis of each of these narratives will provide us with evidence of Christ's identity and also highlight a divine process of encountering Christ. Elements of this encounter will later be reproduced in a local church setting through a combination of ministry approaches, including small groups, bible study, one-on-one coaching conversations, and peer partnering as a base to help facilitate this process with the belief that the essence of evangelism and one of the purposes of the church community is to help facilitate this divine process of knowing Christ personally as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend.

The Importance of the Identity of Christ

Throughout Christ's ministry, no two people encountered him in exactly the same way. Some met him in sickness, and others in health. Some saw him in the city and others in the country or near the sea. Some searched for him, and, in other cases, it was he that

did the searching for them. Some met him while young, and others when old. Some requested after him for healing and others sought him to answer questions that came from the head, and from the heart. Each of these encounters left those involved with a unique understanding of Christ's identity. So diverse were the opinions regarding his identity that when Christ asked his disciples who people said he was, there was no single unified answer (Matthew 16:13-14). Yet for all of the diversity of encounters and opinions, Christ's varied interactions reveal four broad categories in which he interacted with humanity. These four categories, Creator, Healer, Redeemer, and Friend, are important to consider when we are introducing Christ to people who, like the apostles and others from the gospel narratives, are being drawn to obtain a deeper knowledge of him and invited to put their trust in him.

In his book *Our Creator and Redeemer: An Introduction to Biblical Covenant Theology*, Hans K. LaRondelle (2005) asserts that, "To 'know' the LORD means to know God as the Creator Redeemer" (p. 67). He expands on his thought a paragraph later, explaining that this knowing comes by a divine promise. He writes, "The divine promise was sure: 'I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD' (Jer.24:7). This experiential knowledge of God is the most characteristic feature of the new-covenant promise, compressed into one sentence."

We are invited into this covenant through this process of knowing, trusting and believing.

Christ gives us evidence of his Messiahship and his benevolent mission through his teaching and healing. In her book, *The Ministry of Healing*, Ellen White (1942)

maintains that, “During his ministry, Christ devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching. His miracles testified to the truth of his words” (p. 19). She adds that,

The Savior made each work of healing an occasion for implanting divine principles in the mind and the soul. This was the purpose of his work. He imparted earthly blessings, that he might incline the hearts of men to receive the gospel of grace (p. 20).

The Purpose of the Gospel of John: Belief in Christ’s Identity

Toward the end of his gospel John states his purpose in writing his account of Christ’s ministry, “But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). In the Greek, the word here translated ‘believe’ is *pisteo*, can be translated as both ‘believe’ or ‘trust’. The verse indicates that the identity of Christ is linked to the process of placing our trust in him. In several interactions in the healing narratives there is a liminal moment for those that are in crises and are encountering Christ when they are faced with a choice to believe/trust in his ability to act and in his words. These pivotal moments to choose to trust opens the opportunity for further trust and faith in who Christ is.

Christ’s Healing Narratives as Evidence of the Identity of Christ

Christ consistently answered the question of his identity through the truth of his words and the truth in his actions. Early in the book of Luke, Christ connects the prophetic dots during his reading in the synagogue at the beginning of his ministry. He reads the section of the scroll of Isaiah that points to his ministry, saying,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

This beautiful picture of restoration is the mission that Christ clarifies as the purpose of his life, death and resurrection. It is through this mission of healing that he proclaims his messiahship and the continuation of the covenant as creator and redeemer.

The same words are echoed in John the Baptist's question to Christ when John was unjustly imprisoned. In what was a difficult and potentially disillusioning experience for him and the disciples, John questions Christ saying, "Are you the coming one or do we look for another?" (Luke 7:19). Christ answered with the testimony of his words and works saying, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke 7:22). These words and works point to the testimony of Christ as Creator, Christ as Healer, Christ as Redeemer and Christ as Friend.

Key Elements in Narrative Analysis

There are several key elements that help guide us when conducting a narrative analysis. I have based my analysis on elements presented in J.P. Fokkelman's (2000) *Reading Biblical Narrative*. Elements such as characterization, actions, plot, time and space all contribute to discovering and understanding deeper meanings and significance of Christ's works and words.

Looking through the lens of narrative analysis is a powerful way to identify additional information just beneath the surface of the familiar texts in each picture of healing. It is to this analysis that we now turn our attention.

Christ as Creator: The Healing of the Paralytic at Bethesda

The contextual setup of this narrative was, according to the text, 38 years in the making, for this is how long the man has been unable to move (John 5:5). Spatial geographical elements are mentioned along with descriptions of the scene that Christ has entered into. The dialogue takes up most of the narrative and is what frames the theological message and timeless truth of Christ as Creator. The entrances and exits also become significant in the framing of the message as we have a dramatic healing with a before-and-after scene that begins with a crippled man lying helplessly on a mat and ends with the same man restored and walking from the scene carrying that same mat, now a powerful evidence for his testimony of healing. As dramatic as this healing is, probably the most important element in this passage is the use of temporal tools not only in regard to the description of the length of time that the man has been sick, but more significantly, the selection of the day on which Christ chooses to heal the man—the Sabbath day.

The dialogue and the time element of this narrative prove to be most important to the framing of the theological message in this passage and give evidence of Christ not merely as Healer, but also as the Creator.

Christ, who can be seen as narrative analysis' hero on a quest, comes from Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate to a pool (John 5:2). The narrator pauses to describe the scene that Christ is taking in: "In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed waiting for the moving of the water" (v. 3). Here the reader gets a picture of the vastness of the need, and, because of the details included by the narrator, we get a sense that we are not only getting the point of view of the narrator, but also the point of view of Christ. This technique becomes important as we realize that the point of view

moves broadly from seeing the crowd and empathizing with their anticipated hope for healing, to zeroing in to a specific man. By starting with the crowd as the foreground and then shifting the point of view to this man, the intimacy of the scene between Christ and the man is highlighted. Christ is now one-on-one with the man, which is where the point of view stays until the end of the narrative. It is at this point where the dialogue in the narrative occurs. John 5:5-8 says,

Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’

The narrative’s singularly important question occurs in verse six, where Christ asks, “Do you want to be made well?” The Greek word used in this question is a form of the Greek word *ginomai*, which means “to be made.” The first occurrence of this word appears in the gospel of John in the first chapter. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made.” In this extraordinary statement, John sets the stage for his entire gospel of Christ in the language of creation. As Sproul (2019) notes, it is as if John is beginning the account of Christ’s ministry by saying, “The One I’m going to tell you about, the One in whom there is life, the One in whom I want you to believe, is the One who created you in the first place” (p. 4).

This literary link points us back to the truth that the one who is asking the question is also the one who does the “making” or “remaking.” This important marker as an intertextual link helps us to understand the motive behind the question itself. The

question initially seems obvious, and hints at the desire of the man. Its obviousness makes the question unusual and helps it to stand out and as we look closer at the question, we can see the hint that within the question itself is contained the answer to the problem presented in the text. The longing for wholeness and restoration as being met by Christ's presence and inquiry. Christ neither preaches nor teaches, but skips directly to the matter at hand. As Swindoll (2014) notes, "Darkened minds don't need more information. Only *re-creation* will solve the problem of evil - light from within, life from above" (p. 29).

There is a sense that there is a deeper meaning to Christ's words and an invitation to the revelation of his identity.

The man's answer is a cry of helplessness that does not yet take into view just who it is that is talking to him, and it is a cry that echoes the cry of the helplessness of all humanity: "Sir, I have no man" (v. 7). The narrator's attention to placing this detail here is not insignificant. In the light of the miracles that Christ has already performed, his question hints that he is asking not merely as a man, but as the Creator of Men. The question also hints that there is a hope in a direction not yet considered, away from the things that the crippled man has been looking to, whether in the timing of the stirring of the waters, the "angels who stir the water" or other men to help him be placed into the pool (v. 7). Additionally, it recognizes the emptiness, discouragement, and despair that were the result of the man's misplaced hope.

Christ proceeds to say, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," and the man is invited to shift both his hope and his gaze and to reach out in faith beyond what he could see with his eyes. In the narrative, we have a picture of a man who is unable to move and is coping and relying on the muscle movement of his own eyes to grasp his hope. The

narrator presents a contrast between the discernment needed by the man as his gaze is fixated on the water to track and await the exact moment when it is “stirred”, to the spiritual discernment needed to see Christ as his healer and creator and the hope that he will be his re-creator as well. Wright (2009) notes, “The healing that Christ offers is the reality that the created world was waiting for, the beginning of the new creation” (p. 38). The man was challenged to exchange his anticipation of healing as coming from what could be seen with his eyes, to a help that he could only discern by belief alone.

Now the actions in this narrative begin. John 5:9 records “And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked, and it was the Sabbath.”

This verse contains multiple actions and concludes with the temporal element of “the Sabbath.” There are layers of significance here that can be explored, but for the scope of this study I will focus on the only action taken by Christ: his speaking the command, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” In detailing the immediate restoration of the man’s health, the narrator highlights the importance of Christ’s spoken word, and the catalytic power contained in them, that when trusted and believed lead to miraculous, exponential healing.

When clearly understanding the intertextual links that Christ is the word of God who can “make” and “remake,” we can add that it is by the action of his words, that this “making” and “remaking” is possible, which is another link to creation and still more evidence of Christ being the Creator, the very same God that was present and active at the creation of the world (Burge, 2000, p. 56).

The last and loudest echo in this narrative that links us to the Creator and to Creation is that this healing occurs on the Sabbath. This temporal element, used as a

backdrop to the healing, is part of the unfolding controversy in John regarding the identity of Christ. After questioning Christ about the healing, “The Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (v. 18).

The narrative closes with this statement of rejection, highlighting the difference between the crippled man’s simple belief, and the unbelief of the religious leaders who were entrusted with the knowledge of scripture and claimed an intimate connection with God. This contrast emphasizes two different kinds of knowledge. Knowledge about Christ as contrasted to the deeper knowledge that comes from experience with Christ and placing trust in him, and his words.

In this narrative we see Christ’s intentionality in seeking out this man and the necessary ingredients for the healing to be that of trust and belief, not only in something beyond the man himself, but in something that man recognizes as greater than himself.

Though we cannot pinpoint the exact moment when a person’s heart and mind take hold of hope and believes Christ’s words, we can derive from this narrative that when Christ is present, and presented, there is opportunity for hearts to be stirred. And once the Creator’s words are believed, restoration and joy-filled action follows.

This narrative reveals that often individuals may have no prior knowledge at all of Christ before encountering him. They are without bias or preconceived ideas. They have only need, but when they meet Christ in person, hope is awakened inside of them, and by the power of Christ’s presence they are given the courage to hope and to trust his words, and therefore to experience healing and restoration.

Christ as Healer: The Healing of the Nobleman's Son

The healing of the nobleman's son is a much shorter and simpler narrative, but full of significance. At first glance, what is most quickly noticeable about this narrative is that the length is shorter than the two narratives that sandwich it. The preceding narrative, Christ speaking to the woman at the well, is much longer with more dialogue, and the following narrative, the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda, is also longer, containing more descriptive details. The shortness of this narrative, combined with its simplicity of dialogue, creates a very tight frame to bring to the foreground that which is most urgent and important in the passage.

Two key elements of narrative analysis are combined in the outset of this narrative. The literary structure, as well as the tempo, in regard to urgency and intentionality, quickly reveal what is most important and essential, and sets the tone not only for this narrative, but for the entire gospel of John.

With other descriptive elements set aside, the distilled essence of the narrative becomes relationships in general, and relationships between father and son in particular.

Prominent among the themes that emerge in the book of John is that of Christ's mission from the Father, and his relationship to the Father.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary notes,

John refers again and again to the fact that Christ came as the living expression of the mind, will, and character of the Father, as in the 26 instances where he quotes Christ speaking of the Father as "him that sent me," or equivalent words, or in his use of a synonymous verb in referring to Christ's mission from the Father. (v. 5, p. 894)

Commented [JN1]: No author names are included in the original commentaries.

This narrative helps to prominently display the idea that the greater framework of the message, modality and mission of Christ's healing ministry are all anchored in the

context of relationship. Relationship is integral to the divine process of understanding who Christ is as our Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend.

Characterization and movements are important as seen in this narrative. There are five different characters in this narrative: (a) Christ, (b) the nobleman/father, (c) the nobleman's son who is sick, (d) the servants, and (e) the "you" that Christ addresses in his rebuke that falls in the middle of this narrative. Additionally, there are three areas of movement that involve three of these characters: (a) Christ, (b) the nobleman/father, and (c) the nobleman/father's servants.

The first movement is that of Christ as he enters Galilee after leaving Samaria. His movement is defined as intentional, and the trajectory of this movement can be traced all the way back to the beginning of John 4:3-4, "He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But he needed to go through Samaria." He now enters into Galilee where the text says that the Galileans "received him" (v. 45). Christ comes to Cana where he has already performed his first sign and will now be performing his second sign. With this geographical context being mentioned by the narrator, *and* Christ choosing to perform two signs in the same exact location, we can begin to gather that the evidence of "signs" becomes significant in this narrative. This is also supported later in the narrative when Christ says, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe" (v. 48). This idea of "signs" is an important thread that shows up throughout the narrative.

The second movement that is important to notice is that of the nobleman/father. Christ is met by the nobleman after he has heard that Christ has come out of Judea into Galilee, bringing with him an urgent request (v. 47). This is where the action begins. In

fact, these verses contain the most action words in the entire narrative, six in all. The text reads as follows:

So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where he made water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to him and implored him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. (vv. 46-47)

In these two verses the elements of time and space, actions, and characterization all collide and center us in the plot of the narrative.

In the plot we can see two heroes identified, the first being Christ and the second the nobleman. In narrative analysis, heroes can be defined as people that are on a search or quest to obtain something of value (Fokkelman, 1999, p. 79).

In the beginning of this narrative the narrator reveals that what is most valuable to the nobleman is the healing of his son. As the reader, we are not as able to easily see what is most valuable to Christ and what *his* quest might be. However, the literary structure and the use of dialogue will give us a clue.

The literary structure shows a clear beginning, middle, and ending as defined by the entrances and exits, as well as the actions and the dialogue.

The action list of words at the beginning of this narrative (v. 46) stand in sharp contrast to the apparent lack of action in the next verse. It is in this middle that we begin to see what is most valuable to Christ.

In this verse, Christ only speaks, and there is no noticeable physical movement to act on the request of the nobleman, though the nobleman has asked Christ to “come down and heal his son” (v. 47).

This response is unexpected to both the man and to the reader, each of whom may expect a very different response from Christ to the urgent request of a father for his son

who is “at the point of death” (v. 47). This slowing down in the narrative is a signal that what comes next is important. The use of temporal and spatial elements, along with the dialogue, mark this middle point as the location where the theological message is contained.

Christ says, “Unless you people see signs and wonders you will by no means believe.” Köstenberger (2009) notes this as a rebuke for an “unwholesome preoccupation with the miraculous” (p. 205). At this moment, in this pause, what is being “seen” and what is being “sought” are challenged, revealing deeper layers into the narrative. Time and space are at play here in the slowing down of the actions where the relationship of Christ, the nobleman, and his son are made central. Here, in the intimacy of a close-distance conversation, the one-on-one relationship is highlighted as what is most important. Through what Christ says, he re-describes the object being sought as “believing.” This is where we can see that the narrative is hinged on the need for revelation in order for there to be healing and transformation. “Believing” emerges as the object that Christ-as-hero is seeking to attain, which is congruent with the motivation for the Gospel of John, “That they may believe” (John 20:31). Christ names the desire to what is being sought and tests them as far as what is most convincing to them. In this way the issue, question, and controversy of what is being sought after and what is convincing is both highlighted and emphasized.

As we pause and zoom out of this liminal moment, it is helpful to highlight the two main themes that can be drawn out as significant in the passage. The first is the relationship, specifically, that of the father and son, and secondly, the quest and what is being “seen” and “sought.” When the man is introduced in the beginning of this narrative,

his identity is based on his social status. He's not simply any man with an urgent plea, he is a "nobleman." Later in the text we see an important shift in the way this man is described by the narrator. The emphasis is no longer his high social status, rather, he is the "father" of a son who lives.

Is it possible then to draw the conclusion that the sign that is needed, the one that is most convincing and that most likely leads to faith, is linked to the relationship between a father and his son whose life is in peril? Is it possible that the heart of the narrative rests in this relationship and the father's desperate quest to save his child's life? These possibilities echo loudly in the silence as the reader awaits the response of Christ to the man who continues to press him to take action on his behalf. Christ's response is simple and powerful: "Go your way...your son lives" (John 4:50). The narrative states that the man believed the word that Christ spoke to him, and went his way. As Kruse (2017) appropriately notes, the father's immediate response is a model not merely of ordinary faith, but of exemplary faith (p. 36).

The movement now continues and we are aware that we are at the conclusion of the narrative. "And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives" (v. 51). So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Christ said to him, 'your son lives'; and he himself believed, and his whole household" (v. 53). Ultimately the man obtained two objects instead of one: his son lived *and* he believed. The hero then has what he truly has sought.

Parallels between both heroes, the nobleman/father and Christ, can be drawn. At the conclusion of the narrative, as well as the gospel of John, we can see that both were on a quest whose desired object revolved around belief/believing. Life, and its

restoration, was conditioned upon belief. As we look at the greater metanarrative in the book of John we also see the divine Father-Son relationship at the center of the mission to save life, and that this life-saving quest depends on belief/believing.

