

Leading Like Jesus

Sharing Hope at Church, in the Home,
and in the Marketplace

Philip Baptiste



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Introduction – Let's Get Involved

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, before He performed any miracles or preached any sermons, He called others to get involved. He could have ministered alone, but instead He graciously invited twelve disciples to join Him in the ministry of preaching the

Gospel, healing the hurting, and reaching the lost.

After the resurrection, the disciples followed in His example of involving others as they trained and equipped more and more believers to join them in sharing their hope. Today we too have been called to get involved. God is calling us not simply to come to church and warm the seats: He wants us to become actively involved in the reaching of the least, the lost and the last.

As you go through this day, I challenge you to ask yourself: *What can I do to make a difference? How can I get more involved in ministry? What is Jesus calling me to do in my church and my community?* Together, we can make a huge difference for the Kingdom. So come on: don't just stand there! Let's get involved!



When I was just a young boy, our family loved taking long walks in the parks and trails near our home. My brothers are eleven and twelve years older than me, so it was often hard for my little seven-year-old legs to keep up with their strong and powerful strides. I would try the best I could to keep up with them, but usually I had to run to keep in step with both my parents and my brothers. Eventually I would get exhausted and would ask, 'Peter, David, can you guys pick me up and carry me on your shoulders?' But my brothers wouldn't always oblige. I would often burst out crying, 'I'm so tired; I can't go on any more!'

It was then that my wonderful mother would pick me up and put me on her shoulders and carry me all the way home. I didn't know it at the time, but Mum had arthritis in her back, and carrying me would cause her pain; yet she was more concerned about my pain than she was about her own.

Scripture admonishes us in Galatians 6:2: 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.' When I think of discipleship, that is indeed what it's all about – loving and caring for another member of God's family so much that you are more concerned about their pain than your own!

Ultimately, that's what Jesus did for us on the cross. He died, not only to carry our sins, but also to carry our pain, our burdens: and, even today, I'm so glad that when we are tired and worn out in the journey of life, when we call out to Him, like my loving mother, Jesus will carry us all the way home.

As you go through this day, I encourage you to renew your commitment to discipleship and to remember that it's not enough simply to walk beside our younger and newer believers. We must realise that sometimes the cost of discipleship compels us to hear someone else's cries for help, and to love another deeply enough to carry their burdens so that we may fulfil the law of Christ.

The Cost of Discipleship



'Give, Save, Live!'

Like most kids growing up, I loved getting new toys. However, I would sometimes do something that would really annoy my parents. When my friends would come over to visit, I would take paper and wrap up my toys as gifts and then give them away to my friends.

My parents would often wonder why I was giving away toys they had spent money to buy. I would always tell them, 'Remember, it's more blessed to give than to receive.' Plus, I just

loved to see the smiles on my friends' faces when I gave them an unexpected gift.

Today, instead of giving away toys, I give my time, my talent and my treasure. That's what the Bible calls *stewardship*. The biblical concept of stewardship is that nothing we have is really ours to begin with. We have simply been entrusted with it so that we can be a blessing to others. God said to Abraham, in effect, 'I will bless you so that you can be a blessing!' (See Genesis 12:2, 3.)

The Bible tells us that Abraham was rich and increased in goods. How did he become so wealthy, you might ask? The answer is simple. He started with giving. The Bible tells us that Abraham gave a tenth of all he had to Melchizedek the priest (Genesis 14:20).

Genesis 14 is the first mention of tithing in Scripture. As a result of Abraham's faithfulness in tithe and commitment to giving, God blessed him with more than he could ever desire. That was the secret to his success. Growing up, I learned the concept of 'Give, Save, Live'.

Firstly, alongside returning our tithe, we ought to give offerings back to God; secondly, we save a portion of our income; and then, finally, we live on the rest.

I challenge you to try this proposal. Remember, life is not about getting; it's about giving; and, while we don't have to give away our toys, we can have an amazing satisfaction in giving our time, talent and treasure to invest in the Kingdom of God.



When babies are learning to talk, one of the first words they learn is 'mine'. Little two-year-olds grab my phone or tablet and say, 'Mine, mine, mine!' And it is evident that they know that the world revolves around them; and of course it does, at least for a little while.

As they grow and develop, parents try to teach them a new word. This word might sometimes make them cry, never wanting to hear it again: 'share'. Kids don't usually like to share: they would much rather keep all of their toys and treats for themselves. Eventually they learn to share and realise that life is about giving, not just receiving.

Sometimes, as Christian families, we too can forget to share. We may act as if our only job is to take care of me and mine. God, however, has brought us together for a far bigger purpose. We have been called to share!

Abraham and his family are reminded of this when God says to them, 'I have blessed you so that you can be a blessing; through you all families of the world will be blessed' (see Genesis 12:2, 3). In other words, God is saying, 'Abraham, I haven't only blessed you and your family so that you can feel good about yourselves. I've blessed you so that you can be a blessing to the world around you. Come on, then, Abraham; it's time to move from *me* to *we*!'

Imagine how different your life would be if you were to embrace this powerful concept. What if you moved from *me* to *we*? What if you asked yourself, *How can we as a family make a difference? How can we get involved in ministry? How can we begin to share?*

Keep in mind, sharing is not only for married people. Sharing is for every member of the family. It doesn't matter if you're single or married, a child or an adult, a teen or a grandparent: God is calling each one of us to share. Why not join your church family in sharing and making a difference in your community?

If you have parents or children or a spouse, together have a talk about how your family can join in Total Family Involvement. It's not time for *me* and *mine*; it's time to move from *me* to *we*! It's time to share!

Moving from Me to We



Discipleship: A Team Sport

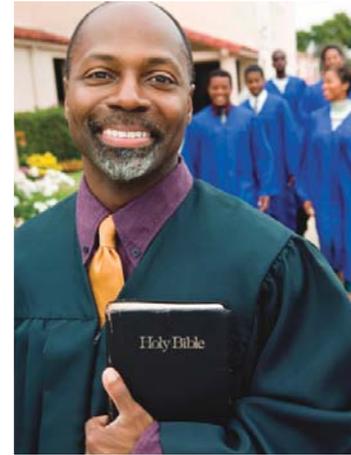
loved to play the game, but sometimes I would try and take over the game all by myself. So, if my team was losing, I thought that perhaps I could try and compensate by outplaying, outshining and outrunning everyone else.

But when I tried to play by myself and be the star on my own, my team would often end up losing. One day the team captain came to me and said, ‘Philip, this is a team sport . . . you can’t win alone; we can only win together.’ That stuck with me, and soon I started helping my team win by not trying to be the star, but simply doing my part as a member of the team.

When I think about discipleship, that’s really what it’s all about. Effective discipleship is not something we can do alone. Discipleship is a team sport, and it works best when we each do our part, with every one of us using his or her gifts and talents to make a difference and do our part as individual members of the body of Christ. As we reflect on this important theme, and on how we can best fulfil Jesus’ call to discipleship, I pray that our faith will be refreshed and renewed as we work together in Christ and recommit to going and making disciples of all nations in our communities and beyond!



When I was growing up, I remember that I wasn’t the best football player: and by ‘football’ I’m not talking about American football; I’m talking about soccer. I



Don’t Believe the Hype!

When you’re a leader, there are often many people who love and appreciate you. People may tell you, ‘You’re the best pastor ever’ or ‘You’re the best leader we’ve ever had in this

department.’ And it’s so easy to believe the hype. I know that in my younger years as a minister, at the door, people would come and tell me, ‘Oh, Pastor, that was the best sermon ever, the greatest sermon ever.’ And it’s easy to think, *Wow, I’m such a fantastic preacher.* And I’m not saying you’re not. But the reality is that the largest room in the world is the room for improvement.

If you just focus only on having people around you who tell you how great, good or excellent you are as a leader, then it’s easy to start believing the hype: and believing the hype can kind of limit you from growing and expanding to become your best.