The manner in which signs are used in the narrative is also thought-provoking. The narrative begins in verse 46 with “So Christ came again to Cana of Galilee where he had made the water wine,” thus turning the reader’s attention to the prior miraculous events. Then, in the pause before the miraculous healing, Christ is recorded as stating “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe” (v. 48), highlighting the conditionality of the belief in himself as a savior: “You people won’t believe in me as your savior *unless* you see signs and wonders.” The narrative concludes with “this again is the second sign Christ did when he had come out of Judea into Galilee” (v. 54), highlighting for the reader Christ’s willingness to do the miraculous on behalf of humanity. The nobleman’s engagement with Christ, like ours, comes in stages. Kruse’s three stages of “knowing about Christ, trusting in his word and experiencing his grace” (2017, p. 164) are helpful in understanding both this narrative and our own encounters with Christ. It is step-by-step, and not all at once, that we come to know Christ.

This brings us to the greater theme in the gospel...of believing not only based on seeing, hearing, or even experiencing healing, but also ultimately based on what is the most convincing sign of all: the giving of life. As John 3:16-17 states,

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Now the reader is prepared to identify Christ as the hero being sent by his Father on a quest for those who believe and receive their object of desire. We also can derive that in order for this to happen, Christ, the savior of mankind, can first be identified as the wounded healer whose desires to go on a quest and bring healing and restoration to all who seek.

Christ as Redeemer: The Woman Caught in Adultery

The narrative of the woman caught in adultery is powerful and points clearly to Christ as Redeemer. I have chosen to include this narrative as a healing narrative for my study with the theological view that forgiveness of sins is at the heart of healing.

The book of John begins with this powerful statement about Christ's identity and purpose saying, "Of his fullness we have all received grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses. But grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." From the outset of the gospel of John we can understand that the law as it stands by itself is not sufficient to save sinful humanity. John the Baptist, upon seeing Christ, declares, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The powerful themes of law, covenant, justice and mercy carry over and are all included in this narrative, contributing to its richness and its profound theological truth of the identity of Christ as Redeemer.

The narrative elements that are crucial to observe, those that bring light on the deeper spiritual truths, are the use of context and setting, characters and characterization, time and space, actions, and literary devices, such as dialogue.

The context of the events of the narrative, its setting and characterization, help us understand the plot. Immediately prior to the events of this narrative, the text reveals that tensions are rising and divisions are increasing, with the question of Christ's identity at

the very center of the controversy. The Pharisees challenge those that are believing in Christ and are relying on the weight of their authority saying, “Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not ‘know’ the law is accursed” (John 7:49). This statement puts in contrast the two different kinds of knowing, those that have a knowledge about something as opposed to an experiential knowledge that leads to transformation.

It is important to note the significance of the temple being the setting in which these important lessons on law, grace and truth are challenged. The temple is where God has historically revealed himself, his law and his mercy to humanity, and has always been the context in which law and judgment meet mercy and sacrifice. This was also the place where these truths were taught to the people by the priests. However, the truths surrounding the requirements of redemption had been confused, and in this narrative it seems that Christ has intentionally chosen this temple setting to restore understanding of the law and mercy and to reveal himself as the redeemer.

What also makes the plot of this narrative so robust are the characters and who and what they represent. John 8:1-4 presents the main characters in this narrative: Christ, the Scribes and Pharisees, the woman and “the people.” The weight of each of the characters in the narrative is not equally distributed as Christ is the primary center from the beginning. His words and actions return our focus and attention to himself throughout the narrative, as the point of view shifts.

John 7:53 - 8:6 gives us the setting where we are amply moved into the plot. John says,

And everyone went to his own house. But Christ went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came to him;

and he sat down and taught them. Then the Scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do you say?' This they said, testing him, that they might have something of which to accuse him. But Christ stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger, as though he did not hear.

In this narrative there are several spatial elements that are described. Christ is placed in the center as the one who is teaching (John 8:2), but as we move forward in the narrative there is one who is "set in the midst." It is "a woman caught in adultery, in the very act" (v. 4). As we continue to read, not only is a person placed in the center, but the dialogue is inserted that puts "the Law of Moses" in the center as well. John 8:5 states "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned." Even beyond these items calling for the reader's focus are the Scribes and Pharisees, the accusers in the narrative. These are the ones who have "found" her guilty and are the ones who have been entrusted with holding the proverbial scales balancing law and justice. Law, justice, and guilt all seem to converge in a way that threatens to crush the woman.

Yet the law as they were practicing it was not weighted on the side of justice, but rather injustice. Whereas God's express judgment on both parties committing adultery held them equally guilty and sentenced them both to death (Lev. 20:10), the Scribes and Pharisees had let the man go free, while condemning only the woman.

There is a flurry of action words that describe the entrance of the Pharisees and Scribes, having 'caught' and 'brought' the woman and 'setting' her in the midst. The only action that we can observe from the woman is that which is reported by the Pharisees as being "in the very act" of adultery. These action words emphasize that the woman is in an inescapable and vulnerable position of guilt and shame. It is not clear from the point of view of the narrator yet what it will mean to be exposed and in close proximity to Christ.

At this point in the narrative what becomes defining and pivotal are not the actions of either the Scribes and Pharisees, or even of the woman, but rather those of Christ. At this moment his actions become more powerful than words.

John 8:6 says, “But Christ stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger, as though he did not hear.” Words and accusations fade into the background, and in the silence the actions taken by Christ begin to reveal the truth of his identity, not merely as a teacher, but as Redeemer. As the narrator shifts the point of view from the words that are said to the actions of Christ, the deeper spiritual connections can be made. The allusion of the writing on the ground with his finger reminds the onlookers of the writing of the ten commandments by the finger of God.

All is silent. Everyone is hushed and waiting. The words that will break the silence become central. After writing on the ground with his finger Christ stands up and says, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first” (v. 7). His words echo those of Deuteronomy 17:7, but instead of the requirement for first action being merely that of witnessing, it is now sinlessness.

And then the text says, “He stooped down and wrote on the ground” (v. 8). Again there is silence, and in that silence John 8:9 says, “Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Christ was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” Bruce (1983) notes that “Christ’s ruling therefore came as a challenge to the conscience of each man who heard him. The embarrassment was no longer his, but theirs” (p. 416).

At the beginning of the narrative it seemed that all the elements of law, justice, and guilt were inescapably rushing the woman to her death, yet a few short moments later

death has fled and all that is left is Christ and the woman. The plot continues in verses 10 and 11, the climax of the narrative: “When Christ had raised himself up and saw no one but the woman, he said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’” Christ’s second question is a judicial one, asking, literally in the original Greek, “Has no one passed sentence on you after having determined your guilt?” She said, “No one, Lord” (v. 11). For the entire narrative, these three words are the entirety of what the woman says. Her near voicelessness throughout her shame and trial exemplifies her powerlessness and highlights her absolute need for deliverance. Additionally, verse 9 highlights the fact that she has been standing in the middle of her accusers throughout the ‘trial.’ This aspect of the narrative highlights the fact that she is surrounded, outnumbered, with nowhere to turn, to run, to hide. And then Christ said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (v. 11). Unexpectedly, she is free, redeemed, delivered. She knows her guilt, and Christ knows her guilt, but the redemption of the woman testifies to the truth shared earlier with Nicodemus, that the Son of God had not come to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:17). “Christ,” noted Ryle (2019), “is a Savior. He did not come on earth to be a conqueror, or a philosopher, or a mere teacher of morality. He came to save sinners” (p. 17). Of all of John’s narratives, and even of those contained in the other Gospels, this one is the most exquisite example of Christ as redeemer.

By the time the narrative concludes, each of the characters has undergone a transition: Christ is introduced as a teacher, is put into the role of judge, and ultimately proves to be the redeemer. The woman is introduced as guilty, is brought to trial, and is ultimately pardoned, freed, and forgiven. The Scribes and Pharisees are introduced as

righteous law-enforcers and the accusers but, at the end, are silently self-condemned as sinners just as much in need of a redeemer as the woman they brought to Christ.

In this narrative we can see that forgiveness is at the heart of the divine process that God leads us into towards healing and restoration. That in our guilt and shame we can know Christ as our redeemer, trust in his words of compassion and love and orient our lives around the freedom that we find in his presence. When we understand that Christ bore the weight of our guilt and we receive his pardon, then we will see the issues around law, grace and truth in its proper light. This narrative reinforces the thought that a knowledge about the law is not enough. When in our vulnerable and helpless places we place our trust in him, we will receive his grace.

Christ as Friend: The Resurrection of Lazarus

This is the last of the narratives in my study, and it is also the last of the healing narratives in the book of John. It is the climactic event that sets off the beginning of the events that led to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. It is interesting to notice that the remainder of the events in John are bookended by two resurrections, those of Lazarus and Christ.

In this narrative, we hear personal and intimate words from Christ directed towards Lazarus that reveal the tender heart of Christ. With these tender expressions of love and sympathy, we can hear the heart of Christ as a personal friend. In this narrative the first important narrative tool that becomes apparent is the use of dialogue. It is the dialogue that moves us through the narrative to the climactic actions of Christ. In the dialogue between Christ, and his disciples, and especially with Martha and Mary, the tender notes of intimacy and the truth of Christ's friendship are revealed. But along with

the intimate expressions of comfort and hope are placed Christ's most powerful 'I am' statements, which assert the truth of his identity and invite those listening to 'believe'. The literary devices unite both the intimate and the powerful together. These words of love surround the powerful act of the resurrection of Lazarus. These beautiful and powerful displays of love give us the assurance that Christ is not only a powerful Creator, but also a personal friend.

Throughout the gospel of John, these three siblings, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, are seen as a family that has individually and collectively been impacted by the mercy and forgiveness of Christ. Yet, the theme and call to 'believe' shows up even more strongly in this narrative as Mary, Martha and all the disciples are now challenged to place all their hopes, in the midst of their sorrow, onto Christ.

The spatial elements add depth and movement to the narrative. The narrative opens with physical distance between Christ and his friends, a distance crossed by a message to Christ that "The one you love is sick" (John 11:3). That Mary and Martha were troubled enough to send the message to Christ indicates the severity of Lazarus' illness, as well as their great need. Ryle (2019) notes that this verse teaches that "Jesus Christ is the Christian's best Friend in the time of need" (p. 186).

The true depth of Christ's friendship with Lazarus is apparent from the very opening lines of the narrative: "Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick" (John 11:3). The sisters use a form of *phileō* to describe Christ's love for their brother. Two verses later John notes, "Now Christ loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (v. 5), using a form of *agapaō* to describe his understanding of Christ's friendship with Lazarus: Christ's friendship with Lazarus is not only that of brotherly love, but of unconditional love.

The narrative continues, and when invited by Christ to return to Judea again with him the disciples reply “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone you, and are you going there again?” (John 11:8). Christ later in the narrative shares with the disciples in the following words, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). The narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus begins with this clear revelation of Christ as friend, who is willing to place himself in danger for those he loves.

John’s recording of Christ’s statements, after he arrives at his friend’s home are also revealing of his friendship. He gives these beautiful words of promise to his friend Martha, to strengthen her faith and comfort her heart, Christ says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26). Martha’s sorrow at her brother’s death had already been poured into the ears of Christ: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (v. 21). Christ in his friendship speaks to Martha’s deepest pain, in the loss of her brother, with the words “Your brother will rise again” (v. 23). The repetition of the word believe (nine times in eight verses: 11:15, 11:25-26, 27, 40, 42, 45, 48) in this narrative underscores the self-stated purpose of John in writing his gospel: “these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).

Words of comfort combined with powerful action are at the heart of this narrative where comfort and hope take center stage. This most powerful act, the resurrection of Lazarus, that is about to be performed is preceded by a touching act that displays the heart and sympathy of Christ both as a friend of Lazarus as well as of humanity. John 11:35 simply and profoundly says, “Jesus wept.” This verse becomes the

center of the narrative, and all who are present witness this demonstration of love. While Christ's weeping could be for many reasons, the text shares that those gathered at the tomb knew why he was crying: "he was weeping for a dearly loved friend" (Bruce, 1983, p. 246).

Up to this point, the narrative's dialogue has been between Christ and other people. But in verses 41 and 42 we hear Christ addressing his Father. In his first detailed prayer to the father in the book of John (two other prayers are later recorded in John 12:28 and John 17:1-26), he highlights the fact that he is speaking out loud so that the people hearing him will believe that his Father sent him to this world.

We now arrive at a place where in a singular verse, we see two narrative analysis tools, action and dialogue. The fact that both are here emphasizes the activating power in the word of Christ. In the powerful command of "Lazarus! Come out!" we hear the voice of the creator of the heavens and the earth...but also the voice of a healer, a redeemer and a friend.

The acts of Christ weeping at the tomb of his friend and of calling Lazarus out from the grave are the most vulnerable and powerful in all of the gospel of John. This narrative communicates to us that both the personal and the powerful coexist in Christ. It also helps us to understand the motivations behind the most important act in all of the gospel...Christ's own death and resurrection.

Conclusion

These four healing narratives reveal the identity of Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend. The end result of each narrative is of people in need encountering Christ, and through the divine process of placing their trust and belief in him, their faith

in him is deepened, as well as their personal relationship with him. Encountering Christ, whether as Creator, Healer, Redeemer or Friend, answers the cry of the heart of humanity. John 1:29 extends the invitation: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” As we take in the many-faceted treasures of the identity of Christ in vision and in heart, and make the choice to receive him, we find the answer to the longing and the quest for restoration.

In the revelation of the identity of Christ, the narratives further reveal several key principles to be considered in the development of an approach that addresses whole-person healing: (a) People need to encounter Christ, (b) in the midst of their journey for wholeness in various areas, (c) in his various aspects of Creator, Healer, Redeemer, and Friend, (d) in a way that moves them from a superficial understanding of him to an experiential experience with him.

CHAPTER 3

A REVIEW OF WHOLENESS/RESTORATION, EVANGELISM, DISCIPLESHIP, SMALL GROUPS, AND COACHING IN CURRENT LITERATURE

There are many approaches to and models of evangelism, discipleship and small groups. In researching these topics and how to be more relevant in both the church and community context, I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has the opportunity to create and offer holistic models based in its distinctive messages of hope and healing. These models integrate mission, message and modality through the combination of five key areas: wholeness/restoration, evangelism, discipleship, small groups, and coaching.

One of the strengths of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that of integration. This praxis of integration extends not only to principles of healing for the whole person, but can also extend to wholeness for the church as the body of Christ. This strength is rooted and grounded in our systematic theology of restoration. As such it provides fertile soil for methods that grow organically from biblical principles that point to hope and healing as unshakeable common ground where both starting points and turning points can occur in the process of transformation. I will be looking at literature related to wholeness/restoration, evangelism, discipleship, small groups, and coaching.

Mission and Restoration to Wholeness

Jesus describes his mission for restoration and wholeness as the purpose of his life, death, and resurrection. According to Luke's gospel Jesus says,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (NKJV Luke 4:18-19)

These messages of hope and restoration are at the center of Christ's mission.

Although many experts on evangelism and discipleship have varying definitions, at the very core of evangelism and discipleship is an invitation to enter into what Christ offers as a journey of restoration to wholeness. Pope-Levison (2020) writes,

No one definition of evangelism is universally accepted, yet common to those presented here is the promise of evangelism that issues invitations, forges relationships, relieves hunger, quenches thirst, restores fruitfulness, and reconciles estranged parties. If a single biblical text can encapsulate this vision, it is Isaiah 52:7: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." In this lovely encomium, the verb euangelizō ("to bring good news") appears twice in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint). The messenger brings good news of peace and salvation—which, in the context of Isaiah 40–55, is restoration to wholeness and return from the harsh realities of Babylonian exile. In essence, the promise is of a return to a place of safety and prosperity, which, when we think about it, is a splendid description of the purpose of evangelism. (Introduction, para. 25)

In her eloquent words, Pope-Levison presents a holistic view of evangelism that promises wholeness and restoration. This view seems to echo the heartbeat of Christ's mission as described by White (1942), who wrote "It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character" (p. 17). White adds, "From Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were to be made whole."

Both writers are consistent in communicating that at the heart of God's mission is a desire to emancipate from sin and restore to wholeness. Both seem to agree and hold the door open for a more holistic approach that has restoration to wholeness as its core message. White (1942) maintained that, "Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated" (p. 141).

In his article entitled, *The Call and the Commission: A Complete Discipleship Picture*, Achata (2018) aptly states that, "Discipleship is about more than beliefs and practices, it's about the process of God restoring a person to wholeness" (para. 1). He continues and says,

Before the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples (Matt. 28), Jesus commissioned his disciples to heal, cast out demons and raise the dead (Matt. 10). Understanding both commissions is vital because together, they complete the discipleship picture." (para. 2)

This promise and invitation of wholeness seems to correlate with the longing of humanity. Peterson and Peterson (2019) write, "We continue to have an unquenchable thirst for wholeness, a hunger for righteousness" (p. 15).

Wholeness includes every facet of our being. Finley and Landless (2014) note that, "The Biblical view, which emphasizes the reality and importance of the physical, spiritual, and mental elements of our humanity, becomes especially vital in the search for health, healing, and happiness" (p. 21). They add that, "Our minds and bodies are inseparable aspects of our existence, and any program that seeks to bring us the best life, needs to account for all aspects of our fascinatingly complicated humanity." Cummings and Reed (2008) wholeheartedly agree, maintaining that, "Health is about *wellness*, and wellness is more than just the absence of disease. Wellness is being mentally fit,

physically robust, spiritually vital, and socially comfortable” (p. 15). Swenson (2004) clearly sees the connection between what can happen when there is a lack of balance in our lives and what happens if we ignore important needs. The result will be pain that is proportionate to our “margin less” living. He states, “Everything must function in balance. If this balance is disturbed, disease is the result. We get sick. We feel pain” (Chapter 13, para. 2). He adds to his point saying, “Pain comes alive when it talks – even more so when it cries” (Chapter 2, Section *Too Much Pain*, para. 1).

Seamands (1981) believes that pain can extend beyond the physical to include the emotions. He reveals that early in his pastoral ministry he faced challenges meeting the needs of the church members saying, “Their problems were not being solved by the preaching of the Word, commitment to Christ, the filling of the Spirit, prayer, or the Sacraments” (p. 6). He saw the need to adopt approaches that embrace an understanding of Jesus as empathizing with a person’s feelings a picture of Jesus who is concerned with healing of their whole being and a sympathizing friend. He writes about his understanding that Jesus is “the wounded healer” sharing,

If He merely understood the *fact* of our infirmities, that would be good enough. But I’ve got better news for you. He even understands the *feeling* of our infirmities, not just the crippling’s, not just the weaknesses, not just the emotional hang-ups and the inner conflicts, but the pain that comes from them.” (pp. 38-39)

Nouwen (2013) lays the foundation that not only are ministers called to help those that are emotionally wounded, but also that their own transformation of personal pain can be a source of help to others. He insightfully shares, “Thus like Jesus, he who proclaims liberation is called not only to care for his own wounds and the wounds of others, but also to make his wounds into a major source of his healing power” (p.82). Scazzero (2015) agrees with this powerful truth, building his work on the thought that the transformation

of a minister's personal inner life will deeply transform their church, their team and, subsequently, the world. When thinking about these concepts, and considering again White's (1942) statement that "In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated" (p. 141), it seems important to consider the holistic health of both the church members and the minister and to remember that when coherence exists in their individual lives there can be more effective ways for mission.

In strategies to becoming mission-driven churches, the development of the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of the members and the leaders is integral. Brantly et al. (2015) note that "A church's lack of relational health may still be a detriment to advancing the work of God" (p. 48), before optimistically adding that "God calls us to a life of hope and wholeness." They go on to note:

God's design is to restore us to the rich connection with Him and one another that was present in the Garden of Eden- total health; spiritual, emotional, and mental wholeness. So wholeness is intrinsically bound up with a life of hope, joy, and peace; and a people who are looking for the coming of Jesus. (p. 49)

Evangelism

Through our own personal journey towards wholeness we can lead others to be whole. Samaan (2014) writes, "The greatest possible qualification we can ever have for our witnessing is to have Christ live out His life in and through ours. The world longs for those who will reveal His love, power, compassion" (p. 19).

Miles (1983) notes "Evangelism is being, doing, and telling the gospel of the kingdom of God, in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit persons and structures may be converted to the lordship of Jesus Christ" (p. 47).

The emphasis here is that the doing flows from the being. That being in a relationship with Jesus and being transformed by Him precedes the doing of “making” disciples and that growth in Christ precedes the growth of the church.

Kidder (2011) shares, “God wants His church to grow and prosper. It takes place most effectively through those whose lives are God-glorifying and church-edifying” (p. 17). He continues:

The power for church growth is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit calls people to faith. The power of God’s Spirit is what helps them advance in discipleship. Whenever we find comprehensive church growth it is because the Holy Spirit has come afresh on His people. (p. 24)

The literature seems to point to the truth that the strength for doing the work comes from being equipped by the Holy Spirit. Effectiveness is directly related to, a deep connection with God, a conviction to share the gospel and a commitment that seems to never waiver. In his book, *A Journey Home*, Bright (2003) shares his faith in God as he faces his incurable disease of pulmonary fibrosis. Writing in the last six months of his life he speaks about his life-long work of being an evangelist and leading thousands of people to Christ:

From this vantage point, it is clear that only two things in this life really matter: (1) our health, and (2) the assurance of our salvation. Next to the Lord, of course, I prize my family and love them dearly, along with many wonderful friends and fellow staff. But everything else, especially material things, no longer hold my interest. (Chapter 1, para. 5)

These poignant words remind us of the call to faithfulness throughout our work and life in Christ and the consistent hope Christ offers through every season of our lives.

Reid (2009) shares encouraging words when he writes:

We are called to faithfulness. Faithfulness to share is our measure of success. Our Lord Jesus did not win every person with whom He shared. We are ambassadors.

Ambassadors do not speak on their authority but for another. We must remember that God holds us accountable for obedience, not perfection. (p. 248)

The emphasis here is on the same truth from the previous chapter that it is Christ as Creator who does the “making” and the “re-making”. Our role is to faithfulness in following Him.

The Challenges for Evangelism Today

Evangelism in the United States faces many challenges today. Barna (2019) notes that:

Churchgoing is in decline. In 2003, three-quarters of US self-identified Christians reported attending church at least once in the previous six months (77%). Today, just 60 percent of Christians say they attended a worship service during the past six months.” (p. 24)

Geisler and Geisler (2014) agree saying, “Something is missing today in our approach to evangelism. Methods and tools used in the sixties and seventies don’t have the impact they once did” (p. 19).

White (2014) maintains that because of current realities we need to shift our approach from an Acts 2 model to an Acts 17 model. He writes,

The more post-Christian a person is, the more evangelism must embrace not only event/proclamation, but also process *and* event/proclamation. Earlier models were almost entirely event/proclamation-oriented such as revivals, crusades, or door-to-door visitation. This is only effective in an Acts 2, God-fearing Jews of Jerusalem context. Process models are needed in Acts 17, Mars Hill, *nones/skeptical* contexts.” (p. 101)

White also believes that the models that invite people into community and then Christ, are not as effective. He states, “Today it is *cause* that arrests the attention of the world” (p. 101). He continues his argument saying, “If cause is the lead and community close

behind, the church is at a deficit. In the minds of many, our causes have been mundane (let's raise money for a fellowship hall) or alienating (moral majority)" (p. 101).

In light of this argument it seems that there is room for a model that emphasizes both health and creation not only as starting points but also as *cause*.

Some have adopted a creation/gospel and have found that going back to Genesis and tracing the storyline of Christ as Creator and Redeemer helps where other methods have failed. Ham (2004) says:

When Paul explained who the real God is (the God of creation) and laid the foundation of the gospel about all of us being descendants of one man, Adam (thus explaining the origin of sin and the need for salvation), and then dismantled their belief in pagan gods, he then presented the salvation message. They began to respond. (para. 7)

Price (2010) agrees with White and Ham:

We are too happy to die the quiet death of irrelevance while the incredible treasure of what we have discovered about God should lovingly move us, in freedom, to tell others. Unless we really take a long hard look at what we do – and what Paul did – and the huge differences between the two, then we are likely to continue to be the irrelevant voices on their sacred reservation. Rather than those, who – like Paul in Acts 17 and Corinth – were able to cut into, and attack the ideas of the day – persuasively, attractively, relationally, lovingly, forcefully. (para. 12)

Gladden (2003) writes “The cities of Acts 17 help us understand our world today. When it comes to spiritual receptivity, interest varies widely from place to place, even from nation to nation” (para. 8).

The creation/gospel is a powerful message for both the religious and the nonreligious in that it speaks to hope and values, not only for those that may need healing physically, but in also the care of the environment. Both personal health and the health of environment are causes that are increasingly important on an individual and global level. In thinking about holistic models that hold central the goal of restoration and wholeness it

seems important to also include the care of the environment under the banner of stewardship.

Evangelism as Event and Process

Many believe that evangelism is a process. Finney (1992), in speaking about evangelism “up-front” methods and events, comments “The fact is that most people come to God much more gradually. Methods of evangelism which fit this pattern are urgently needed” (p. 25).

Some believe that the event is salvation. White (2014) says,

In light of today’s realities, there must be a fresh attention paid to the process that leads people to the event of salvation. The goal is not simply knowing how to articulate the means of coming to Christ (the 10 moment); it is learning how to facilitate and enable the person to progress from a 3 to a 7 or 8, where he or she is able to even consider accepting Christ in a responsible fashion. (p. 93)

He continues saying, “Every approach, every program, every service furnishes a particular environment that will either serve the evangelistic process or hinder it” (p. 93).

The previous chapter explored a scriptural foundation and highlighted a divine process in which people move beyond a superficial knowledge about Christ to an experiential knowledge of Christ. These “events” or encounters with Christ brought them to a place in which they had opportunity to make a choice to place their trust in Him. The four healing narratives that were studied reveal a moment when each person was invited to make a choice to believe Christ’s words, and thereby receive healing and/or forgiveness from him. It was in these “events” and encounters that their faith would be increased. MacArthur (2011) comments on the decision that came next: “To follow Jesus required recognizing that He was divine” (p. 2).

Many believe that the “seeker sensitive” models of evangelism are not as relevant as they once were in the light of the reality that fewer and fewer people are “seeking” to be a part of a church or religious community. There are many who describe themselves not as atheists but as “apatheists.” This term, coined by Rauch (2003) in an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* to describe his own spiritual condition, describes a state in which one has “a disinclination to care all that much about one’s own religion, and an even stronger disinclination to care about other people’s” (p. 34).

These individuals are not actively looking for a church or religious community to belong to, but social science researchers have shown that many still have a longing for connection and belonging. Brown (2017) offers a valuable insight when she notes that people “want to be a part of something...we need true belonging...belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us” (p. 31). People who may no longer be “seeking” a church or a religion are likely to still be on a quest. This questing usually involves a yearning for something beyond itself and is driven by hope. If, as Keller (2018) posits, we are “irreducibly hope-based creatures” (p. 153), then there still may be ways of designing evangelism to meet this new generation of non-seekers with the promise in view of the possibility that the common ground for all questing could be that of hope. Another equally strong desire is that of connection. Hari (2005) in speaking about addictions and sobriety, writes, “The opposite of addiction isn’t sobriety. It’s connection” (*Conclusion*, para. 32).

These two examples reflect the truth that though there may be some who have apathy in regard to religion, there still exists a deep craving in society for a message of restoration and wholeness that can be realized in the context of community.

God's Story – Our Story – Narrative

Dodson (2014) takes up the challenge of analyzing and overcoming the obstacles in communicating the gospel. He writes “How can we turn down our evangelistic noise and cut through the cultural confusion in order to communicate a clear winsome gospel message?” (p. 12). He wisely states,

Evangelism doesn't have to be mechanical; it can be intuitive and relational. It doesn't have to be pressure-driven and event oriented. Listening to people's stories, we can discern how to best share the gospel with them in a natural, relatable way. (p. 24)

This gentle yet wise approach to evangelism taps into the truth of the power of story. It reminds us that people want to share their story, and that listening and understanding their story is important and integral to respecting who they are. In listening to their story and sharing the story of Christ and His mission, something is awakened inside of each of us.

Peterson (2011) shares,

Acts is a detailed story of the ways in which the first church became a church...A story develops a sense in us so that we, alert to the story of Jesus, will be present and obedient and believing as we participate in the ways that the Holy Spirit is forming the Jesus life in us. The plot (Jesus) is the same. But the actual places and circumstances and names will be different and form a narrative that is unique to our time and place, circumstances and people. (pp. 118-119)

This thought emphasizes the importance of our testimony and understanding how our story and God's story intercept.

Harrington and Hull (2014) note that “The story line of the Bible is the story of God's relationship with humanity and God's long-promised kingdom as outlined in the Old and New Testaments” (Chapter 1, *The Storyline of the Bible*, para. 1). Bauer et al. (2013) comment similarly that

According to Revelation 12:11, Satan is overcome by the combination of ‘the blood of the Lamb’ (His story) and ‘the word of [our] testimony’ (our story). When His story is combined with our story, it is a powerful witness God can bring to someone. (p. 11)

As seen in the previous chapter an encounter occurs when two people on quest meet. In light of the narrative analysis in the previous chapter, an encounter could be described as when God’s story and our story intersect, leading to a testimony of his work in our lives.

Spiritual Conversations

Being in relationship, listening to a person’s story and sharing the hope in the gospel all revolve around conversations. The majority of the literature around both evangelism and discipleship seem to revolve around conversations that help to facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit in comforting, convicting and teaching.

Packer (2012) shares:

According to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners. Anyone who faithfully delivers that message, under whatever circumstances, in a large meeting, in a small meeting, from a pulpit, or in a private conversation is evangelizing. (p. 45)

Earley and Wheeler (2010) write, “Often as we engage people in everyday conversations, they will say something that can become the springboard into a spiritual conversation. Wise evangelists will prayerfully listen for an opportunity to turn an ordinary dialogue into an eternally significant conversation” (p. 123).

Newman (2017) notes that “Solomon understood the complex nature of people. He realized that conveying content makes up only a small part of the communication process. Being sensitive to a person’s heart comprises a much larger portion” (p. 50). He goes on to say:

Real conversations, the ones that connect hearts and transfer understanding, need breathing spaces. We don't have to jump in with words as soon as the other person pauses. In fact, we need time to hear and digest what has been just said before we jump in with the next thought that comes to mind. (pp. 245-246)

Along the same lines of thinking, Chan (2020) explains, "Probably the most important way we can do this [evangelize the same way that you want to be evangelized] is by listening to the other person talk first" (p. 52).

Jesus always invited people into an understanding of who he was and what his mission was in the context of relationships.

Coleman writes, "Knowledge was gained by association before it was understood by explanation" (p. 38). He goes on to observe:

John and Andrew were invited to "come and see" the place where Jesus stayed (John 1:39). Nothing more was said. Yet what more needed to be said? At home with Jesus they could talk things over and there in private see intimately into his nature and work." (pp. 38-39)

This helps us to understand that an essential part of evangelism is building relationships. Cavey (2018) supports this saying, "Jesus is more about relationship than religion" (p. 141). Pippert (2020) writes:

Having positive, effective spiritual conversations is truly possible when we ask God to guide us to the people he is seeking and we invite his presence into our conversations, and when we authentically connect with others and genuinely listen and ask good questions. More than anything else, spiritual conversations are possible when what we do and say reflects the love of Jesus. (p. 196)

All of these ingredients help to create a context for conversation to happen that leads to the building up of faith and community. Burrill (1997) says, "The purpose of our evangelism is to bring people into community" (p. 82). Stiles (2014) seems to agree with this thought when he writes, "We want to have evangelism in community. We long to have friends alongside us when we share our faith" (p. 46). Holleman and Holleman

(2020) support this thinking, sharing, “As we gather people together in communities, we increase the likelihood of gospel conversations and we solve a significant crisis in our world” (p. 137). It is important to remember that inviting people into community is not just about witnessing to people. It is about living out the life that Christ called us to live, to love one another in the way that He loved us.

Discipleship and Evangelism an Integrated Approach

When it comes to the question of the relationship between evangelism and discipleship many think that you cannot have one without the other and still fulfill the mission of Christ. Briggs and Jethani (2020) note “Jesus engaged in discipleship *and* evangelism at the same time with the same people. It was an event *and also* a process...Jesus was discipling those who didn’t yet believe *and also* evangelizing those who already did” (p.132). Hull and Harrington (2014) believe that the church continues to struggle with a disconnected mission. They exert that, “Disciples have a mission and the mission is to reach people. Evangelism necessitates disciples who have matured to the point of reproduction. Discipleship includes evangelism and evangelism is a part of discipleship” (*Introduction. sec. The Question*). They believe that the way we present the gospel is the cause of a disconnect with mission and posit that “Jesus as the gospel” is what helps to reconnect the two. They believe that what is necessary is “A fuller gospel presentation and an invitation to a fuller, covenant-making response that will link evangelism and discipleship” (Introduction, para. 2-3). Many still ask the question why we prioritize one over the other. Briggs and Jethani, (2020) say, “Evangelism...is crucial to life in Christ. But why is it that we don’t view discipleship as equally crucial. One is not more important than the other” (p. 134). They continue saying, “If we bisect

evangelism and discipleship, we miss out on the rich dimensions of life available to us in the kingdom. Evangelism, yes. We need both.”

Easley and Easley (2020) agree, believing that when we are lacking balance between the two that the church as a body will not function properly. They observe that:

The Great Commission involves the components of reaching *and* teaching the people. This is only possible when the church is bearing fruit in the way Jesus described...When true disciples of Christ bear fruit, they focus on both evangelism and discipleship. There will be no separation.” (Chapter 3, section *Regaining Balance*)

Gallaty and Stetzer (2015) follow up by saying that:

Evangelism and discipleship are two oars attached to the same boat. With only one oar in the water, you will row in a circle. Both oars are required to navigate in a straight line to reach your destination. We need evangelism and we need discipleship to carry out the Great Commission. The gospel is received through evangelism and then lived out through ongoing discipleship.” (p 165)

Discipleship

Many experts in discipleship understand that transformation is a process.