So I want to challenge you today: surround yourself not only with people who support you, but find a coach; find a mentor; find someone whom you can trust to be honest with you. Find someone you can trust to tell you the truth; whom you can trust enough to say to them, ‘I’m going to send you this sermon; please give me some critical feedback and tell me what I can do to improve. Tell me three things I did well and give me two areas for growth.’

Find someone whom you can trust enough to ask them, ‘Here’s how I did in chairing this committee meeting; but tell me, did I do my best? What can I do better? How can I improve?’ Here, then, is my leadership tip for today. *Don’t believe the hype.* Find a mentor; find a coach; find someone who can help you grow.

You know, even Moses needed that, and he found Jethro, his father-in-law. And his father-in-law said words to the effect of, ‘Listen: you’re a great leader, but you’re doing too much; you need to empower others, and you need to equip others. You can’t solve the world’s problems by yourself’ (see Exodus 18:17-23). And, because he listened to Jethro, he was able to grow, and in the process he was able to empower and develop other leaders to be more useful for the mission. So, if you follow Moses’ example, by God’s grace you’ll be able to grow and reach your full potential. Remember: whatever you do, don’t believe the hype! And find someone who can help you grow!

Don't Run from Feedback



I used to be afraid of feedback! I remember that when I was a youth pastor there were times when my senior pastor would call me up and say, ‘We need to talk.’ And I

would try to find every excuse to put that meeting off, because I knew that he was probably going to say something negative such as, ‘How come you’re always late in coming to meetings?’ or something that wasn’t necessarily positive.

But, as I’ve grown, I’ve learned that feedback can actually be one of the best ways to help you grow. So

now I don’t wait for a supervisor or boss to give me feedback: I’ve actually learned to invite feedback.

Here, then, is my leadership tip for today! *Don’t run from feedback!* Every leader needs communication flowing in two ways. Firstly you need to be willing to receive feedback, and secondly you need to be prepared to give feedback.

There are two questions that I ask whenever I want to invite someone to give feedback. I may sit down with a departmental director or a person that I have the privilege of mentoring or leading, and I ask them two simple questions.

Number 1: ‘How are you doing?’ Number 2: ‘What can I do to help?’

As a pastor, I would sit down with my departmental directors and ask, ‘Hey, how are you doing? How are you doing as a youth leader? How you are doing as a person?’ And then, ‘What can I do to help?’

These two questions can go both ways. So, if you’re the leader, sit down with your team members one-to-one and ask them those questions: ‘How are you doing, and what can I do to help?’

But also, even as a leader, from time to time I’ve learned to invite feedback. I sit down with my president or with my superiors, and I reverse the question. I ask, ‘How am I doing in my role, and what can I do to grow?’

If you ask these questions, by God’s grace you will be able to grow and become the leader that God wants you to be. Even Jesus asked His disciples, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ (See Matthew 16:13.)

I challenge you therefore to follow the example of Jesus. Don’t run from feedback: invite feedback so that you can grow, but also seek to get God’s feedback daily through prayer so that you can learn to lead

One of the most important things you can do to communicate and lead with excellence is to grow spiritually.

In the Bible, David was a remarkable leader, but he wasn’t a perfect leader. He made some mistakes. But the amazing thing about David that you will see as you read through the Psalms is that he kept growing spiritually. He kept asking God to go deeper!

He prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’ (Psalm 51:10, KJV). And as a leader, whether you’re a church leader, a pastor, a teacher or an administrator, it doesn’t matter what type of leader you are: you cannot reach your maximum level of communication and leadership excellence unless you’re growing spiritually.

And here’s the thing: you can’t lead where you’re not headed. Therefore, I want to challenge you today to grow spiritually. You can grow spiritually through these three ways: prayer, Bible study, and ministry.

Engage in prayer and spend time talking with God every day as a friend. Schedule time for Bible study and experience the joy of reading God’s word every day. As your devotional life strengthens, you will be able to declare, as David did, ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path’ (Psalm 119:105, KJV).

Then engage in ministry, make a difference in the world around you and get actively involved in sharing Christ and serving people. Let your life be one of selfless service for the Saviour. By engaging in prayer, Bible study and ministry you’ll find yourself growing in a deeper, closer walk with God. And then, as you grow with God, you’ll find that you’ll be a better leader because you’re not leading by yourself, but Jesus Christ is leading through you.

Grow Spiritually!



Learn Leadership Skills!

Often, when people get elected, appointed or chosen to serve in a position as a leader or as an administrator, they think: *Wow, they picked me to be the leader, so now I've arrived; I know everything!*

But the reality is, nothing could be further from the truth. If

you have been asked to be a leader, it is incumbent upon you to be open to learn leadership skills. Therefore, I want to challenge you to commit to growing today. Grow by learning leadership skills. Commit to reading a book each month that will help you grow and expand your leadership skills in your field.

Always remember that leaders are learners. And, because you are a leader, it's even more important for you to grow each day. You can grow by finding and scheduling time to learn leadership skills – daily, weekly, monthly. Start reading, subscribing to blogs and magazines that can give you practical resources to help you in your leadership role. Pray for humility and don't forget to invite feedback.

Always remember that the largest room in the world is the room for improvement. So join me in committing to be willing to step into that room every day. Ultimately, the number-one person you can learn leadership skills from is Jesus: so ask God for wisdom today; ask Him for understanding, and remember His promise in Psalm 32 that He will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.



Remember, as you lead, that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care: and you have to earn the right to lead. You can't merely assume, just because you have been chosen to be the leader, that everyone is going to be ready to follow you, or to go in the direction you want to take your team.

You have to nurture relationships. You can cultivate relationships by remembering people's names. You nurture them by building authentic relationships, and you enhance and nurture relationships by conducting icebreakers, activities, mixers and fun things with your team so that they are not just working all the time, but they are actually spending time with each other in loving, balanced, Christlike relationships.

People say that the family that prays together stays together, but I would add that the family that plays together also stays together – so don't forget to nurture relationships. You know: when it's someone's birthday, remember that birthday. If you're the leader, send them a card and sign your name. If it's their anniversary, send them a card and sign your name.

There's nothing like nurturing relationships. When people know that you care for them, when they know that you have a heart of love, then they will be willing to listen and follow in the direction that God has called you to lead them.

When relationships are nurtured, you'll be manifesting to others the revolutionary love of Jesus. Think about His leadership approach. He nurtured relationships by healing the sick, by cleansing the lepers, by loving people, by feeding the five thousand, and by investing in His team, the twelve disciples.

If you want to invest in your team, get to know the people you work with, and in doing so you'll be the type of leader that they love following, because they will see God's love and care manifested through your caring character and because they'll know that you're following Christ.

Nurturing Relationships



Are You a Leader?

Of course you are. We are all leading in some way. As a parent you're leading your children; as a student you're leading your peers; and as a church member or pastor you're called to lead others to Christ. So you're a leader; there's

no doubt about it: but the question is, how are you leading the people around you?

Many people seem to dislike their leaders. Either they feel like they are horrible communicators with temper tantrums or they think that they are too calm and unwilling to take action in the face of conflict or crisis. Often leaders are selected based on popularity or likeability, resulting in nice people at the helm without the experience, ability or mental acumen to lead or communicate with excellence.

Be that as it may, leadership is all about relationships and communication. You can't dictate to or lead others by force or manipulation. One of my mentors used to say, 'You have to earn the right to lead.' I think there is a lot of truth in that statement. Leaders cannot simply assume that people will follow them just because they have been merely elected or assigned to a particular position. You have to earn the right to lead: and you earn it through building relationships and effective communication.