VinCross (2020) confirms that, “The most radical shift we can make in our understanding of discipleship is to move towards a life-long, intentional, process orientation. Rather than a quick fix or overnight metamorphosis, discipleship is a journey” (Chapter 8, *Intentional Process*, para. 1). Ogden (2012) notes that progress in transformation is measured by content being learned and applied, disciplines being practiced and lifestyle changes taking place (p. 430). This idea of knowing, being and doing becomes a hallmark of biblical discipleship.

Thayer (2018) asserts:

Discipleship requires the transformation of the whole person. Paul says that anyone who is in Christ has become a new creation. The old has gone; the new has come. But the “old” doesn’t leave and the “new” doesn’t come automatically.

Someone—many people—must partner with the Holy Spirit to teach us how to grow in Christ. Discipleship teaching and learning involve much more than collecting knowledge.” (Introduction, para. 1)

These thoughts echo White (1940) who wrote,

The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual work of the Holy Spirit.” (p. 172)

In the process of transformation God calls us to move beyond a superficial knowledge of him to an intimate relationship and an experiential knowledge of him. Buehring (2007)

expands on this saying,

God invites us to know Him personally, not merely to know of or about Him. He desires to draw us into a real relationship as personal and tangible and the most enduring we’ve experienced in life. He desires for us to have first-hand knowledge of Him, not to settle on the second-hand hearsay of others. He calls us to know Him for ourselves.” (p. 73)

Moore (2012) emphasizes the closeness and the importance of the personal relationship of Jesus with his disciples:

Jesus taught His disciples to pray by praying with them. He taught them to heal by healing others in their presence...After demonstrating *what* to do, He sent His disciples on outreach missions of their own. He also showered them with approval when they returned. (p. 47)

Coleman (1993) notes the experiential nature of Jesus’ relationship with his disciples when he observes “Having called his men, Jesus made a practice of being with them.

This was the essence of his training program—just letting his disciples follow him” (p. 33).

Dodson (2012) similarly observes this intimacy noting that: “Jesus did not view his disciples as mere students. He viewed them as family...For Jesus, discipleship was rational and *relational*, the second aspect of being a disciple (p. 30). Putnam (2013)

agrees saying, of Jesus that “He invested in them [the disciples] by talking to them when they sat down, when they walked along the road, and when they laid down” (p. 33).

In the previous chapter the emphasis for the process of transformation had to do with recognizing the identity of Christ as our creator, healer, redeemer and friend. This recognition is an important step in the discipleship process. Bonhoeffer (1995) writes, “When Jesus called his first disciples, they obeyed and followed him because they recognized him as the Christ” (p. 226).

Thayer (2018) adds to this point saying,

At the close of John’s Gospel, the disbelieving Thomas finally confessed his belief when he saw the wounds of Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). “His confession is the proper response of every Christian disciple—of all believers in Jesus and of the church at all times—to the revelation in Christ.” Continuing belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Redeemer is basic to discipleship.” She continues and says, “John said that the purpose of his entire gospel was written “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). (Chapter 2, section 5, para. 7)

Hull and Sobels (2018) note that “Discipleship for Jesus was first and foremost about being with his disciples – being with them so he could influence them to be more like him” (p. 66).

Being with Christ lead to a deeper experiential knowledge of Christ that could only come through time with him. Though this process of being with Christ there was a shift in head knowledge to heart knowledge. Hull and Sobels continue: “The Holy Spirit used the disciples’ time *with* Jesus to open their hearts to *him*, and while we are not Jesus, as disciple makers in the body of Christ, we make a similar impact by spending time with those we are disciplining” (p. 66).

At each encounter we are called to make a choice to trust Christ.

Blackaby et al. (2003) share their insight and experience saying, “Throughout Scripture, we see God taking the initiative in people's lives. He would encounter a person and reveal what He desired of them. The revelation was always an invitation for people to adjust their lives to God” (Chapter 8, *God's Purposes*, para. 1).

In each encounter Christ calls us into deeper communion with Him.

Small Groups

Several scholars explore the community aspect of small groups, finding a solid biblical basis for their origin, continued existence, and mission. Icenogle (1994) delves into the rich theology of small group community asserting that,

The small group is a generic form of human community that is transcultural, transgenerational and even transcendent. The call to human gathering in groups is a God-centered (ontological) and God-directed (teleological) ministry, birthed out of the very nature and purpose of God's being. God as Being exists in community. Humanity as the imaged being of God were created in community and are called to live and mature in community. The natural and simple demonstration of God's communal image for humanity is the gathering of a small group. (p. 13)

He goes on to note that the very nature of God is face-to-face community (p. 67).

Donahue and Robinson (2001) enter into the dialogue on the biblical basis of community by expressing the thought that there is a “community gene” (p. 23) that has been passed down from the triune Creator to the creation.

Gladden (2011) understands the small group as “a community of people who challenge each other to become all that God destined them to become” (Chapter 7, *Small Groups* section, para. 3). Stanley (2004) resonates with this, writing of authentic community being one of God's biggest dreams for humanity (p. 40). Hartwig et al. (2020) state that small groups are “an example of an attractive, irresistible community to an unbelieving world” (p. 15).

The need for an understanding of community and its relationship to spiritual growth is a theme that is voiced and echoed by most of the scholars on small group ministries. The craving for community is not just a result of the fall and the need to have restored relationship with God and others. Rather this need for community was present pre-fall in the creation of the world. It would seem from this thought then that the purpose of community was not an afterthought or a remedy, but rather part of the divine ordinance of God.

Cloud and Townsend (2003) believe the key ingredients are grace, truth, and time, and that the purpose of the small group is reconciliation. They believe that growth requires all three of these aspects. God's grace is:

Brought to us, not created or produced by us...Other people can give us expressions of God's grace that we cannot produce for ourselves. In a good small group, people get things from others that they are unable to give or get for themselves. (p. 43)

One of the most significant aspects of small group ministry is that of the group leader.

Earley and Gutiérrez (2010) ground small group leadership in the life and example of Jesus himself. Their thought is that his "pattern was gathering a few to transform the many" (p. 284). McBride (1997) states that the key to good groups is leadership (p. 17).

Johnson (2011) shares his insights on leadership writing that,

The small-group leader is the person appointed and recognized to serve the groups by facilitating and enabling it to achieve its purpose and goals. The group leader's role is essential to the success of the group. The leader needs to be a facilitator of group discussion and personal relationships more than they need to be an authority or distributor of information. (p.120)

Gladden further develops this idea, noting that the role of the small group leader is not one of a teacher who merely dispenses information, but is that of a facilitator that encourages discussion and dialogue between all group members (p. 58).

To be able to listen well is another important aspect to being a leader. Poole (2003) shares that, “whenever we are heard at such a deep level, we feel the freedom to safely express and process our ideas, problems, impending decisions, and emotions. Such listening communicates how much the listener really wants to know and understand us” (p.147).

Coaching

Coaching is another component of a holistic model that can help foster transformation. One of the benefits of coaching is in providing an experience in which someone listens and asks questions that helps another person to go deeper into their strengths. This helps people find untapped potential within themselves. This process can be affirming and empowering and can also help people reach their goals and recognize their spiritual gifting (Creswell, 2006, Chapter three).

Coaching is not about the coach coming to the meeting with their own agenda. It is about the coach helping the person being coached to find their own answers, to draw on their own wisdom, as well as helping them to discern what God may be trying to produce in that person’s life. Comiskey (2011) shares:

It seems to me that the bedrock foundation for coaching is servanthood. The coach is the servant. The coach is trying to place the coachee in the driver’s seat. The coach doesn’t lord over the one being coached but attempts to wash his or her feet. The coach draws out the wisdom that already resides deep within the coachee.” (Chapter 3, par. 32)

He continues along this train of thought saying:

Coaching stems from the understanding that the New Testament is under the headship of Jesus. Coaching is recognizing that we are all a part of the whole body of Christ. Coaching is catching the Spirit of Jesus who came to serve and not to be served.” (Chapter 4, par. 12)

The models for coaching are all rooted in the relationship between the coach and the coachee. Kimsey-House et al. (2011) suggest “Coaching is not so much a methodology as it is a relationship” (p. 15). The emphasis in co-active coaching is around peer-relationships and the concept that the coach and the coachee “have equal, though different, roles. They are Co-Active in the relationship, so they are cocreators, collaborators, in a way.” (p. 16)

Scott (2017) has brought special emphasis to the power of conversations and their role in transformation. She states: “The conversation is the relationship. If the conversation stops, all of the possibilities for the relationship become smaller and all of the possibilities for the individuals in the relationship become smaller.” (p. 5)

Coaching can help a person grow to achieve their personal vision and helping them to connect to Christ’s vision for their life and to the overall vision for the mission of restoration and wholeness. As a subset of small groups coaching is another modality that helps facilitate the process involved in a holistic model of evangelism and discipleship, where mutuality, conversation and relationship remain central.

Conclusion

Though not exhaustive, the above review of literatures focuses on wholeness/restoration, evangelism, discipleship, small groups, and coaching for the purpose of creating a holistic evangelism model for the local church. The literature reviewed reveals that the process of transformation is related to our beliefs of who Christ

is. This belief permeates the whole life. In the goal to design a model that leads to transformational whole-person health, aspects of physical, emotional and spiritual health need to be considered as a part of stewarding our relationship with Christ.

The literature also shows that conversation and relationships are central to both an evangelistic and discipleship model.

In conclusion, the literature review highlighted the following concepts that are vital for inclusion in a holistic model: First, the understanding that God's desire is to restore us and reconcile us to relationship with himself. That this restoration is complete, including every facet of our being. Second, that cause is vital to reaching a generation of people no longer seeking after God. Third, that the process of evangelism and discipleship must allow individuals to come to God gradually giving them a place for belonging, relationships, and the opportunity to be heard. Finally, the understanding that discipleship and evangelism belong together and that they complement and complete one another. These concepts form the foundation for a holistic model defined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

AN INTERVENTION THROUGH A HOLISTIC DISCIPLE-MAKING GROUP

The theological insights from chapter two and the literature review in chapter three suggested a holistic small group model in the line of Pope-Levison (2020) and Stanley (2004) from the previous chapter, an authentic community in which relationships are forged and whose content and design relieve the hunger and thirst for health and wholeness. The project was called *Journey to Wholeness*. The plan was an eight-week holistic program that emphasized emotional, physical and spiritual health. The objective was to create an environment, content, materials, and opportunities by which participants could be empowered to make choices towards their physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness. The most important of these opportunities would align with Hull and Sobels (2018) from chapter three, allowing the participants to spend time encountering Christ as creator, healer, redeemer/savior and friend. The desired outcome was that as participants see Christ taking the initiative in people's lives mentioned previously by Blackaby et al. (2003), they might decide to take their own next step toward the One who desires their healing, happiness and restoration.

The purpose of this project was to address the problem of deficits in the traditional evangelistic approaches which are not designed to impact the whole person. Seventh-day Adventists theology is replete with a whole-person emphasis. However, traditional evangelistic approaches usually address only the cognitive and spiritual

aspects of bringing people to growth in Christ. A methodology that combined the aforementioned models of ministry with models that address emotional maturity and needs for authentic community provided a greater opportunity for transformation of the individual.

The theological insights from chapter two provided a scriptural base for the project implementation. The four healing narratives that were analyzed revealed a divine process of a person moving from a superficial knowledge about Christ to an experiential relationship with Christ. This intervention created an environment in which this process can occur.

Chapter three established that at the heart of Christ's mission is the desire for restoration to wholeness and that the complete evangelism/discipleship picture is about the process of restoring wholeness to that which is broken. In the review of the literature it was discovered that connection is vital to health and restoration, and that cause, community and Christ are vital to this process. It was also discovered that conversations in the context of discipleship groups and coaching can provide starting points and turning points for transformation. There are several components built into the intervention that allowed for these connections to happen. These components provided connection to cause, community, and Christ and allowed for discovery of purpose as well as opportunities that helped participants discover meaning in their life stories. The components of the project were as follows: Weekly group sessions, bible study, wellness presentations, discussion times and sharing testimonies, prayer, journal reflection, and coaching. These all worked together to provide a foundation for a process and journey to wholeness and mature discipleship.

Ministry Context

At the time of this project, the Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church was a friendly and diverse congregation which met at 6657 Stevensville-Baroda road in Stevensville, Michigan. There were approximately 400 church members on the books and approximately 250 people attended regularly. The congregation was largely middle to upper middle-class families. Age ranges within the church varied from a large population of infants and children to an equally large number of retired individuals. The Stevensville SDA Church was a part of the Michigan Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, located in Lansing, Michigan. The church was located close to Andrews University, the Seventh-day Adventist flagship university in North America. Although the church was not directly affiliated with Andrews University, a large number of its church members either attended or worked for the university.

The church was active in supporting and sending missionaries overseas and was also involved in several outreach activities that include evangelistic meetings and health outreach events such as weight loss programs, health seminars, and participating at the health tent at the local county fair.

Session Design

The discipleship group was conducted in the Stevensville multi-purpose room. The room was divided into two sections. This first section contained a number of round tables and seats, while the second section contained a gas fireplace and couches in a more intimate space.

Upon entering the room, participants signed in. They chose a seat at the tables where they had light refreshments and mingled and conversed with one another. This was where the first half of the nightly program occurred.

In the second part of each evening's program, the group was invited to transition to the couches next to the fireplace. In this more comfortable and intimate setting they watched the videos associated with the intervention and had conversations in a more intimate setting.

Materials for each week were located on the round tables at each place setting. The list of these materials can be found in Appendix C.

The discipleship group consisted of eight to 10 members.

On the first night of the intervention, each participant was offered a survey to complete with whole-person health questions. A follow-up survey was intended to be offered in the concluding week of the program to help members assess and celebrate their progress. I shared details of my own journey to wholeness with the participants, highlighting how two bouts with Lyme disease affected my own wellness. I believe that, as seen in chapter three, Nouwen (2013) is correct that our own wounds can be a source of healing power, and sought to encourage participants by sharing the hope that I found both in and through my own pain. I hoped as well that my story of God journeying with me would be, as Bauer et al. (2013) noted in the literature review, a powerful witness to each of the *Journey to Wholeness* participants of God's mercy, grace and love.

At the first part of each session for the remaining seven weeks, participants were given opportunity to share their testimony as well about how they had been encountering God through the process and materials of *Journey to Wholeness*.

At the end of each of the eight-week sessions, participants were invited to continue studying the whole-person discipleship principles in an ongoing support group that met once a week at either a participants' home or at the church itself.

Content

In line with the recognition of whole person health in both Finley and Landless (2014) as well as Cummings and Read (2008) from the previous chapter, I used the CREATION Health group materials and combined them with a series of short Bible studies that I had written with an emphasis on Christ's healing narratives. I had chosen eight narratives that would go along with the eight principles that lead to whole-person transformation. I also implemented a coaching component where-in I had a coaching session with each of the members every two weeks. As noted by Comiskey (2011) in chapter three, I was attempting to assist the participants to find their own answers by helping them draw on their own wisdom.

The first principle, "Choice" provided the most important principle for the entire program's efficacy. It not only is the beginning step for a change in the direction of a lifestyle that embodies the "abundant life", but it is also the paramount step towards a decision to surrender to Christ as one's personal Savior. Special emphasis was taken on this first week's principle and the principle was reinforced each week as the members of the group were invited to make a choice at the end of each session.

By highlighting the gift of choice and extending an invitation each week to make choices towards wholeness, members were being empowered to make continued choices in regard to their emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Reinforcing this principle

each week helped to provide an opportunity for the group members to continue to make choices in the context of a supportive community.

The CREATION model was created by Florida Hospital and is a faith-based wellness plan. Its purpose is to help individuals to achieve their goals in whole-person care. It addresses the multi-needs of individuals in regard to a vital picture of wholeness by promoting the eight principles: Choice, Rest, Environment, Activity, Trust, Interpersonal relationships, Outlook and Nutrition.

This philosophy and program are a part of Florida Hospital's grander vision to continue to extend the healing ministry of Christ to their community.

There were several reasons why this model was chosen as part of the project. The first was its focus on both healing and prevention, as well as its ability to introduce biblical spirituality in a non-threatening way. Spirituality has been shown to be a significant component to the development of skills which contribute toward a person's resilience. The program also provided a way to continue ministering to people beyond the hospital walls with an approach to wellness and belief that is sensitive to those who may not have any faith background at all. Its approach addressed aspects of being and doing and aligned with a holistic model of both discipleship and evangelism. Miles (1983) noted in the literature review, being, doing, and telling the good news about Christ and his kingdom. Lastly, the program offered hope and invited people to begin thinking about God in a way that was non-threatening.

The Creation Health material was combined with a picture of Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend through the healing narratives of Christ that were presented and were a part of the study.

Each week's presentation on health was paired with a picture of Christ as healer of the whole person. Each week a portion of scripture was read that took a look at one of Christ's healing and miracle narratives. A brief bible study with reflective questions was used in the exploration of each narrative. The guide was based on a narrative analysis of each of the chosen healing narratives that was prepared before the launching of the program.

The purpose was to have some time devoted during each of the sessions to having a look into Christ's miracles and his healing ministry. This not only helped to create the connection with Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend, but it also gave a picture of hope that could be grasped regardless of where a person was on their journey to wholeness.

The principle that I operated from in creating this section and facilitating this format was based on the scriptural promise that when Christ is lifted up He will draw all creation to Him. This aligned with what White (1942) said: "In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated" (p. 141).