Leadership is a very delicate balancing act. An outstanding leader should show competencies in a variety of areas: the ability to hold others accountable while still showing care and compassion; the capacity to move an organisation forwards to embrace a new vision of the future, while still enabling them to celebrate the accomplishments of the past; the skill to be a change agent without making changes too radically; the courage to speak out against injustice without speaking in an unkind or aggressive manner. It is very challenging to lead. The



leader must walk with the people along the journey while simultaneously guiding them towards their destination.

I think that's why Solomon prayed for wisdom, knowledge and understanding as he was getting ready to lead the nation of Israel . . . and God answered his prayer. He wasn't perfect, but he was able to lead Israel to the pinnacle of success. Are you facing challenges in your leadership journey today? Why not pause and pray as Solomon prayed? Ask God to give you wisdom, knowledge and understanding today; and claim His promise in Psalm 32:8: 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye' (NKJV). If you let Him instruct and guide you then you can lead with confidence, knowing that you're not leading alone, but Christ is leading through you!

United in Christ and United in Mission

Thousands of years ago, the psalmist David penned these words: ‘Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ (Psalm 133:1, NKJV.) Jesus also prays for His disciples to have unity in John 17.

The apostle Paul counsels us to remember that the church is a body, and that ‘there should be no division in the body’ (1 Corinthians 12:25). Be that as it may, the disciples did not have a history of working together in unity.

‘Who’s on the left side and who’s sitting on the right side?’ they bickered angrily. They didn’t realise the importance of TEAM: *Together Everyone Achieves More*. Jesus wanted them to live in unity. He taught love and togetherness, and prayed earnestly that they would become one, just as He and His Father were one.

Perhaps the unity Jesus prayed for was not fully realised until the day of Pentecost arrived. On this day, after being together for so long, the disciples finally understood what it meant to live in unity. The blessing of being in unity is that *unity promotes promise*.

They had been promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, so they got together in unity to pray and look for that promise. Today, as Seventh-day Adventists, we too need to pray and look for the promise. Why? Because we believe that ‘the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air’ (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, KJV).

This is our promise, because in unity we can help to promote and fulfil God’s message. In unity, as we share and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to our friends and neighbours, we anticipate the Second Coming and the fulfilment of this most precious promise.

Unity not only promotes promise: *unity unveils potential*. As the



disciples came together in unity in the upper room, their unity unveiled the potential not only for the Holy Spirit to come and fill them, but through Him to speak in languages heretofore unknown to them and to evangelise in ways that they never could have envisaged before.

With this new gift of diverse languages and communication, they now had the potential to reach people from all walks of life with the good news of Jesus. Unity unveiled the potential that language and culture need not be barriers to reaching the masses for Christ. Unity not only promotes promise: *unity unveils potential*.

What barriers do you face? Unity not only promotes promise: *unity unveils potential*. Perhaps being united in Christ, praying together and coming together in one accord will unveil the potential to help us break down these barriers and carry out our mission.

Finally, and most importantly, *unity unleashes power*. After the upper-room experience, the disciples, now empowered with the gift of the Spirit, were able to move, preach, and reach people for God with unprecedented power and unbridled creativity. Do you want that kind of power? Do you want the Holy Spirit’s power to fill your church and help you to reach your community for Him? It can happen when we are united in Christ and united in mission!

Come and See

In Matthew 28:19, 20 we find the Great Commission: ‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with

you always, to the very end of the age.’

This robust mandate and mission statement, given by the Master Himself, is our guiding principle for evangelism and the impetus behind everything we do to share our Adventist message of hope and wholeness.

But, as we preach, teach, and evangelise, how important is discipleship to us? Have we fully understood what it means to ‘go and make disciples’?

A disciple is defined as one who accepts and assists in the spreading of the Gospel message of Jesus.

Giving assistance

In my experience, Seventh-day Adventist Christians do a great job of empowering and equipping people to accept the Gospel of Jesus: but we aren’t always the greatest at helping individuals learn how to assist in spreading the Gospel of Jesus.

In John 1:45, 46, the newly recruited disciple Philip is so excited that, after he accepts the invitation of Jesus, he goes and finds his friend Nathanael and says, ‘“We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

‘“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”’ Nathanael asked.

‘“Come and see,” said Philip.’

We need to develop this ‘come and see’ philosophy. We must allow our passion and love for Christ to so fill our lives that we are overflowing with a desire to tell everyone we meet to ‘come and see’.

When was the last time you were at the supermarket or grocery store and shared Jesus with someone? When was the last time you invited a friend at your job or at school to attend church so that they could ‘come and see’?

Invitation

Being a disciple is more than just attending church and Sabbath School and carrying a big Bible. Being a disciple is a commitment to a ‘come and see’ lifestyle, a

commitment to daily reach out to the least, the lost, and the last. Being a disciple means that you will prayerfully commit to never let an opportunity to witness or to give a ‘come and see’ invitation pass you by.

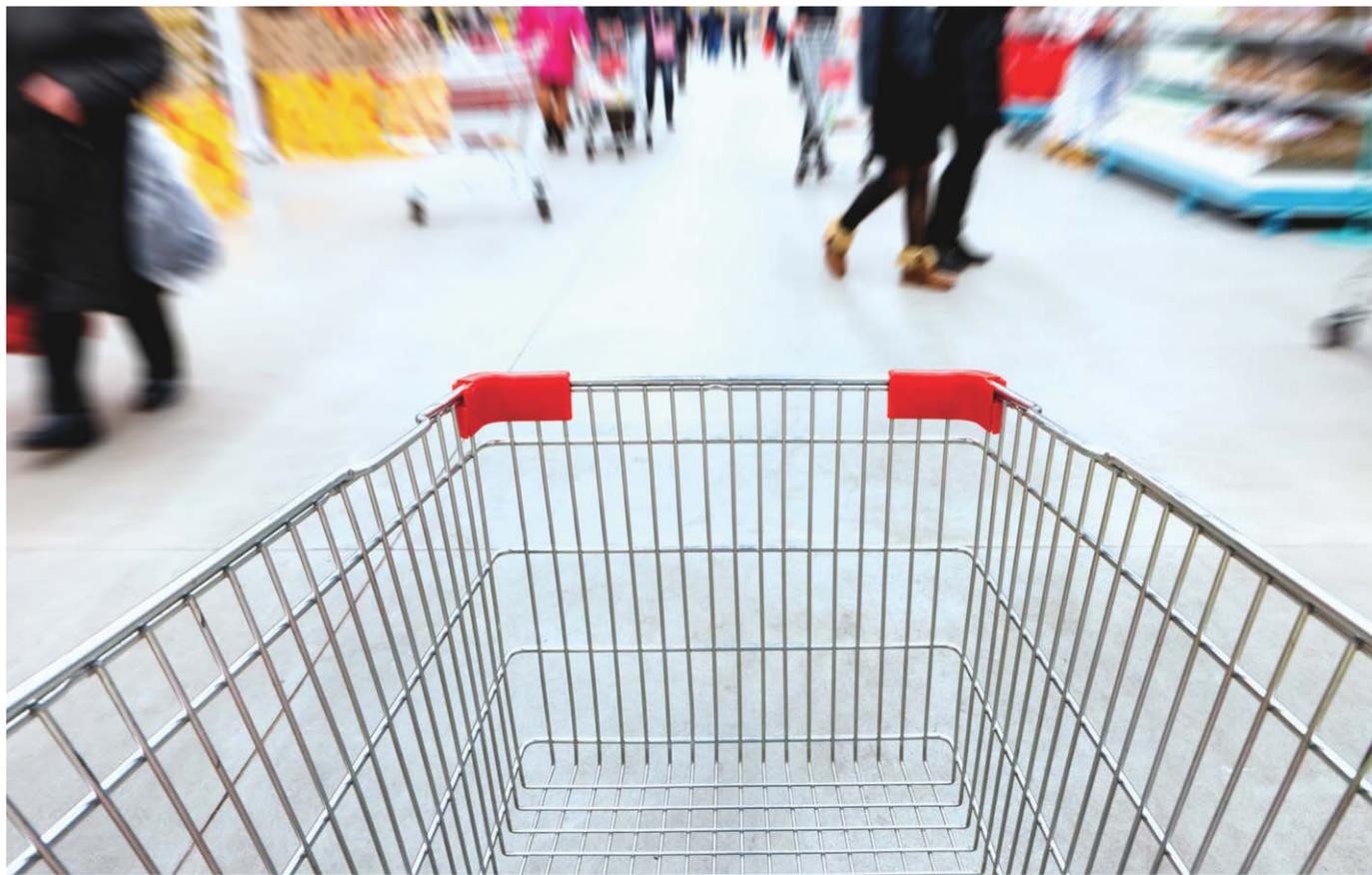
John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother Simon. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples teach the importance of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbours.