In preparing the study guides, eight healing/miracle narratives were selected and examined through the lens of narrative analysis. Narrative analysis took into account literary structure and the narrator's perspective in order to reveal additional aspects of the texts easily missed by a cursory reading. Key features of the text were analyzed that included such literary devices as time and space, setting, repetition, how the narrative was organized and further components that helped to give insight into each passage. Narrative passages always contain verbal discourse between at least two parties. The use of narrative analysis for this project was with the understanding that the narratives are true

historical accounts and that the Word of God was inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”)

After examining the bible passages chosen for *Journey to Wholeness* through the lenses of narrative analysis, a series of short Bible study guides were made that included highlights from the text and reflective questions for the group to discuss. Those passages, and their integration into each evening of the program, were as follows:

Presentation 1 – Choice

Passage for Consideration: The Healing of the Paralytic in John 5:1-9 (Read by Presenter)

“After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked” (New King James Version, 1982, John 5:1-9).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. What choice was this man offered?
2. What possible answers could he have given in return?
3. Why is choice so important to our physical well-being?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Choice”.

Introductory thought: “Choice is the first step toward improving your wellbeing. Before we can achieve positive changes in any area of our lives it’s important, to choose to do so. Conscious decision-making is key to experiencing the positive impact of good choices” (CREATION Health, 2009, p. 3).

Presentation 2 – Rest

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Invitation to Rest in Matthew 11:25-30 (Read by Presenter)

“At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light” (New King James Version, 1982, Matthew 11:25-30).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. What is Jesus offering in this text?
2. What does his offer recognize about mankind in general?
3. How does the absence of rest affect us?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to

CREATION Health presentation “Rest”.

Introductory thought: “This part of our CREATION Health Seminar, “Rest Assured,” is designed to help you understand what proper rest is, why it is so important for your well-being, and how you can best achieve it” (CREATION Health, 2009, p. 33).

Presentation 3 – Environment

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Healing of the Demoniacs in Luke 8:26 - 39 (Read by Presenter)

“Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!” For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, “What is your name? And he said, “Legion,” because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed *them* saw what had happened, they fled and told *it* in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen *it* told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him” (New King James Version, 1982, Luke 8:26-39).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. How do environments impact a person both mentally and physically?
2. What shifts in environment are noticed in this narrative before the healing and afterwards? Where do the men desire to stay after they were healed and what is Christ revealing his purpose is for them?
3. What can you observe about the shifts in environment as it relates to healing and the importance of connection, belonging, and the great commission?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Environment”.

Introductory Thought: “Environment is what lies outside of us, either immediately or in our world at large...In this section of the CREATION Health seminar, we will encourage you to create the best possible environment for yourself and those around you” (CREATION Health, 2009, p. 65).

Presentation 4 – Activity

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Healing of the Paralyzed Man in Luke 5:17-25 (Read by the Presenter)

“Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who

can forgive sins but God alone?” But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God” (New King James Version, 1982, Luke 5:17-25).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. In what ways would this malady of paralysis negatively impact this man?
2. Christ doesn’t immediately address the man’s obvious physical problem; he first addresses his spiritual problem.
3. What is significant to you about Christ asking the man after he is healed to pick up his mat and walk?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Activity”.

Introductory thought: “Activity includes both mental and physical movement and development...In other words you will get the best performance from your mind when you exercise your body, and you will get more from your body when you regularly exercise your mind” (CREATION Health, 2009, p. 103).

Presentation 5 – Trust

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Healing of the Woman with the Flow of Blood in Luke 8:43-48 (Read by the Presenter)

“Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, “Who touched Me?” When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ But Jesus said, “Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.” Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace” (New King James Version, 1982, Luke 8:43-48).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. What do you think this woman might have been thinking just before she was able to touch the border of Christ’s garment?
2. Why do you think Christ commented on her faith?
3. What are some benefits of living a life where trust is key?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Trust”.

Introductory Thought: “A loving, all-powerful, all-knowing Creator God is the focus of this seminar. When we come to Him just as we are, He works to transform us and to re-create us into His image” (CREATION Health, 2009, p. 133).

Presentation 6 – Interpersonal

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Healing of the Thankful Leper in Luke 17:11-19 (Read by the Presenter)

“Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men

who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” So when He saw *them*, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well” (New King James Version, 1982, Luke 17:11-19).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. In what way does gratitude play a role in the healing of the leper in regard to his emotional, physical and spiritual health?
2. What role does gratitude play in our interpersonal relationships and our relationship with Christ?
3. How does gratitude contribute to our overall well-being for us today?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Interpersonal”.

Introductory Thought: Interpersonal relationships are important to your well-being. Knowing you have the support of others has been shown to positively contribute to improved health.

Presentation 7 – Outlook

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Healing of the Man Born Blind in John 9:1-11 (Read by the Presenter)

“Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he

was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he.” Others *said*, “He is like him.” He said, “I am *he*.” They said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight”” (New King James Version, 1982, John 9:1-11).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. As the narrative opens what is the disciples outlook regarding misfortune?
2. What does Christ’s answer to the disciples teach us about how we view the world?
3. Think about the outlook of each person in the narrative and what lessons can be drawn for us today?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Outlook”.

Introductory Thought: A person’s ‘outlook’ is their general view of life. Research strongly suggests that an optimistic outlook positively influences one’s health and disease progression.

Presentation 8 – Nutrition

Passage for Consideration: Christ’s Feeding of the Multitude in Matthew 14:13-21 (Read by the Presenter)

“When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” He said, “Bring them here to Me.” Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children” (New King James Version, 1982, Matthew 14:13-21).

Example Starter Discussion Questions for Participants

1. What does Christ’s compassion for the hungry crowd tell you about God?
2. What strikes you about how Christ met their physical needs that evening?
3. What is the deeper spiritual lesson Christ is trying to communicate?
4. What does this narrative reveal to us about Christ as Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend?

After five to ten minutes of brief discussion on the opening questions, the presenter segued to CREATION Health presentation “Nutrition”.

Introductory Thought: “In the beginning, God gave us the best diet possible. Today, scientists are discovering more and more about the amazing benefits of eating a diet that closely resembles the diet of Eden” (CREATION Health, 2009, p. 213).

Timing

The program was scheduled to begin April 10th, 2019 and, though intended to be held for eight consecutive Wednesday evenings from 7:00 -9:00 pm was, because of circumstances related below, actually held for nine consecutive Wednesday evenings.

Recruitment

The intervention sought to recruit eight to ten participants. Advertising for the intervention was through personal invitation, announcements printed in the church bulletin and through invitations from the pulpit during Sabbath services. Personal invitation cards were created that showed the dates, location, and an RSVP number. Announcements for the church bulletin were prepared, and a flyer was printed to be handed out to interested people.

Coaching

The objective of coaching was to come alongside the participants and help facilitate their growth process. As facilitator, I met weekly with each participant either in person or over the phone for a 50-minute coaching session. This time together, as suggested by Kimsey-House et. (2011) in the literature review, was intended to build a relationship with the participant. The goal of each session was to help participants take the next step towards goals they identified during the eight-week sessions. This time also reinforced and empowered their choices towards emotional, physical and spiritual health. The aspect of coaching was a life-impacting skill, especially as it is centered upon helping people move to maturity as followers of Jesus. That is, beyond mere doctrinal

ascent to an experience of creating deeper self-awareness and setting and realizing goals for spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical development.

Conclusion

My hope for the *Journey to Wholeness* program was that it would become a starting point for an on-going series of outreach programs that the church would conduct cyclically throughout the year. Feedback from the first series provided insights into possible options for further adaptation of the program, especially as it concerned its topics, duration, and format. Living and promoting ministry to the whole-person, in connection with Christ, was one of the shared values that was already present with many of the members and the core leadership of the Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church. This value will likely remain, providing a solid foundation upon which to experiment further with fulfilling the great commission, utilizing a whole-person approach, and taking participants deeper into the experience of becoming mature disciples.

CHAPTER 5

A NARRATIVE ABOUT THE PLANNED INTERVENTION IN A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP COMBINING MULTIPLE WHOLE-PERSON ASPECTS WITH THE GOSPEL

The Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Stevensville, Michigan is a rural church attended both by the local community as well as university students and their families from the nearby flagship Seventh-day Adventist seminary. It has a long history of active support for missions and regular community outreach programs involving health-related presentations. The problem which I was addressing was that customary approaches to evangelism and goal of the intervention was to develop, implement, and evaluate an eight-week evangelistic ministry consisting of the integration of whole-person aspects with the gospel. This intervention began in March with recruitment resulting in a total of 14 participants. Following recruitment, the actual sessions began on April 10th and, though scheduled to run for the next eight weeks, actually ran for nine weeks. Each small group session ran for an hour and a half. Details of the sessions were recorded and a concise description of the intervention is given in this chapter.

Pre-session Planning

The first step towards preparation was to incorporate prayer into my daily devotionals about who might participate in the *Journey to Wholeness* program. Other

important considerations were the use of the room in the church facility where the group would meet, and when the launch date would be. I meet with the pastor of the Stevensville church and the local church board and they enthusiastically approved the use of the space, and expressed excitement about the program. They also asked how they could support me in the process. Though I did not anticipate a lot of needs, the enthusiastic response and offer of support from the church board and the pastor were invaluable to the success of the program.

The next step was to order program-related materials. Some materials were directly ordered from the *Creation Health* website, and some materials were created to curate the *Journey to Wholeness* small group. A binder was chosen and contained an invitation card, the small group discussion guide, a place to put the weekly Bible study guides that discussed each of the eight healing narratives of Christ, and extra paper for note taking.

Creation Health journals were ordered along with notepads, pens, magnets and water bottles to be part of a welcome pack given to each participant.

People who might be interested in participating in the *Journey to Wholeness* program were given *Creation Health* pocket health plans and three additional items: (a) a card that had room for a person to fill in their contact information and the best times that they could be reached, (b) the invitation card for the *Journey to Wholeness* event, and (c) my business card.

The church board had asked if I would work with the head of the Evangelism and Outreach Committee in launching the program. I agreed and contacted him and after

explaining the concept to him, he offered his support and advice and offered to be present with me as I gave the initial announcement/invitation during the church service.

I spoke with the pastor of the Stevensville church and made arrangements to make the announcement of the program for the next two Sabbaths prior to the week of the launch date.

Recruitment

The goal for the discipleship group was to start with between 10-12 participants knowing that some people might not attend for the entire eight weeks.

Recruitment consisted of a two-fold approach: the first was to make an announcement two weeks prior to the launch in front of the church to cast a vision for the program about this discipleship/evangelistic opportunity. The second was to invite people personally. On the first Sabbath during the church service the first of the two presentations were made.

After the service, during the pot luck time, I mingled with the those that were present and was able to sign up eight of the participants, seven of whom stayed in the entire program.

On the following Sabbath before the service I saw three women who were standing in the foyer talking with one another. I greeted them and shared the program idea with them. All three were interested in joining the program, and gave me their contact information. Later on, during the week, follow up phone calls were made to all of the contacts that were gleaned, 14 in total. Each follow-up phone visit took between ten to fifteen minutes to understand their needs and interest level in participating in the program and have prayer for them.

Advertising for the program was also done at two local health food stores. To gain permission to post flyers for the *Journey to Wholeness* program, visits were made to both of the stores, where I spoke to the persons in charge. One health food store was on the Andrews University Campus. They were already accustomed to area churches posting upcoming events and programs and they freely advertised the program posted on a bulletin board near the entrance of the store.

The other health food store was owned by a Christian couple. I met with the wife and co-owner of the store who I had been acquainted with from some years previously when I was attending the university as a student. We had many discussions in the past about our shared values. The couple was active in their Christian faith. They expressed appreciation for holistic living and were intentional about integrating their faith beliefs into their personal and professional lives. When I visited with her at her store, I shared the flyer. After inquiring about the program and its purpose, they agreed to advertise the program.

Follow up – RSVP

For each of the participants, I followed up with a brief phone call to remind them of the date, time, and place for the first session. Several of those interested in participating were juggling challenging schedules as health care workers and parents of young children. Arrangements were made with those who might not be able to attend the first night to visit in their homes, with the purpose of delivering the packages of materials and their water bottle and get better acquainted.

Coaching meetings either by phone or in person were offered, and meeting times set up from the outset for those willing to engage in the *Journey to Wholeness* program

but who knew of scheduling challenges that might prevent them from attending sessions in person on a given date.

Individualization

In light of these inevitable challenges that would present themselves around program attendance in the group, adjustments were made to accommodate each individual's needs throughout the program with the overall goal in mind of connecting each participant to Christ and community. After each personal interaction, a time of prayer and reflection occurred with an after-action review, which guided the decisions and approaches for the duration of the program. Bi-weekly coaching meetings were also scheduled with my DMin. adviser to receive support and guidance throughout the process.

Site Preparation and Session Planning

The Stevensville church is an ideal church for small group functions. Their multipurpose room has several couches, an electric fireplace, a TV, and nice lamps. For the intervention, the room was divided in half, with one half containing tables and chairs, and the other half containing the electric fireplace, multiple couches and chairs around a television connected to a DVD player.

Prior to the initial meeting, a colorful chalk board sign was posted in the entry way of the church directing guests to the meeting room which was directly to the left of the sign. All four glass doors were unlocked and one door was propped open to help with easy access. The entry way also was near a wheelchair-accessible entrance. Four round tables and one rectangular table were set up in the room, with the rectangular table near

the entry point of the room. This table included a sign-in sheet, name tags, free reading material about wholeness and pitchers of water.

Three of the round tables were decorated in the center with vibrant-colored flowers and candles resting on top of heart-shaped mirrors, symbols of the HEART Goals that would be introduced in session one and utilized thereafter for the remaining seven sessions. Orange and green pens with the *Creation Health* name were placed also at each table in decorative glass containers filled with colored orange lentils. Bright green *Creation Health* journals (which could be used to record HEART goals) were placed in the middle of each table, and a Flagler Hospital *Creation Health* handbook was provided to engage and record SMART Goals and paired with each *Journey to Wholeness* binder and placed on the table at each place setting. Each binder contained a *Creation Health l Group Discussion Guide*, a *Creation Health* quick self-assessment, a *Creation Health* magnet and note pad, extra blank paper and the first week's Bible study of Christ's healing narrative. During the course of the program participants were given a different Bible study guides that asked reflective questions about Christ's healing narratives, and were given a journal to write their reflection in. There were eight healing narratives in total that corresponded to the eight weeks.

The fourth round table was filled with a variety of finger food refreshments, small plates, and napkins.

Each evening session was broken up into sections: an initial gathering time around the round tables to eat and pick up materials, a middle time centered around the video played on the television and subsequent discussion with testimonies and prayer,

and a concluding time again at the round tables, where participants journaled about their goals.

The group meetings were held every Wednesday night starting at 7:00pm, with the goal being to end around 8:15 each night. This was designed to allow participants, especially those having young children, to get back to their homes at a reasonable time. In the end, due to participant enthusiasm and participation, sessions generally concluded around 8:30 each night.

Week 1 – Choice – April 10

Session 1 occurred on the evening of April 10, 2019 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. The goals for the first night, in addition to creating a welcoming environment, were to present to the participants the “why” or the purpose of the small group *Journey to Wholeness* program, and to inspire a willingness to commit to taking the journey together.

An important part of fulfilling this goal was to share my personal testimony, which I did at the end of the evening, sharing how God gave me the comfort and reassurance of His presence and strength on my personal *Journey to Wholeness*. I shared how I discovered more about the truth of his love, and power of His provision as my Creator, Healer, Redeemer and Friend. Though participants at each week’s in-person meeting and in coaching sessions would be exploring what their own personal goals would be, the purpose of the testimony was to share the overall goals and desire that I had for them: that their faith may be deepened, their hope enlivened, and that they would grow in love, all through an encounter with Christ and community. As ‘choice’ was the

topic of the first meeting, this week's purpose was to help them explore their choices and inspire a willingness to take their next steps on their own personal *Journey to Wholeness*.

Participants were introduced to the *Journey to Wholeness* program and the first of the eight *Creation Health* principles, Choice, and encouraged that no matter what condition their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health was in now, a better state could be achieved by making choices that prioritized the integration of spiritual and emotional healing.

As participants entered they signed in and received their name tags and a self-assessment survey. One of the unforgettable comments made by one of the participants as she entered and looked around the room with a smile was, "You are spoiling us."

After signing in, the participants chose a seat at any of the round tables. I then welcomed and invited them to partake of the refreshments and introduced them to the material in front of them on the table, inviting them to ask questions at any time during the session. Lastly, they were asked to take a few minutes to fill out a quick self-assessment. This assessment was taken twice during the intervention, once at the beginning of the program and again near the end. This gave the participants a way of seeing improvements in their overall life choices. Published by *Creation Health*, the self-assessment included the eight principles that were covered over the course of the eight weeks: Choice, Rest, Environment, Activity, Trust, Interpersonal Relationships, Outlook, and Nutrition. Under each principle were five statements that pertained to each topic. Each person who filled out the survey rated themselves on a scale of one to five on each statement below each of the eight principles. After tallying up the results, a *Creation Health* score on the back of the assessment ranged from 200 points, which was excellent

and indicated that they were already making wise choices to prioritize wellbeing, to 40 points, which was poor and indicated that they were not making the best choices as regards their wellbeing. Each guest that arrived spent 10 -15 minutes filling out the assessment.

These surveys were not collected, but observations were made to assess the growth in the eight areas of health highlighted as well as areas of growth in the areas of faith, hope and love, based on 1 Corinthians 13:13.

After 15 minutes, the participants were invited to transition to the adjacent room where the nightly program video would be watched and discussed. After transitioning to the seating near the television, the participants were again welcomed and introduced to the *Journey to Wholeness* program and given an overview of the eight sessions.

Participants were then invited to introduce themselves.

Following the self-introductions, the introductory *Creation Health* video was then played, followed back-to-back with the first night's video, *Choice*.

At the conclusion of the video, a group discussion was begun with the participants being asked three questions:

1. What spoke to you personally?
2. What is one thing that inspired you?
3. What is one thing that challenged you?

After the discussion, participants heard a brief personal testimony regarding wholeness from the moderator, lasting from 8:00 to 8:15 pm. They were then introduced to the idea of SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based) and HEART goals (Honest, Exact, Authentic, Realistic, and Timely), leading to

participants being able to choose the goals they would like to work on. Towards the end of this first session there was time set aside for the participants to journal about what they personally related to that evening and what their heart goals and smart goals might look like.

A key component of the *Journey to Wholeness* intervention was introduced in the Bible study based on a healing narrative of Christ. The participants were asked to read and reflect on the narrative, which introduced them to Jesus as the one who desired their wellness, happiness and restoration, between sessions.

After a time of discussion and prayer, participants returned to the round tables where they wrote their HEART goals in their supplied journal before leaving for the evening.

Additionally introduced was the concept of personal coaching. Participants were invited to sign up for four 50-minute sessions over the course of the eight weeks. The purpose of the coaching was to encourage the participants in the accomplishment of their goals, and mentor them in their decision-making process. The participants were reminded that personal information shared in the coaching sessions would be kept confidential.

There were four coaching sessions scheduled for the days in between the sessions and all of the participants kept their appointment times. Some of the participants desired to meet in person and some desired to meet over the phone. In each of the coaching sessions with each of the participants there was a longing to share their personal journey, so in the initial coaching sessions, time was spent listening to their stories of where they have come from, and their desires to where they would like to go on their journey. Built

into the program were several components to help participants engage in reflecting on God's word and their personal journey.

Journaling, interaction with the Bible studies of Christ's healing narratives, and the coaching time allowed them the space to verbalize and process both their thoughts and feelings and help them to identify their goals and values, and also allowed space to observe how their faith in Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and personal friend was growing. This was a way to measure progress toward the goal of creating a more integrated experience of knowing God as One committed to their spiritual, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing.

Week 2 – Rest – April 17

The second session took place on Wednesday April 17, 2019. I arrived early and placed the *Journey to Wholeness* signs in the foyer and set up the entry table with the name tags and signup sheets. The participants were expected to bring back their *Journey to Wholeness* binders. I provided extra notepads and pens and had extra materials for any new participants. On the center of the tables I replenished the following items: fresh flowers in vases, candles on the heart-shaped mirrors, extra pens and extra note pads along with new wellness-related materials, and the weekly healing narrative as journal reflection material. I set up the refreshment table with snacks and drinks. The fire was turned on and I looked over my notes for the evening as I waited for participants to arrive. I was curious to see who would come out for this second week and had a silent prayer.

I was encouraged to see that the first guest who arrived was the person that I was not sure would come back. She was a young woman from another country who was

married to one of the University students. The pastor had previously inquired if she had signed up for the program and was grateful when he heard that she had. He had been wanting to make sure that she was feeling connected and supported. She came early and I greeted her and welcomed her back. She smiled, looked around the room and saw the refreshments on the table, and said that she was hoping there would be food as she had not had time to eat before she came. She signed in, picked up her name tag and materials, and sat down at the tables and began to look over the new Bible study material. She opened up her journal and began writing in it.

The next guest, who was a fashionable business woman arrived promptly at 7:00 pm and cheerfully greeted me before I greeted her. She said she enjoyed the last session and was excited about the session tonight. She greeted the other young lady that had arrived and sat down at the round tables near her with her *Journey to Wholeness* binder in hand.

She later confided to me in her coaching sessions that she was curious and surprised about the impact the program was having on her. She commented that she had “never seen anything like this in an Adventist church before.” She continued sharing that she was experiencing something different than she had experienced before when she had been a member of the church. In our future coaching sessions, she remained curious and open, and positive. I was beginning to see transformation that very moment.

The next guests began to arrive and I welcomed each as they entered and asked them to sign in. As they came in, they helped themselves to the refreshments and found seats near each other around the round tables. Some of our first evidences of community-forming began that night.

As the guests were seated at the table I welcomed them and reminded them about signing up for the coaching sessions. I also shared a short devotional thought from the Bible about faith, hope, and love, and reiterated to them my desire that they would experience growth in each of these areas throughout the *Journey to Wholeness* program.

After I shared the opening thought, one of the participants opened up and talked about the chronic health challenges she was burdened by and the feelings of anxiety that were continuously present for her. She was emotional and she began to cry as she was sharing. One of the other participants sitting near her held out some tissues to her that she had pulled out of a package from her purse, and shared encouraging words of faith to the participant which seemed to comfort her. I had also reached for a box of tissues that were behind me and placed them on the table near her. In watching this interaction between the two participants, the best thing for me to do as the group leader was to resist the urge to stay on schedule, and instead to hear her pain in this moment. I also realized with my background as a chaplain and pastor it would be easy for me to jump in and minister, but that my role, and goal as a group facilitator, was different, so I held back and watched the group minister to her. For future sessions I made sure to have boxes of tissues on the tables and in the sitting areas. It seemed that this was just the beginning of the sharing and being vulnerable, and I made a decision going forward that instead of viewing this part of the healing process as disruptive, and risk participants feeling invalidated in their sharing by moving on too quickly in order to keep to the schedule, I would be more flexible and look for ways to integrate the heart sharing with the head learning as both were valuable steps in the process of healing and transformation.

Once it seemed like she was comforted, I invited the participants to join me in the other section of the room to watch the video. Since the group had spent time ministering to her, and we needed to still be aware of the needs for those that needed to leave on time, I adjusted the program and left out the check-in time.

We moved right into the video presentation and the discussion. During the discussion time, one of the young women shared that what gave her rest was to work with horses and that she had found a new job working at a stable. She was a young woman who was not connected to any particular church. She had become connected to the Stevensville church through the youth leader, who had also brought her to the meetings. The young woman said that she was enjoying the meetings, but that she was sorry that she would not be able to attend the group after that meeting because of her work schedule. She also mentioned that she might need a ride to work, and the youth leader graciously offered to drive her to work, and then come to the *Journey to Wholeness* weekly meeting. The leader remained faithful to her promise, and was present for each of the future group meetings. The more I became acquainted with this leader and learned about her passion and ability to integrate her personal journey and how she compassionately reached out to others, I could see that I had found my next group leader. Near the end of the *Journey to Wholeness* program, we later discussed the leadership opportunity. She had been a working mother who also had seasons of staying at home and homeschooling her children, and was also very involved with caring for her young grandchildren. She had strong values around education, family, mentorship, and was finishing up a degree in counseling.

At the end of the night I offered the young woman who was seeking one of the vases of flowers, and gave her a book on the life of Christ. I asked her if she would like to continue with the coaching sessions. She said she would and we continued to meet every two weeks over the phone. I also provided a ride for her to work when the youth leader was not able too.

In light of the previous coaching sessions and the interactions between the group members which gave evidence that the participants were coming in with heavy burdens, I shared a verse in one of Christ's healing narratives where he says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28 (NIV)) I asked the participants to take some time to share what that verse meant for them personally. Participants began to share more deeply about their concerns and burdens with the group.

One of the mothers in the group who was a single mom raising three boys who were coming into their teenage years shared her struggles around resting in the knowledge that she was making the right decisions in her parenting, and also shared how she was feeling burdened.

The group listened to her concerns, and another mother shared that she resonated with her in that she had two boys who were a little older than hers, and that she understood the challenges of knowing when to intervene and when to let go.

I closed the meeting by talking about how many of us are in some form of ministry, or relationships where we are consistently giving of ourselves, and how God wants us to have space in our lives to receive from him. As I gave them the next week's Bible study I encouraged them to think about what ways they could make room to receive from Jesus as their Creator, Healer, Redeemer and personal Friend. At the end of the

night many of the participants had taken risks to share their struggles. Some were quieter, but all the participants engaged, by either offering comfort or being comforted. As the participants were leaving, I saw a man in the hallway who was waiting for his wife. His wife came to me and asked me if it was ok for men to join the group too. She introduced me to her husband and I let him know that we would be happy if he would like to join in as well, and supplied him with the materials, and a water bottle. He seemed excited about the possibility and the next week they both came. This couple had worked in the mission field for many years in a difficult assignment and were now returning. They had just arrived to the area and were staying with another couple who also had been invited to join the discipleship group, and attended later.

During the week I met with the missionary couple at a private table in the cafeteria for a joint coaching session. I had decided earlier that it was best to coach the male participants along with their wives in joint coaching sessions. The couple was eager to share their very personal story of crisis in their life when they lost their daughter in a tragic accident. They shared with me that they were serving as missionaries overseas when this happened, and how they believed and knew that God had led them to this place, but shared the challenge to their faith in the wake of their loss, and their struggle in understanding God's presence in all of this. They shared their journey of grief and how they managed to deal with their painful loss. The husband shared with me the profound moment of surrender he had and the peace he experienced when he made the choice, as he put it, "to be better and not bitter" about what had happened. They both shared moments of acceptance that helped them in their healing process. This was a powerful coaching session, and the thought crossed my mind that the Holy Spirit was working in

powerful ways. On a side note, I also realized I not only needed to supply tissues in the room at the church, but that I also needed to carry them in my purse, for it was clear that hearts were receptive and people were feeling safe to share the tragic and tender moments of their lives. I was grateful for the stack of napkins that were in the center of the table at that moment, which we all partook of as we cried together. In their sharing they related back to the principles that we had been talking about in the *Journey to Wholeness* sessions and the husband shared that he did not believe he could be whole again unless he made that choice to trust God. As they were sharing, they both were nodding their heads in agreement to what the other was saying. His wife also shared about how she became pregnant again and the powerful testimony around how God personally communicated to her and them, in their healing process and how they moved through sorrow and returned to joy. I was deeply moved by their testimony and asked them if they would be willing to share their testimony on the night that we would be talking about the principle of trust. They agreed and said they would be honored. I thanked them for sharing with me their testimony, and be willing to share with others their journey.

Week 3 – Environment – April 24

The third session occurred on Wednesday April 24, 2019, with the main goal of presenting the truth that Jesus as Creator cares about us as his creation.

There were four new attendees and in light of having a bigger group, one of whom was a working mother, the meeting was started and ended on time.

This night's topic was "environment", which was a straightforward topic. The two prior sessions held more excitement and intensity as it was the beginning of the journey. For this session, it was important to provide good structure, and consistency. At the

beginning of the session I made sure that each new member had the materials they needed to be caught up with the others in the group.

I had already previously met with the new participants, so they had already had the materials and seemed comfortable.

The video was played and the discussion revolved around the points shared in the video. In the discussion, we talked about the hope and comfort that we find in creation, about the garden of Eden and focusing on God, and Jesus as a Creator. The discussion question was about what it meant for us to know that a place was originally designed and created for us in which we could live in comfort and be at peace. Many of the participants shared not only what inspired and comforted them, but also details about the spaces they in turn created for others to feel the comfortable and at peace.

The youth leader shared about her burden for the youth and mentioned how she was able to advocate for a space in the church where the youth group could come and feel like it was their own space that they could gather and connect with each other.

One of the participants shared about how when she was a missionary she was able to create a space for the children in her classroom that was safe and nurturing and through this a bridge was built to be able to minister to the women in the community.

Another participant shared that she enjoyed watching landscape painting on television as it helped her to feel calm and inspired.

The new couple who came to the group shared their testimony of how God called them to open up their home to students to visit and stay with them. They shared that they had ministered to countless students through the years, and asked for prayers for their ministry. After they had finished sharing their testimony, we had a season of prayer in

which anyone who wanted to pray could have prayer for them. Others also asked for prayer requests. In order to help people feel ministered to in the moment, and to be mindful of the time, participants took turns sharing and after each prayer request was shared, volunteered to pray for that person and their request. We continued this format throughout the subsequent meetings.

Week 4 – Activity – May 1

The fourth session was held on Wednesday May 1, 2019, with the goal being to continue to foster connection in both the coaching and the discipleship group setting, and to help participants towards their individual goals they had chosen to work towards.

We had the same eleven participants in attendance as the week before. After the prayer time in the last session, comments were made to me that people were feeling supported and connected and this was clear in the sharing, laughing, and expressions of care that were being communicated to each other. The intent of the goal this week was to guard and continue the trend of these positive experiences.

The group participants came into the meeting room, picked up refreshments and brought them over to the couches to sit and talk to each other while waiting for the starting time. Most of them sat in the same places at this point. The group chatter was warm, and the voices of the participants were sounding lighter, and less burdened. I abandoned the check-in time as the group members were checking in with each other on their own both in the beginning and at the end of the meetings. This time was replaced by the time spent in group prayer which seemed to be valued by all of the participants.

I welcomed the group and offered a prayer and started the video on the topic of “activity.” During the discussion, most of the group members shared that of all the more

practical wellness principles we reviewed so far, this was one of the more challenging ones to incorporate. Many members of the group suggested that maybe those that were interested could meet up and go for walks together. Several of the members responded positively to this, and reported in the next session that some of them met outside during the week to walk together. There was another time of prayer following the format begun in the last session and because the discussion around the video had been shorter, longer time was spent engaged in our new prayer format, taking turns to share and pray for each other. The session ended with a wrap up prayer and handing out the Bible study for next week.

During the *Journey to Wholeness* program, I attended prayer meeting each week that was held at the church on Tuesday night. At the prayer meetings, I gave a brief report about how *Journey to Wholeness* was going, and invited people to attend. As the prayer meeting was held on Tuesday nights and *Journey to Wholeness* was on Wednesday nights, those who were interested could attend both meetings. One of the gentlemen in attendance at the prayer meeting said that he had been praying for a prayer request that I had in regard to one of my family members and a serious physical challenge they were facing – he said he was praying for them every day. I was surprised at their memory of what I had shared and had a few moments to talk with him during the prayer meeting where he shared that he was praying about becoming a minister.

One of the weeks that I was eating in the school cafeteria, I met him and his wife and lovely daughter when we were waiting in line at the cafeteria. His wife began to share with me some of her personal journey. We decided to eat together and continue the conversation. In the discussion that followed, they shared their journey of loss and love.

She shared her experience about the loss of her first husband who tragically died in a plane crash. Our conversation was a long one, and admiration grew inside of me for this amazing couple as they shared details of their journey and their resilience was clearly present. They shared that they were interested in ministry and that they had been asked by others to share their journey. As she shared the most painful part of her journey, her husband lovingly had his arm around her as her tears of grief fell.

I asked them if they would like to come to the *Journey to Wholeness* meetings. I explained that the group has already started, but they would be welcome to join in. I shared with them some of the positive statements that were being said by the group members about the discipleship group and the coaching. I also asked if at some point they would be willing to share their testimony with the group at the session on Outlook. They were interested in both. She attended the next meeting, and her husband came with her to the session on “outlook” where she shared her testimony.

Week 5 – Trust – May 8

The fifth session took place on Wednesday May 8, 2019. By week five, our group was continuing to grow not only numerically, but in connection with Jesus and with each other. The goal for this week, roughly half way through the program, was tied to the evening’s topic of “trust,” with the intent of supporting and deepening the trust being displayed by all of the participants. This principle, coupled with the foundational principle presented on the first night (“choice”) were the two most important spiritual principles in the program. Before this session, a strong emphasis had been placed on connecting the group members to one another. In this session, there was intentional planning to help facilitate members choosing to place their whole trust in Jesus as not

only their Creator and Healer but also as their personal friend and restorer and redeemer of their lives.

In this session, the missionary couple shared their testimony about how they chose to become better and not bitter, and in their choice to trust Jesus in their journey of grief. It was important to make sure there would be plenty of time for the couple to share and not feel rushed. We did not have our usual room available to us as we had the other nights, and in this new room we did not have access to a DVD player. Given the changes, I decided that the session would mainly focus on the testimonies and refreshments, and be followed by a season of prayer. Before this meeting, the couple that had the gift of hospitality and had ministered to students in their home offered to bring food for the entire group. That night they lavished the *Journey to Wholeness* group with gourmet food that was beautifully presented. One of the members of the group offered to put signs out in the hallway to redirect people to the new room. The sense of community was continuing to grow and anticipation in my heart was rising as I welcomed the group members and shared that our friends would be giving their testimony. The testimony was powerful and as they were sharing, the woman who had lost her former husband began to cry. A group member near her handed her tissues and, after the couple shared their testimony, during a break she approached the missionary couple, introduced herself, and invited them out to dinner to meet her husband and daughter. We closed the meeting with a season of prayer, our prayer focus was for each other, as well as for a family that most of the group members knew, who had been recently in a car accident. The husband and father of three young children, was seriously wounded and in critical condition. Different group members joined in the prayer and claimed promises for the family and each other,

as we focused on scripture promises around faith and trust. It was a very powerful time of prayer and testimony and in the next session we continued to see the fruit of this growing connectedness to God and to each other.