I want to challenge you to live a ‘come and see’ lifestyle. Can you live in such a way that you are consistently scanning your surroundings to look for people whom you can invite to church, Bible study, or Sabbath activity?

Philip did not engage in a Bible study with Nathanael. He did not try to convince him that his newfound religion of Jesus was better. He merely said, ‘Come and see.’ This is powerful, because Jesus proclaims, ‘I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself’ (John 12:32).

Is Jesus Christ lifted up in your home, in your marriage, in your parenting, in your friendships and relationships? Is He lifted up in the way you interact with others, handle your anger, and communicate?

When Jesus is reflected in our lives and lifted up in our characters, others will be drawn to Him. This starts with inviting others to ‘come and see’.



Total Member Involvement – Part 1



As Jesus was approaching the close of His ministry on earth, He gave His disciples some very interesting instructions. He told them to go to a particular place in the village and, when they saw a donkey

tied up, to untie it, take it and bring it to Him. If anyone was to ask them what they were doing, they were just to say that the Master had need of it.

The disciples took the donkey, and that donkey became involved in ministry. Can you imagine? A donkey was awarded the humble privilege of carrying on its back Jesus – the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

The interesting thing about this donkey is that it was tied up. Donkeys are meant to be working to help ease the burden of those nearby. But this donkey was tied up, meaning that it was just standing by, and not reaching its full potential for ministry. Jesus, from afar off, saw that this donkey needed to be used in Christian service, so He told the disciples to untie the donkey; to release it and let it do what it was created to do.

I have a question for you to ponder. How many times have we perhaps acted like that donkey? How often have we been standing by, with our gifts and talents tied up, instead of using them for ministry? How often have we listened to appeals in church to get involved or to give more, while we stand idly by, with our hands folded and our talents and resources tied up?

How much more could we accomplish if we were to untie our donkeys and release them to be used by the Master? We have no idea how much God is waiting to bless us. But how many of us have missed our blessings because we prefer to be bench warmers rather than get involved in the work of the ministry?

The Adventist Church has launched a global initiative called Total Member Involvement. I'm excited about this incredible concept. Total Member Involvement is an invitation for every single Adventist member to untie their donkeys and release their full potential in ministry and service for Christ.

Jesus initially extended this invitation over 2,000 years ago. He told His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field' (Luke 10:2). Jesus reminds us that we have a great harvest, but we are desperately in need of more workers. This is a call for Total Member Involvement. If every member were willing to move from being a spectator to being a worker, think of what an incredible difference we could make for God's kingdom.

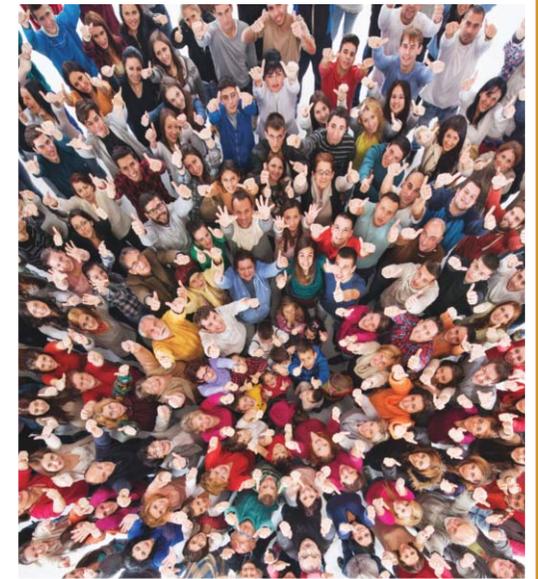
In May 2016 over 100,000 people were baptised as a result of the Rwanda Total Member Involvement evangelistic series. Led by the Adventist world church president, church members organised and conducted over 2,300 simultaneous evangelism campaigns all over Rwanda. The humongous success was a direct result of Total Member Involvement. A 12-year-old boy preached and led hundreds to Christ.

Lay people taught young people how to get involved, grandparents did their part, business professionals led meetings, and doctors and medical professionals held health clinics. Everyone contributed, and the result was the largest public campaign baptism in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This is what can happen when we all get involved! So let's untie our donkeys of potential. Let us surrender our spiritual gifts and talents into the hands of the Master so that together we can reap a rich harvest for Him.

Total Member Involvement! This is our time! This is our moment! Let's get involved and reach the world for Jesus!

Total Member Involvement – Part 2



Total Family Involvement

In the Old Testament, the fearless leader Joshua makes a very profound statement: ‘Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD’ (Joshua 24:15, KJV).

Sense, if you will, his sincerity; feel his favour and capture his courage. Here Joshua is pledging Total Family Involvement to the mission and service of God. Notice that Joshua does not have a family meeting to ask his wife and children to vote on this idea. He simply boldly declares, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.’

Notice that this was a powerful declaration of Total Family Involvement: for he said, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.’ That word ‘we’ is the one that I would like to start with. There’s something powerful that can happen when we move from *me* to *we*; when we commit with our families to serving the Lord.

Too many of our families are focused on *me* and *mine*. In fact, there is often a disconnect between what we say or commit to do in church and how we live together as a family at home. But Joshua doesn’t say ‘me’: he says ‘we’. He is committed to Total Family Involvement.

He realises that it’s not enough for him to be an elder in the church; it’s not enough for him to teach the Sabbath School lesson; it’s not enough for him even to be a pastor or a church leader. He knows that the call of God is not just for personal involvement: it’s a call for Total Family Involvement.

He says, ‘I don’t know what you’re going to do, but I and my house are going to serve the Lord.’ I wonder what could happen if our churches and our communities committed our families to serve the Lord? Think about it. Can you imagine what our churches would be like if every single family committed to Total Family Involvement; if we were to choose this day to make serving God our number-one priority?

What would happen in our families if, instead of tuning into the



television, we tuned into Heaven’s vision? What would happen if we stopped focusing so much on our wants and needs, and started focusing on what God wants and needs us to do for Him? When we focus only on ourselves, we can do only so much for God’s kingdom – but when our entire family commits to serving Him then there is no limit to what we can accomplish for His mission.

Do you remember the story in 1 Kings 17:8-15, where God’s prophet Elijah is sent to stay with a widow and he asks her to give him some bread? Her first response was to say no. ‘You don’t understand,’ she told him, weeping; ‘you don’t know my struggle. I’m just making the last loaf of bread with the little flour and oil I have left, and then after that my son and I will starve to death’ (see 1 Kings 17:12).

But God’s word to her through the prophet Elijah was radical. He said, ‘Take care of God’s request first, and then God will take care of your needs.’ (See verses 13, 14.)

This is difficult, because we don’t always believe that God can supply our needs. We often doubt His promises and wonder how He will provide for our families if we put Him first.

This woman decided to put Him first: and, when she chose to serve the Lord, she committed her son to do so as well. And together as a family they put the needs of the Kingdom first and trusted in God to supply their needs. What happened next was simply miraculous. The flour and oil never ran out (verses 15, 16). When her family put God’s business first, God took care of her family’s business.