Week 6 – Interpersonal Relationships – May 15

The goal for this session was to continue to support the community that was building among the group.

The session started on time and participants now had a routine of coming into the meeting room and helping themselves to the refreshments and then gathering in the more comfortable seating area on the couches and chairs. I welcomed the group members and we went straight into watching the video and the discussion questions.

One of the group participants who was a health care worker, and a mother, joined into the discussion. she shared that she had been feeling isolated and a lack of connection since her close family member had moved away. Her level of vulnerability was striking as she was someone who most people would have thought would not have any struggles. She continued sharing her feelings in regard to her loss of connectedness and longing for belonging. Her brave and authentic confession did something very powerful for the group. Though they all had different backgrounds, they all had similar feelings and longings to be more connected.

The single mom responded to the other mother who had just shared. She said that even though they saw each other at times when picking up their children at school, she did not realize that she was going through this struggle, she shared that she would love to connect with her more regularly, with tears in their eyes, the two mothers stood up in the center of the group and gave each other a hug. This was a very touching moment in the

group and many of us were speechless and of course, reaching for those tissue boxes. Several of the other members stood up and also gave hugs to each other, the room filled up with an unmistakable feeling of compassion and love. Tears came to my eyes as well as I saw that something clearly had gone very, very well. John 1:39 says, “Come and See” this was powerful evidence that as a result of cultivating these interpersonal relationship connections to each other and to Christ, lives were being touched and the Holy Spirit was truly present and ministering to minds and hearts. As the group members returned to their seats, the mother who was single shared that her oldest boy was graduating the next week. The group members verbally offered her their support and talked about attending the graduation. The group as a whole decided to forgo the meeting the following week and instead decided to meet at the high school graduation to support the single mom and her children.

Week 7 – Graduation Attendance – May 22

The usual *Journey to Wholeness* programming for the seventh session was postponed and instead the group attended a high school graduation to show support for the single mother whose son was graduating that week.

Week 8 – Outlook – May 29

In this session, I asked the couple who I had visited with in the university cafeteria who shared with me their loss and love testimony if they were willing to share it with in our small *Journey to Wholeness* group. The couple accepted the invitation, and were present with their daughter who was sitting in between them. I welcomed the group and we watched the video. When the video finished, instead of the discussion time as

usual, I introduced the couple who shared their powerful testimony. They talked about outlook and how gratitude became an important part of the wife's emotional healing as well as one of the most important roots of their marriage. She also shared that from the coaching that she was doing, she had gone from being uncomfortable even thinking about journaling, because she felt stuck emotionally, to a breakthrough where once she started she experienced greater healing and an awareness of Jesus' presence in her life and her calling to write a book about her journey, and that even though she was an introvert and it was hard to talk about her story, she felt a calling to share her testimony in front of the church. After their powerful testimony, my husband who had joined into the small group that night, helped me as we had a time of prayer and anointing, as we had co-led many times in the past. We had a general prayer and positioned ourselves at the other end of the meeting room to give space for those that were gathered in the seating area and those that choose to be anointed. We had quiet praise music playing during this season of prayer and anointing as the group members came to share their private prayer requests with us and be anointed before leaving. Some participants left after they were anointed and some stayed longer and just remained gathering and talking and singing with the music.

Week 9 – Nutrition – June 5

As noted at the outset, the program was intended to be an 8-week program, but due to the community that rapidly developed, when the son of one of the group members graduated from high school during week 7, the entire group chose to show solidarity for the mother and attend the graduation with her. As a consequence, week 7 materials and week 8 meetings were held a week later than planned. As a concluding session, the group was invited to a group member's home. Healthy food was served and provided for by the

member who had opened up her home and an informal discussion was held after watching the last video on the topic of nutrition. Group members shared their personal testimonies in regards their experience with *Journey to Wholeness* and talked about what they would like to do to continue the experience.

Conclusion

Though planned for eight sequenced sessions, due to the participant's desire to support one of their own group members, the group calendar was modified from the original concept. Individual coaching was also modified by being extended for an additional two to three weeks after the concluding meeting. These changes were a result of participants demonstrated sense of community and expressed value in their time with one another.

In talking with the participants near the conclusion of the planned sessions, they shared how positive and life-changing their sessions were, in both the group and coaching sessions, and expressed a desire to continue their weekly meetings and discussed subjects that they might be interested in. Towards the end of the program in a coaching session with the youth group leader I asked if she might be willing to lead as the group facilitator if the *Journey to Wholeness* participants chose to continue meeting. She said she would if she had a co-leader. In another coaching session with the single mother, I asked if she would be willing to co-lead, and she said she would be excited to do this. Both of these leaders, were in school to become licensed mental health counselors, and decided to use content for a depression and anxiety recover group. With leader and co-leader in place, the participants chose to continue meeting.

The problem which I was addressing is that traditional approaches to evangelism and disciple making do not support an integrated approach to soul winning which ministers to the whole person – spiritual, physical, social, emotional wholeness. The goal of the intervention was to develop, implement, and evaluate an eight-week evangelistic ministry utilizing a whole-person model – group sessions, individual study and journaling, a ministry of physical, spiritual, and emotional healing, while creating biblical community. The size of the discipleship group and the life-giving culture that was generated became a catalyst toward a transformational journey for the participants.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATIONS AND LEARNING FROM AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP COMBINING HOLISTIC CONCEPTS DRAWN FROM PRINCIPLES DERIVED THROUGH BIBLICAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The original purpose of my project was to develop, implement, and evaluate an evangelistic disciples-making ministry that focused on the integration of whole-person perspectives and a revelation of Christ's love for people who are in need. The model chosen was the *Creation Health* product produced by Advent Health and analysis of selected healing narratives from the Gospels. Pastoral observation had previously suggested that many people who are open to learning how to improve their physical health are also open to learning how to improve their spiritual health. The healing narratives of Christ focused upon individuals facing varied difficult circumstances who, through their encounter with Christ in critical moments, chose to put their trust in him. The theological review also revealed a divine process where those who encountered Christ moved from having merely a head knowledge of who Christ was to having an actual heart experience with Christ, and thus leading to the individual placing their whole trust Him.

Method of Evaluation

Originally a two-part method of evaluation was planned: For the first part, each participant would fill out an assessment questionnaire at the beginning of the eight weeks and then again at the end of the eight weeks. For the second part, each participant would be invited to write a one-page description of their experience in the discipleship group. I would then proceed to write an assessment based on their responses.

What actually happened was that part one remained the same, but for part two, the self-reporting during the coaching sessions took the place of the written description of their experience.

The first part of the intervention evaluation was for the participants themselves, and came from an assessment questionnaire they completed both at the beginning of the eight-week program and then again towards the end. Published by *Creation Health*, the self-assessment included the eight principles that were covered over the course of the eight weeks: Choice, Rest, Environment, Activity, Trust, Interpersonal Relationships, Outlook, and Nutrition. Under each principle were five statements that pertained to each topic. Each person who filled out the survey rated themselves on a scale of one to five on each statement below each of the eight principles. After tallying up the results, a *Creation Health* score on the back of the assessment ranged from 200 points (which was good and indicated that they were making healthy choices to prioritize their health), to 40 points (which was poor and indicated that they had room to improve in making healthier choices). This gave the participants a way of seeing improvements in their overall health choices. In the coaching sessions, time was also allotted for participants to see and evaluate SMART/HEART goal-oriented progress for themselves.

Attendance was used as an additional method of evaluation. It was used to evaluate participant's level of commitment as well as giving insights into the perceived value of the content and possible connection and community that participants were experiencing with one another in the program.

The program began with a core of eight participants, seven of whom attended consistently for the duration of the program. The program grew by the third meeting to include four additional participants, who also remained consistent in attendance throughout the program. At the fourth meeting one more participant joined who had scheduling conflicts with their work and was not able to attend consistently. In the fifth meeting a new participant attended the meeting and stayed committed to the end of the program and in the 7th meeting was joined by their spouse. The program therefore grew to a total of 14 participants by its completion. The program was initially intended to run for only eight weeks, but during the program the group choose to support one of the group members for a special event and so an extra week was added to make nine meetings in total.

Originally the intent was to run the discipleship group twice, but as new components were added and implemented, such as coaching and study/reflection on the healing narratives during the week, as opposed to only jointly during the nightly group sessions, the program became more robust than originally proposed.

In my work as a chaplain I often used spiritual assessment tools to create and evaluate a plan of care for patients. Though I did not create a plan of care for the group members, the coaching sessions and group meetings allowed me the opportunity to spiritually assess participants in areas based on the initial survey. Additionally, I assessed

the participants in three spiritual components based on 1 Corinthians 13:13, which says, “and now these things remain: faith, hope and love, But the greatest of these is love.” These three components were kept in mind regarding the participants: (a) Was their faith in Christ deepened? (b) Was their hope enlivened? And (c) Did they grow in love toward God and one another?

The success of the discipleship group intervention would be evaluated based on the participants self-reporting of both (a) their improved physical well-being which matched the survey and (b) their knowledge of and relationship with Christ.

Outcomes

The project resulted in improved physical and spiritual health of the participants. These three components of growth, mentioned above, were self-reported and observed in the group meetings and in the coaching sessions. The increase in faith of the group members was perceived during the prayer time, group sharing, and coaching sessions. Prayer was incorporated from the beginning of the program, but seemed to emerge as more and more valuable to the participants as more group members were sharing their burdens and asking for prayer. In light of their interest, the nightly schedule was changed to eliminate the check-in time and to incorporate additional prayer time. This change allowed participants time to pray for and with one another when they would share their burdens, praises, or prayer requests.

The indicator that hope was enlivened in participants hearts was evidenced in their increasingly empathetic and caring responses to one another’s shared life experiences. The picture of hope was also held up in powerful testimonies that were

shared. The common thread in each of their testimonies was the healing of their broken heart and a return to both hope and joy.

The text of 1 Corinthians 13:13 states that love is the greatest of the three elements mentioned in the passage. This form of love is translated as agape love and was powerfully demonstrated and observed in the group. Whether hugging one another at touching moments, choosing to attend special events to support fellow participants, or committing to drive members to work weekly, as the sessions progressed so did the expressions of agape love.

As the program progressed it became clear that though the content, devotionals, Bible study/journal reflections, and the coaching were all valuable, it seemed that the experience the participants were having in the small group itself was the most outstanding. Participants expressed experiencing feeling loved, valued, encouraged, and supported.

The one-on-one coaching sessions especially allowed me to observe progress and outcomes in each of the participants. I will include some examples here: At the beginning of the program, several of the health care workers mentioned that they were facing challenges around their work/life balance. This correlated with three of the survey questions under “Choice,” recognizing when one’s life is out of balance and minimizing or eliminating stressful situations to bring life back into balance, as well as rest and interpersonal relationships. One of these participants set a goal of adjusting their schedule so they could take more time to rest and to be with their family. During the initial coaching sessions she described the conversations that she was going to need to have with her supervisors, peers, and family to see that improvement. By the end of the eight

weeks she reported having successfully made changes to her schedule and had found ways of getting better rest and better quality time with her family while also increasing her productivity at work.

Another participant who began the program discouraged about her physical health shared at the end that she had found hope after Bible study of the provided healing narratives of Christ and after engaging in the discipleship group. She noticed that this change occurred within the first few weeks of the program with the result being that by the program's end she felt that she could deal better with her health challenges. She further shared that she had always struggled with feeling abandoned but that when she began to study how Christ drew near to those who were suffering she no longer felt like God had abandoned her. This was a powerful breakthrough for her.

Several participants shared that they wanted to be more physically active and that during the eight-week program they decided to meet to walk together. Others shared that prior to their participation in *Journey to Wholeness* they had struggled with having personal devotionals and with being honest with God in their prayers. As they saw Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend, their goal became working on having their devotional time every day and using their journals to record their time with God, as well as journal their thoughts and prayers, with a perceived improvement of the health of their relationship with God, which was self-reported in their coaching and group sessions. One of the participants shared that because of her intentional time now spent focusing on Christ she was able to discern that God was calling her to write a book about her testimony.

The consistent attendance and growth in the number of participants in the group helped to affirm that the group was receiving what it needed and thirsted for. One of the

group members shared that they were curious about the group and were not sure what was so different, in a positive way, about what they experienced in the discipleship group setting. In the coaching conversations we tried to identify why this was so different for her. She reported that what was so positive for her had to do with the community that she was experiencing. The development of biblical community within the group context was a distinguishing factor since it is usually not present in traditional evangelistic approaches. This became a demonstration of the value of expanding the modalities for disciple-making. By combining cognitive learning with ministry to the whole person, a transformational impact upon participants was observed. This was confirmation to the author that a whole-person approach, ministry to the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social aspects of the person, was a more effective strategy in the 21st century. It addressed the problem brought on by primarily using a cognitive and individualized approach to spiritual formation and disciple making.

Listening played a powerful role in the group transformation. Listening to each other's stories created a safe and warm emotional environment where people felt valued. Once they unburdened their hearts they were able to make room for greater connection with the content, with each other, and with Christ, with the result of having emotional and physical resources now available to devote to others. This was noticeable in the discipleship group when group members automatically began looking beyond themselves and demonstrating interest in each other. They started to provide support to one another outside of the group meetings, showing up for other member's special events, giving rides to one another when the need arose and talking about what they could do together in

the future as a group. This interest in others seemed to naturally arise once their own needs were met.

What would church look like if people's emotional needs for love and connection were consistently met? What if church members and visitors alike had a place to share their stories in a non-judgmental, safe place? Often it seems that we focus our attention outwardly in evangelism, trying to feed others truth through ways that may not be either sustainable or effective while our own members are in want for spiritual, and emotional nourishment. This project's observed outcomes suggest that if we provided safe small group environments where our own member's needs could be addressed first, their own journey to improved wholeness would naturally result in their increased ability to reach out to others. The literature review seemed to correlate to this observation as it related to mission.

In strategies to becoming mission-driven churches, the development of the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of the members and the leaders is integral. Brantley et al. (2015) note that "A church's lack of relational health may still be a detriment to advancing the work of God" (p. 48)

The testimonies that were shared and the emphasis on participants sharing their stories in the initial coaching sessions seemed to help participants to connect their narrative to God's narrative. This correlated to the research in the literature review that,

Evangelism doesn't have to be mechanical; it can be intuitive and relational. It doesn't have to be pressure-driven and event oriented. Listening to people's stories, we can discern how to best share the gospel with them in a natural, relatable way. (p. 24)

The narrative analysis in the theological review supports that an encounter could be described as when God's story and our story intersect, leading to a testimony of his work in our lives.

Throughout the program, there were places designed for these encounters to occur which created a process for each participant to take one step further in their faith journey. Each encounter could also be described as an event of experiencing Christ as creator, or healer, or redeemer or personal friend. The theological review explored a scriptural foundation and highlighted a divine process in which people move beyond a superficial knowledge about Christ to an experiential knowledge of Christ. These "events" or encounters with Christ brought them to a place in which they had opportunity to make a choice to place their trust in Him. The four healing narratives that were studied reveal a moment when each person was invited to make a choice to believe Christ's words, and thereby receive healing and/or forgiveness from him. It was in these events and encounters that their faith would be increased.

The *Journey to Wholeness* program was designed to help facilitate these divine appointments at different times during the program.

The intent and purpose for using the *CREATION Health* material at the same time as introducing the four aspects of the identity of Christ was to help connect participants to the belief of Christ's identity as the creator. Using Christ's healing narratives for Bible study and opportunities for reflection was intended to give hope that Christ is truly a healer in whom they may have hope for whatever area in which they needed healing. The reflection time was not only given to help participants identify concrete health goals, but was also given in hope that through time spent in study and reflection upon the healing

narratives, the Holy Spirit would reveal to them the areas of life in which they would need deeper healing.

The testimonies and prayer requests shared in the group setting as well as during the coaching sessions revealed that different aspects of *Journey to Wholeness* were speaking differently to individual participants.

Encounters could also be seen as moments when participants were ministered to by each other in love, or moments where they felt heard, or when they were able to interact with content that helped them to recognize Christ's identity and internalize their identity in Christ.

Since most of the participants already had previously chosen a faith relationship with Christ as their redeemer, what seemed to become more important was the experience they were having with each other in community and the internalization of the belief that Christ, as their personal friend, was truly interested in their well-being for every area of their lives.

Personalizing and internalizing that God cares about every aspect of their lives seemed for some participants to be challenging, but it seemed that as they were experiencing community and connection with each other a pathway was provided whereby participants were able to internalize these truths. These breakthroughs were observed at different places during the program, and were different for each individual, but it was observed that when the participant experienced connection in the community setting, either one-on-one in the coaching sessions or in the group, the breakthroughs and growth were undeniable and powerful.

Though there are many places where the *Journey to Wholeness* could be strengthened regarding the better integration of the components, a powerful impact was clearly evidenced for the participants of the group as well as for myself as the facilitator.