Living Life to the Full – Part 1



What is your most valued personal possession? What is the one thing that you would not want to lose, break, or give up? We all have things that are valuable to us. For some, it's their mobile phones. I've seen people so out of sorts because they have lost their phones or cracked the screens. For others it's their bicycle, motorbike, car, or favourite piece of furniture.

While many think of their most valued possession in terms of material things, the Bible reminds us that our most valuable possession is our bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 (KJV) says, 'What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'

In other words, your body is your most valuable possession; and it's not even yours. It's God's. You were bought with a price. The Bible says, 'Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'

Our bodies are God's precious and valuable possessions. That's how each of us should value them too.

We have to take care of our bodies because they belong to God and are on loan to us from the Creator. Are we living in such a way that we are glorifying God in our bodies? Are we exercising, eating healthily, and avoiding abusive substances? Are we living a pure and holy life?

Is our physical and spiritual health a living testimony that brings glory and honour to God? Sometimes we don't always feel as though we are glorifying God in our bodies. Maybe we feel overweight, or perhaps we feel that we aren't eating a healthy, balanced diet. Maybe there are secret addictive habits in our lives that rob God of the glory He wants to get from our spirits and our bodies.

Here's the good news. Today can be the beginning of the best days of the rest of our lives, once we choose to start glorifying God in our bodies.

If a friend of yours loaned you this very nice car for the weekend, wouldn't you take care of it and not drive it in an irresponsible, reckless manner? Our bodies are not ours. Each of us must treat his or her body with utmost care because it belongs to God.

Ellen White gives us this reminder: 'Make the most of the capabilities and talents lent us by God. All who are weakening and destroying the physical, mental, and moral powers by sinful eating, sinful dressing, and violation of the laws of health in any respect, will have to render an account to God for all the good they might have done had they observed the laws of health' (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 192).

Here's the point: we can't treat our body just anyhow, because it does not belong to us. We can't live our life just any way we want, because it is not our own. Our body is God's gift to us. What we do with it and how we live our life is a gift we give back to God: so what kind of gift are we giving Him today?

The Bible counsels us, in Romans 12:1 (KJV), 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'

God wants us to take good care of the bodies He has loaned to us. So how are we treating our bodies? Have we presented our bodies fully and completely to God?

Today, let's start to implement the principles and suggestions that have been given concerning this issue so that we can glorify God in our spirit and body, which belong to God! Then we will be living life to the full!



Living Life to the Full – Part 2

Strategies for Total Member Involvement Success!

One of the greatest examples of Total Member Involvement is found in the story of Nehemiah! Nehemiah was a man with a dream and a mission. He wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This is interesting, because, while he lived in Babylon, his heart was in

Jerusalem. Even though he worked and lived in another country, he did not forget where his home was. Like Nehemiah, we live and work in the world, but we must never forget that this world is not our home!

Now, Nehemiah had a plan for rebuilding Jerusalem's wall. He knew exactly what needed to be done to make this mission a success. But the first thing Nehemiah did was to pray! 'When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and

prayed before the God of heaven' (Nehemiah 1:4). This anointed leader realised that success could not result from his own strength: so he committed to fasting and prayer.

Let's take a look at Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1:5-11:

'LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.'

'Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name."

'They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.'

Notice that he even prayed for favour in making his request to a foreign king, and God granted his request. If we simply have faith in God and pray fervently for His guidance, He will be sure to guide and provide all that we need to accomplish the mission.



Forwards on Our Knees

The secret to our success in Total Member Involvement (TMI) is not merely in our abilities or our carefully laid plans: it is in us moving forwards on

our knees. What is it that you want to happen in your community? What would you like to happen in your church or your Conference or Union? Don't you know that the secret to your success doesn't come from having more committee meetings? It's through united prayer and supplication before the God of Heaven.

The first step for us to be successful in our TMI mission is for us to *engage in prayer*.

The second step for success in our TMI mission is for us to *empower a team*. Reading Nehemiah chapter three, we catch a glimpse of just how massive Nehemiah's team was. He could have tried to rebuild the wall by himself; but he realised that together everyone achieves more. He divided up the work and got everyone involved – every family and every member got to participate in rebuilding a portion of the wall.

During my work in the East-Central Africa Division our goal was to

follow Nehemiah's approach. Our goal was to mobilise Total Member Involvement all across the vast Division territory. For this to be successful we needed every single member to do their part to help rebuild the brokenness in our community, and to engage in service by using their unique gifts and talents to help spread the Adventist message with their friends and neighbours.

Step three is *enduring till the end!* Nehemiah faced many obstacles in his mission to rebuild the wall. Many of his strongest opponents were fellow believers and church members, not unbelievers. People even came and commanded him to stop building and to come down: but Nehemiah was committed to enduring till the end. When people tried to get him to stop, he said, 'I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down' (Nehemiah 6:3). I challenge you to endure in TMI until the end. Don't let your fire burn out or your courage wane. There are still thousands, even millions, who need to hear and accept the Adventist message. Let's endure until the end. Let's commit to never stop until every nation, kindred, tribe, and people has had an opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus.

Remember the three steps for TMI success: 1) *Engage in prayer*; 2) *Empower a team*; and 3) *Endure until the end!* May we be faithful, like Nehemiah, until we hear the Father say, 'Well done!'



Live Like Jesus

Luke 4:16-21 (Message): ‘He came to Nazareth where he had been reared. As he always did on the Sabbath, he went to the meeting place. When he stood up to read, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he

found the place where it was written,

God’s Spirit is on me; he’s chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor,

Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind,

To set the burdened and battered free, to announce, “This is God’s year to act!”

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the place was on him, intent. Then he started in, “You’ve just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place.” ’

All of us have goals, dreams and aspirations. For some youth, it’s to become a doctor or a lawyer. For others, it’s to become an artist, a singer, a basketball player or maybe even a movie star. Everyone has dreams and hopes for the future, and our aspirations influence the way we live, the way we talk and the way we interact with others. Our character often reflects the deepest desires of our heart. If your goal is simply to make a lot of money, it’s often reflected in your character.

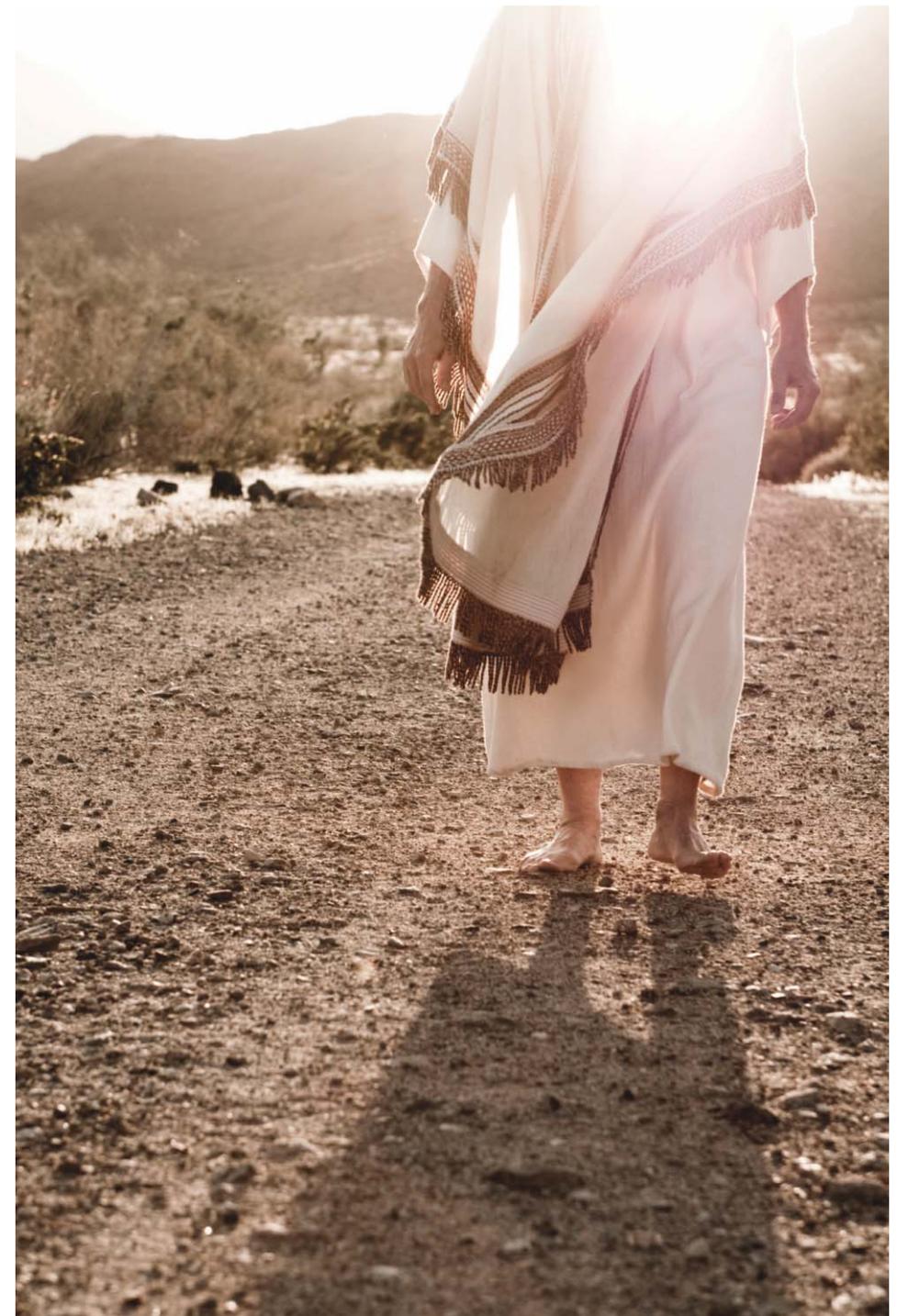
Perhaps you’re less generous and don’t really spend a lot of time with your family because you’re too busy trying to make that money. If your goal is to climb the corporate ladder, perhaps it’s not always pursued in the right spirit. It’s possible that an attempt is made to lie and manipulate and use flattery to get to the top. What we aspire to and what we dream of achieving often affect who we are and the person we become.

But here’s a question for you. What if you decided to live like Jesus? What if living like Jesus became your goal, your dream, your aspiration? What if living like Jesus became the number-one thing you pursued?

In the Bible, King David had it all: he was successful; he had conquered all the other surrounding nations; he had wives and concubines; he had achieved the greatest success in man’s view. But David declared, in Psalm 27:4 (NKJV), ‘One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.’

For David, his destination was God. It was not more things or more money or more earthly success. His goal was simply this: ‘Lord, just

to be close to You is my desire. . . .’ What’s your goal today? What is it that your heart longs for? What is it that you want more than anything else in the world?



'Living Like Jesus' – More than a Song Title

What is the most important accomplishment or achievement that you could ever have? What if you made it your life's goal to learn to live like Jesus? Can you imagine how different your life would be if you were to make it your mission to live like Jesus?

Now, this is not an easy task. We often sing songs such as, 'I would be like Jesus'. But when we sing such songs, do we mean what we sing? Because living like Jesus, and being like Jesus, is not just about repeating a pretty turn of phrase or a vapid soliloquy. It's about changing our way of life and transforming our perspective. It's about *service*, not *serve us*. It's about *giving*, not *receiving*. It's about *humility*, not *popularity*.

In Luke 4:18, 19 we see Jesus share His mission statement.

Here Jesus proposes the kind of life that He wants to live. And I want you to know that Jesus' proposal should be our proposal. His mission should be our mission.

He said (NKJV):

'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.'

How did He fulfil this mission? Jesus had a commitment to *give generously*; to *serve authentically*; and to *love unconditionally*.

Perhaps that's why Jesus declared, in Luke 6:38: 'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure,

pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

Jesus was the model Leader. He believed in teamwork. That's why he built a team of disciples that He could mentor and develop. Jesus believed that 'teamwork makes the dream work'.

He believed in empowering others, so with His disciples He created this model. He said, in effect, 'Listen: I do, you watch. I do, you help. And then you do, I watch.' He believed so much in growing spiritually that often He would go off by Himself to pray and commune with the Father. He understood that you can't lead where you're not headed.

He believed in creative communication. Sometimes, when people asked Him a question, He would communicate in the most creative ways. When the scribes and Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to Him, He could have started an argument with them. Instead, He just began writing in the sand, and then finally He said, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first' (John 8:1-7, NKJV).



Give, Serve, Love

Jesus is the Master Communicator, and the model Leader! When He began His ministry, He boldly declared His mission and vision. In the synagogue one day, He stood up to read and said, ‘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 . . .’ (Luke 4:18, NKJV).

Over and over He would remind the disciples that they were called to engage in selfless service for the Saviour. His mission was not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

In fact, Jesus believed that the church was not called simply to have open doors, but to open hearts and open minds. By the power of God and with the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus calls us to remove the doors, heal the hearts and change minds so that the barriers no longer exist for the least, the lost, and the last.

As the model Leader, Jesus was humble, truthful and faithful. I don’t know about you, but I want to learn how to lead like Jesus. I want to challenge you to live like Jesus! And to live like Jesus is to engage in service, to be willing to give. To live like Jesus is to *give, serve, and love!*



The Bible tells us that Abraham was rich and increased in goods. How did he become so wealthy? The answer is simple. He started with giving. The Bible tells us that Abraham returned a tenth of all he had to Melchizedek the priest (Genesis 14:20).

Genesis 14 is the first mention of tithing in Scripture. As a result of Abraham’s faithfulness in tithe and commitment to giving, God blessed him with more than he could ever desire. That was the secret to his success. Proverbs 11:25 (NKJV) says this: ‘The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.’

Life is not about getting; it’s about giving. That’s why, when the disciples came to Jesus asking, ‘Lord, who’s going to be on the left side and who’s going to be on the right side? Who’s going to be first in your kingdom?’ Jesus said, ‘If anyone among you desires to be first, let him first be a servant’ (see Matthew 20:20-28). Because living like Jesus is about *service*, not *serve us!*

If we want to live like Jesus, we’ve got to *give, serve and love*. It’s not enough simply to give generously, or serve unselfishly, or love unconditionally. By itself each trait is good: but together they are irresistible. And watch Jesus as He *gives, serves and loves* in the upper room at the last supper with His disciples. Watch as He gives of His time and talent to spend and invest in them to prepare them for what He knows is coming. Watch as He gives of Himself through service by washing the disciples’ feet. And even watch as He loves them unconditionally: even the love He shows to Peter and Judas, knowing that they will deny and betray Him.

But He doesn’t stop there: watch Jesus *give, serve and love* as He climbs Calvary’s hill. Watch as He serves on the cross; as He lovingly cares for His mother and says, ‘Mother, behold your Son’ and ‘John, behold your mother.’ Watch Him love those

who crucified Him, jeered Him and mocked Him as He cries, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

But it doesn’t stop there. Watch Him even after the resurrection as He *gives, serves and loves* Peter and the disciples on the beach; as He serves them fish and gives them His care, and lovingly restores Peter into the fold. If you want to live like Jesus, you’ve got to *give, serve and love!*

I'm Willing to Give – Part 1

1 Peter 4:10, 11: 'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone

speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.'

The Christian life is one of service to others. It is a life where we show love and kindness to everyone, even to those who do not treat us well. Because I am a Christian, I understand that charity begins at home, and ends abroad. This means that my service to others is not something I just do publicly but ignore privately. Christian service means that I'm not only willing to help in church, but I'm also helpful at home.