Conclusions

Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church is active in both health outreach and evangelism, holding annual seminars and employing a Bible worker to do Bible studies and train its church members. It desires to help individuals become both physically healthier as well as spiritually healthier. Personal observation revealed that despite the presence of health outreach to restore physical health on the one hand and evangelistic outreach to restore spiritual health on the other, the Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church had no programming at the time that actively integrated these important ministries into one program. An opportunity was therefore being missed to reflect Christ's whole-person approach. Furthermore, neither stand-alone health programs nor traditional evangelistic programs address the needs for emotional healing and biblical community. A study of Christ's ministry, combined with selected literature, suggested a successful holistic evangelistic and discipleship ministry that would seek to integrate healing on multiple levels – spiritual, physical, emotional, social, as well as cognitive study of biblical truth. The program was implemented in April of 2019, and the outcomes were then evaluated to help understand the programs efficacy in aiding the participants to grow toward spiritual maturity and wholeness utilizing as many modalities of Christ's ministry as possible.

Theological Reflection

The four selected healing narratives revealed Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend. The end result of each narrative is people who are in need of encountering Christ, and through the divine process of placing their trust and belief in him, both their faith in him and their personal relationship with him is deepened. As we take in the many-faceted treasures of the identity of Christ in vision and in heart, and make the choice to receive him, we begin the journey to satisfy our longing for restoration.

Literature Review

Though this was not an exhaustive study, the review of literature focused on mission, health, evangelism, narrative, discipleship, small groups, and coaching for the purpose of creating a more holistic evangelism model for the local church. The literature reviewed revealed that the process of transformation is related to our beliefs of who Christ is. These beliefs permeate the whole life. In the goal to design a model that leads to transformational whole-person health, aspects of physical, emotional and spiritual health need to be considered as a part of stewarding our relationship with Christ.

The literature also shows that conversation and relationships are central to both an evangelistic and discipleship model. The small group model offers both of these aspects to participants.

Methodology

Seeking to follow the example of Christ's own combination of physical and spiritual healing, and informed by both the theological reflection and the literature review, an eight-week holistic discipleship group was developed. Combining both

elements of narrative analysis-derived biblical principles with *Creation Health* materials, the focus was on helping participants experience both physical, spiritual, and emotional healing as measured by increased faith, hope and love. To evaluate the effectiveness of the discipleship group program a survey was given at the beginning of the program and specific questions were developed and responses to participant testimonies were carefully observed.

Narrative of Intervention

The eight-week holistic discipleship group introduced participants to Christ as creator, healer, redeemer and friend, and presented ways that individuals could improve multiple aspects of health. The number of participants continued to increase throughout the eight weeks, and the discipleship group experience was received so well that the group decided to continue meeting.

Evaluation and Learning

Three methods were ultimately used to evaluate the intervention and are listed in Appendix D. The self-reported improvements in physical, spiritual, emotional, and social wellbeing revealed the success of combining of multiple elements in the discipleship model.

Several factors were found to contribute to the positive outcomes: First, the physical environment as intentionally chosen and designed for the project. A spacious room that was also private and cheerfully decorated, easily accessible, safe, and comfortable. Participants commented multiple times on how visually pleasing things were, how they felt welcomed and comfortable.

Second, the biblical study of Christ's healing narratives through a devotional guide, with insights into Christ as creator, redeemer, healer and friend highlighted Christ as a foundation of hope. He was compellingly revealed as one who was interested in the participant's wholeness and restoration.

Third, the *CREATION Health* materials, were attractive and organized and correlated well with the healing narratives.

Fourth, the integration of sharing personal challenges and testimony, reflection, and prayer. Observation revealed that the more that participants were allowed to share and reflect, the more they experienced acceptance, validation, and empathy. As a result, they followed the same path and naturally began to empathize, pray for and help other participants. These behaviors helped generate an experience of biblical community, which became a powerful context for their journey toward wholeness.

Regarding learning, the experience of ministry to the whole person and creating a context for the formation of biblical community may be the area of greatest learning from this project. It has demonstrated that this is an untapped resource to address the diminishing effectiveness of traditional evangelistic approaches for reaching western culture in the 21st century. This was at the heart of the problem which I sought to address through this intervention. Further experimentation with evangelistic approaches which proclaim the gospel in the context of ministry to the whole-person and the formation of community in small groups should be carried forward. In the opinion of the author, this approach is much more attuned to the needs of people with demanding lives who lack deep relationships because of remote work, dependence upon social media for interaction, etc.

Additionally, the context of a small group is an underutilized resource for evangelism and disciple making. Small groups have been used primarily as a resource for nurture and have provided a context for fellowship and prayer in many churches. But there is more capacity for utilizing the small group dynamic in outreach. A series of two or three small programs, perhaps eight weeks per program, may provide a better opportunity to present the broader message of Adventism. This intervention was foundational to building trust and community. A follow-up strategy over a period of months may successfully build upon that and lead people further into a deeper understanding of truths with creative approaches to application such as keeping a Sabbath together, etc.

In summary, meeting human needs on multiple levels engendered the formation of biblical community. Utilizing study of the four healing narratives from the Gospels led to the revelation of God as creator, healer, redeemer and friend. This revelation created a response of faith, hope, and love. This result is often lacking in traditional Adventist evangelistic approaches – the problem which the intervention addressed. Opportunity for further experimentation with such an approach is warranted.

Professional Transformation

I feel that this DMin project has helped contribute to my professional transformation in four significant areas. First, my awareness has grown in the potential impact small groups can have in regard to transformation for the individual as well as the larger body of the church. Second, I grew in my theological reflection, study of scripture, and my writing skills through the process of researching and writing this thesis. Third, I deepened my understanding in my roles as a minister. Lastly, I have become more

pastorally sensitive in my current context in regard to how to facilitate transformation of the local church community.

Recommendations

In reviewing the goals of this project, my initial intention was to have the biblical study with narrative analysis presented during the nightly program. In the implementation, however, I changed this to using the biblical study for narrative analysis as devotional guides for reflection during the week. After reviewing the outcomes, I recommend that future implementations of this intervention may be improved by either incorporating them into the nightly sessions (to be presented along with each night's health principle) or to leave them as they were implemented, but to encourage participants to spend time in reflection outside the main sessions. In addition, time given to reflect on the narratives in the group and/or the coaching sessions will be valuable.

Further, I would recommend being more intentional about planning additional time for participant testimonies. The personal testimonies shared by participants during this project revealed a process in which their faith was tested by a personal crisis and in which they chose to trust in Christ, and as one of the participants shared, "became better instead of bitter." Each testimony correlated with three of the spiritual principles highlighted in the program, 'Choice', 'Trust' and 'Outlook'. This also seemed to correlate with the process highlighted in the theological review of Christ's healing narratives, which emphasized that the choice to trust leads towards hope, healing and restoration. I observed that letting the participants share their stories and allowing them a safe place to process their feelings and thoughts led them to be able to clarify their

values. This seemed to further allow them to begin thinking and communicating about vision.

Additional thought can be given to creating and implementing spiritual assessment tools in evaluation of participants in discipleship tracks, to be used to as part of coaching.

Further research can be done in regard to the role and power of agape love in the small group dynamic as it relates to connection, community, and transformation.

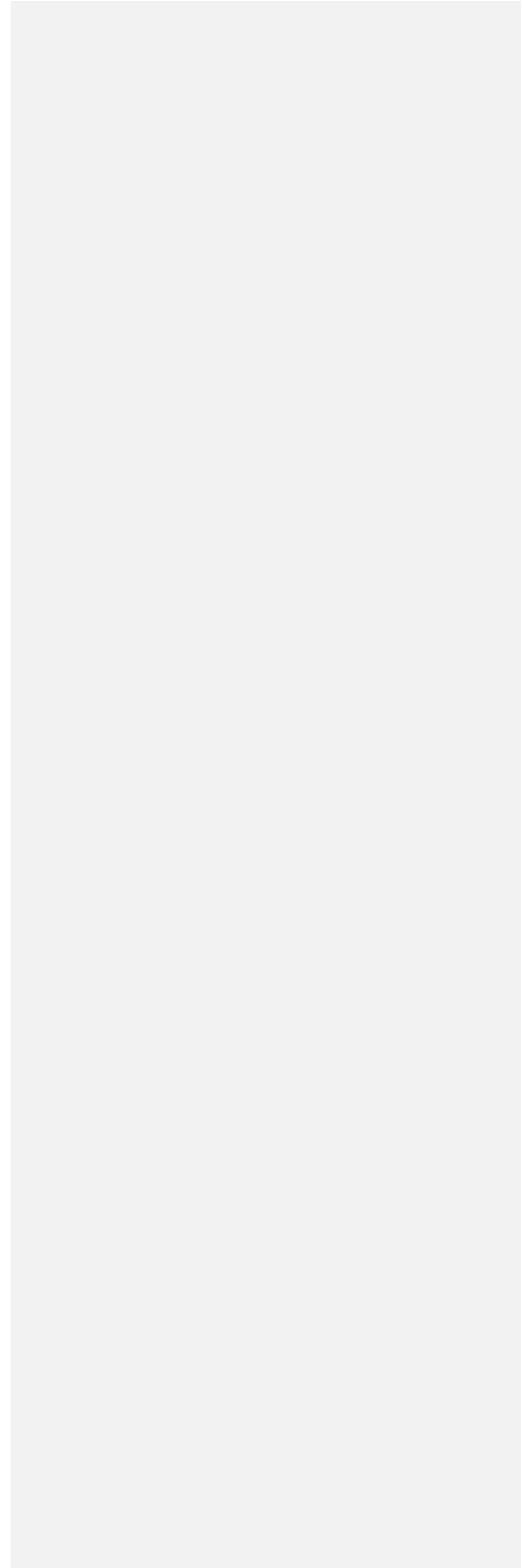
Lastly, though from the beginning the intent of the initial and final surveys was to benefit the participant, it could also be used to help assess the overall effectiveness of the program.

Conclusion

Copying Christ's method of helping individuals understand both their physical health as well as their relational health with God can result in improving both, with the benefit of also increasing individual's faith, hope, and love. The journey of research, planning and implementation that took place during this project has changed how I understand evangelism and outreach, and has broadened me both personally and professionally. The discipleship group model and materials are versatile and can be used in churches of any context, would encourage facilitators to introduce the principles of Christ as creator, redeemer, healer and friend at the same time they introduce individuals to health principles in their own small group programs.

APPENDIX A

VERBAL ANNOUNCEMENT



“As part of my doctoral work I will be conducting a health program here at the Stevensville church in the youth room. The program will begin on April 10. The eight-week program is a curated program that looks at eight of Christ’s healing narratives along with eight principles highlighted in *Creation Health*-related material. The overall program is called *Journey to Wholeness* and will equip participants to improve both their physical health as well as their knowledge of Christ of as their creator, redeemer, healer and friend. It is a small group that will meet once a week for approximately one-and-a-half hours and will consist of presentation time and group discussion time. All participants will also have the option of private, individual, one-on-one coaching to focus on your personal goals. The group is open to all who are interested, and you are welcome to invite anyone that you think might enjoy learning more about Christ while at the same time learning how to improve their health. An invitation card will be handed out, and a card to write in your contact information. I will be available after the service to receive the contact cards and answer any questions you might have. Also, because this is a research project it is especially important to let you know that for all the participants any personal information shared will remain confidential. I am looking forward to being on the journey with you!

APPENDIX B

SMALL GROUP INVITATION

JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS



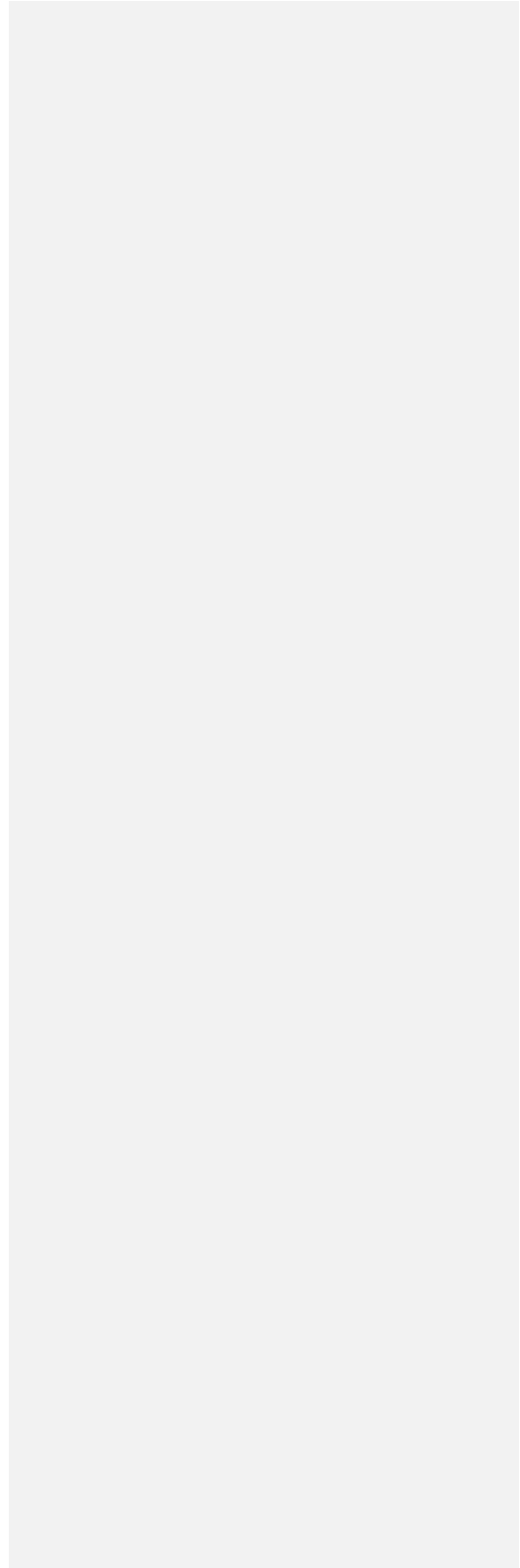
**THE JOURNEY
BEGINS APRIL 10**

STEVENSVILLE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH
6657 STEVENSVILLE-BARODA RD.
STEVENSVILLE, MI 49127

FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE CALL PATRICIA NESBIT @
269-252-8913

APPENDIX C

WEEKLY MATERIALS USED

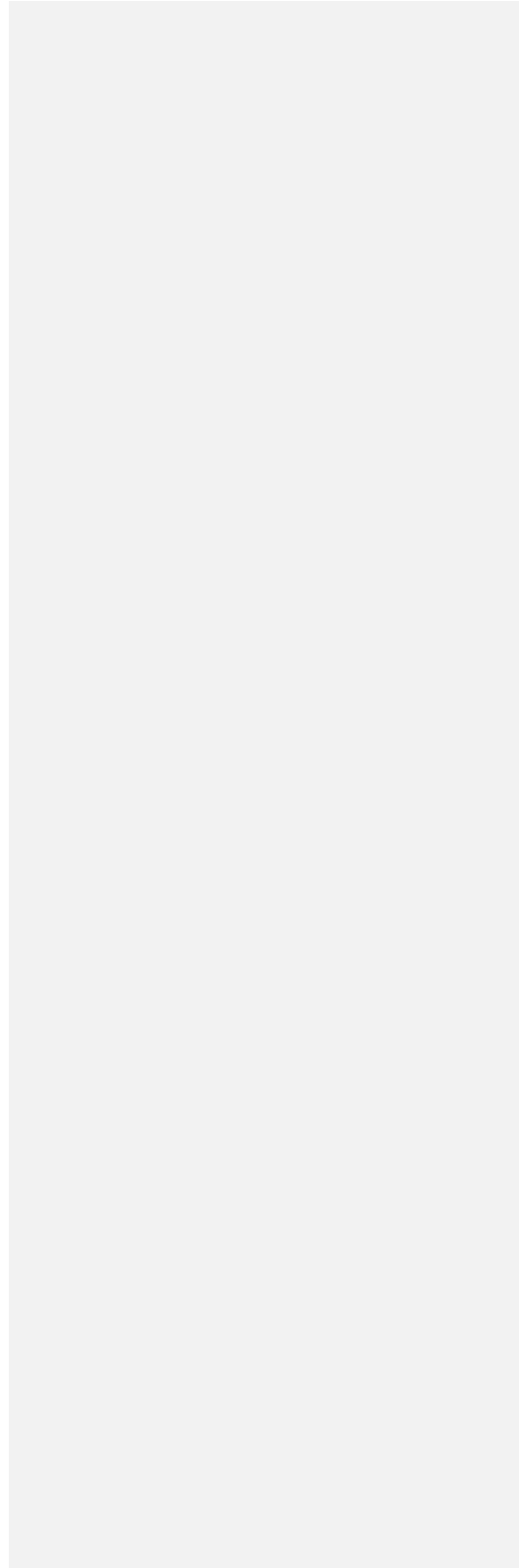


Participant Materials

- Pen
- Blank paper
- Water bottle
- *Journey to Wholeness* Binder
- Weekly Bible Study on a Healing Narrative of Christ
- CREATION Health Journals
- CREATION Health Small Group Discussion Guide
- CREATION Health Small Group Leader's Guide
- CREATION Health Self-Assessment
- Healthy Flagler Manual: Personal Action Plan

APPENDIX D

METHODS OF EVALUATION



Methods of Evaluation

- (a) A survey completed both at the beginning and ending of the intervention.
- (b) An abbreviated spiritual assessment tool that consisted of three questions, the answers to which were listened for during the group meetings and coaching session.
- (c) Participant attendance.

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