This means that I'm loving and kind to my wife, and eager to take the rubbish out or do the dishes. I'm happy to massage her tired feet after she's been in heels all day. I'm excited to cook dinner or fold the laundry or make her a cup of tea. Ellen White, in the book *Mind, Character, and Personality* (vol. 2, p. 433), says this: 'Let Christ be seen in all that you do. Let all see that you are living epistles of Jesus Christ. . . . Be lovable. Let your life win the hearts of all who are brought in contact with you.' Perhaps that is the best definition of service: *being lovable*.

Many of us know how to be lovable in our job, or at school, but don't know how to be lovable at home. Other people are only lovable at home to their friends and family, but forget to be lovable to people they don't know.

But Jesus wants us to be like

Him: and Jesus was lovable at all times, to all people. Indeed, Proverbs 17:17 says that 'a friend loves at all times', and I'm so glad that I can call Jesus my Friend. And He was lovable wherever He was. It did not matter who you were, what your background was or where you came from: Jesus showed love to all.

And He demonstrated His love through selfless service to others. Romans 5:8 says that His greatest demonstration of love is this: 'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' I think that's why Peter says we should use whatever gift we have to serve others, as faithful stewards or recipients of God's greatest gift of grace: for the greatest way we can show God's love and grace to someone else is to engage in serving others.

Jesus values service so much that He declares, in Mark 10:44, 'Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.' The apostle Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:2 that helping others when they are struggling is fundamental to the Gospel. 'Carry each other's burdens,' he says, 'and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.'



I'm Willing to Give – Part 2



Bryan Anderson.' The tyre was flat, and while changing it he got dirty and his hands were hurt. When the job was done, she asked how much she owed him for his help. Bryan smiled. He said: 'If you really want to pay me back, the next time you see someone who needs help, give that person the needed assistance, and think of me.'

The same evening, the lady stopped by a small cafe. The place looked dingy. Then she saw a waitress, nearly eight months pregnant, wiping her wet hair with a towel. The waitress had a wonderful, friendly smile. The lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so kind and giving to a stranger.

Then she remembered Bryan. The lady finished her meal and paid with a hundred-dollar bill. The waitress went to get change, and when she came back the lady was gone. She had left a note on the napkin: 'You don't owe me anything. Somebody once helped me, just like I'm now helping you. If you really want to pay me back, do not let this chain of love end with you.' The waitress found four more hundred-dollar bills under the napkin.

That night the waitress went home earlier than usual. She was thinking about the lady and the money she had left. She was wondering how the lady could have known how much she and her husband needed it: especially now, with the baby soon to arrive. She knew that her husband worried about that, so she was glad to tell him the good news. Then she kissed him and whispered, 'Now everything will be all right. I love you, Bryan Anderson.'

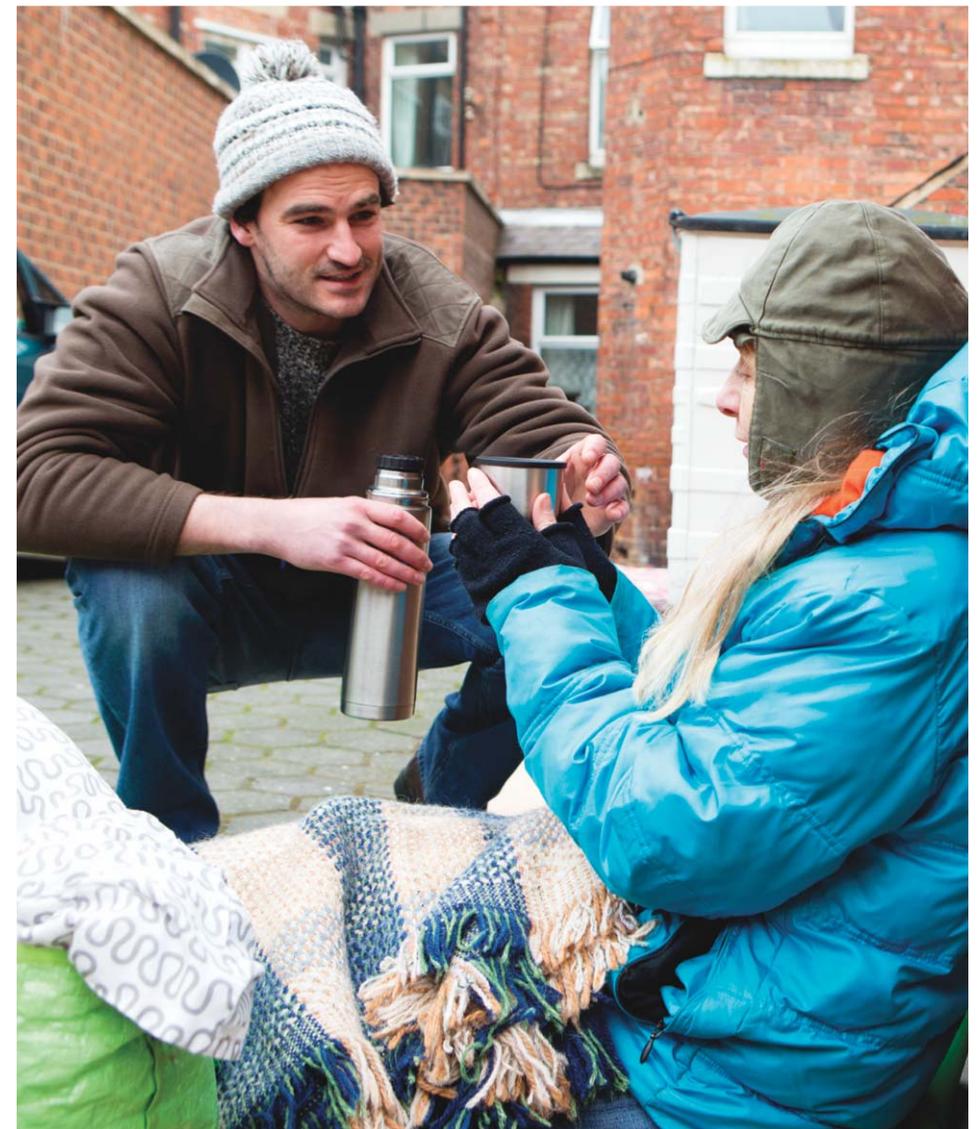
Perhaps that's why Jesus declared, in Luke 6:38, 'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

A man was driving his car when he saw an old lady, stranded on the side of the road. He saw that she needed help, so he stopped near her car and got out. He smiled while he was approaching her. She still looked worried, as nobody had stopped for hours. Moreover, he did not look safe, as his appearance was so poor and shabby. He could see how frightened she was, so he tried to calm her: 'I'm here to help you; don't worry. My name is

In the Old Testament, Ruth leaves all after the death of her husband to follow Naomi, her mother-in-law. She says, 'Wherever you go, I will go.' She says she will follow her anywhere, and when they get back to Bethlehem Ruth goes to get grain for Naomi to take care of them.

While working in the field she meets Boaz, who was considered the family redeemer. He begins to bless her in big ways by providing for

'If I Can Help Somebody . . .'



her needs. Then he tells her that he knows everything she has done for her mother-in-law and speaks a blessing over her. Immediately she is blessed because she has been willing to give.

When will we realise the blessing attached to serving others? Sometimes we serve with a wrong heart and don't give ourselves fully to help others. Ruth served in humility, out of a pure heart. She wanted to be a blessing to her mother-in-law. As she was serving with that pure heart, the blessing of God hit her life in a powerful way. God blesses those who serve Him and others in humility. God notes and sees every little thing you do for others. His blessings abound in the lives of those who give their lives away. You can't outgive God! He will turn your sacrifice into blessing every time.

I don't know about you, but my prayer every day is, 'Lord, I want to serve others out of a pure heart: no ulterior motives! I want to help people that need help. Help me to serve with gladness and joy of heart. Help me to be a blessing to my family. Teach me to serve them better. Jesus, You came to be the servant of all. Help me to improve my service.'

It's one thing to talk about Jesus, but it's another thing to show the love of Jesus to those who are so hurting and so depressed that they can't hear your message. We immediately think that they need the bread of life; but some folk just need some bread. They need the water from the well that won't run dry; but some folk just need some water. They need the embrace of God's love and forgiveness; but they also might just need a hug.

As Alma Bazel Androzzo wrote in her famous song, 'If I can help somebody as I travel along, then my living will not be in vain.' A great philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore, once said, 'I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and found that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy!'

And my prayer for you today is that you will make this declaration: 'I'm willing to give!'

Listen to the words of Eugene Peterson in the Message paraphrase of 1 Peter 4:7-11: 'Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless – cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and *he'll* get all the credit as the One mighty in everything – encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!'

Choosing to Be Wise

Solomon in the book of Proverbs declares that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This reminds us that acquiring wisdom comes by taking a journey, not merely from taking a class or subscribing to a particular course of study.

Wisdom gives us the knowledge to know how to travel on our journey and how to make prudent decisions that will bring us lifelong success. Proverbs 27:12 says that the prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it. In other words, the prudent or wise person is able to see danger ahead as they travel on the road of life, and they take refuge, or they change their direction: but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Let's suppose you are taking a boat ride with some friends. You step into the boat and you are enjoying the beautiful scenery as the boat slowly begins to make its way through the calm waters. All of a



sudden you see a sign: 'Big Rapids Ahead'; 'Huge Waterfall Ahead'. What do you do? Do you turn around or do you keep going?

Believe it or not, there are some people who would want to keep going. You might say, 'Well, maybe the rapids won't be that bad? It will be fun to go over the waterfall. It will be OK; it will work out.' But the wise person will stop and take refuge or change their direction so as to avoid the danger ahead.

You see, there are only two types of people in the world: the wise and the otherwise; the prudent and the simple or foolish. The prudent, or wise, see danger and take refuge, but the simple, or foolish, keep going and suffer for it. One definition of wisdom, according to our text, is listed as the ability to adjust your direction to avoid the pitfalls or dangers along the pathway of life.

Imagine that your parents say to you, 'Stop hanging around that group of friends; they are a bad influence on you.' If you are wise, you take refuge and listen. You adjust your direction and find friends who build you up, instead of staying with ones who bring you down. However, if you are simple, or foolish, you say, 'I've seen the warning, but it's OK; I'll just keep going. It will work out. My parents don't really know what they are talking about.'

But suppose you end up in hospital, almost dead, because of a late-night car accident you have been involved in with your friends driving under the influence. Only then do you say, 'Oh man, I wish I had listened, and now I'm suffering for this mistake. I wish I had been wise or prudent, instead of just simple and foolish.' Your ability to adjust your direction and take refuge will determine your ultimate success.

Lessons from the Life of Esther

Today I want us to spend just a few moments looking at the life of Esther to see what gems we can pick up from her life.

Indeed, Esther was someone who learned how to adjust her direction and take refuge in order to avoid the pitfalls and dangers along the pathway of life. There are several things we must learn from the life of Esther that will help us to be wise in this life, and not merely simple or foolish.

They are to prepare, to seek God, and to act according to His will.

When you examine Esther's life, you will see that before she became Queen she had taken the time to prepare. In fact, scholars tell us that she had spent over a year of preparation in the palace before she was ever presented to the King. She was taught court etiquette and royal practices. She went through beauty treatments and was trained in many ways about how to please the King.

Sure enough, the Lord was with her, but she did not forget the importance of preparation. She did not simply walk up to the royal palace and appear before the King. No: when he selected her, it was after months and months of intense, thoughtful and careful preparation. Friend, whatever you want to accomplish in this life, be sure to take the time to prepare for it.

When Esther was Queen, a situation arose where Haman was trying to kill all of God's people. It was over his jealousy of Esther's cousin, Mordecai. Whenever you achieve your goals, whenever you start being successful, there will always be those devils that will try to tear you down or invent accusations against you because of pure jealousy and pride; but when God is with you, you don't have to worry. They will not succeed.

Haman didn't like Mordecai, so he decreed, with the King's permission, that all the Jews should be put to death. The King didn't know that Esther was a Jew. When she heard about it, she could have just simply ignored it and kept going. Esther could well have said, 'I am a queen. I'm supposed to just look beautiful and please my husband; I don't want to get involved in such matters of state. This decree won't affect me personally, so let me just keep going.'

However, Esther was prudent and wise. She saw danger ahead for her people, and she sought the Lord through fasting and, we may also infer, through prayer. She probably didn't just pray the short, 30-second prayers that some people pray when they wake up or before



they drive to work. She *prayed!* In fact, she spent three days in prayer and fasting. When you are faced with a challenge or a problem, don't just go to other people for advice. Go to God first. Seek Him in prayer. Let Him speak to you and be your Guide. He promises in Psalm 32 that He will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

Remember to pray. 'Pray without ceasing,' the Bible says (1 Thessalonians 5:17, KJV). Remember that prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlocking Heaven's storehouse. Pray; and don't only wait for a challenge to come, but get into a habit of daily prayer. Develop a relationship with your heavenly Father so that, when danger lies ahead, you can pray and ask Him to give you the courage to take refuge, and the wisdom to make the right decisions, in desperate times of difficulty and trial.



Luke 18:9-14 (NASB):
'And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

A selfie is a self-portrait photograph, typically taken with a handheld digital camera or camera phone. Selfies are often shared on social networking services such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. They are often casual, and are typically taken either with a camera held at arm's length or in a mirror.

Techinfographics recently released an infographic dedicated to selfies, and it turns out that people are taking over one million a day. What's particularly interesting is the amount of folks who digitally alter their selfies. More than 50 percent admitted to retouching their selfies, and almost half the women said they retouch every selfie they post. As for the country that loves selfies the most? Australia!

When we take a selfie we see ourselves up-close and personal: all of our flaws are revealed and we become aware of our imperfections . . . hair, nose, teeth, lips. All our deficiencies are exposed when we take a selfie.

The Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14 hadn't learnt how to take selfies. That's how he could stand judging his brother, because he had no idea how he looked up-close.

Let Me Take a Selfie



The Plank in My Eye

If the older brother Jesus describes in Luke 15 had learnt to take a selfie he would have remembered that Jesus says in Luke 6:37, 38 (NASB), ‘Do not judge, and you will

not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.’

If he had learnt how to take a selfie he would have remembered that Jesus said (vss. 41, 42, NASB), ‘Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,” when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.’

When we take a selfie, we may not always like what we see. But God is not so much interested in face selfies: He’s interested in heart selfies. In fact, 1 Samuel 16:7 reminds us that man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

What would happen if we were to take a selfie of our heart? We may not be ready to publish that photo on Facebook or Instagram. We may find some things in our heart that we don’t like. In fact, Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that the heart is deceitful above all, and who can know it?

But the good news for us today is found in 1 John 3:18-20:

‘Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things’ (NASB).

If your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart. When the publican took that heart selfie in the temple he cried out, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ Notice that he did not ask for forgiveness or call upon God to change him, yet Jesus said that this man went home justified.

Now how could he be justified, or made right, automatically, without even asking God to do it? Let me explain it like this. I have discovered that there is a new feature in the cameras of many smartphones. It is called ‘Beauty Face’. The ‘Beauty Face’ option captures a portrait and automatically adjusts the photo to create a more visually pleasing picture. ‘Beauty Face’ softens faces to get rid of wrinkles and spots. When you accept Jesus into your life, He applies the beauty feature to the selfie of your heart so that the world doesn’t have to see all your imperfections. All they see is the beauty of His character reflected in you.



Conclusion – Loving Disciples!



When all is said and done, what is great leadership about? We hear the word ‘disciple’ a lot, but what does it really mean to be a disciple of Jesus, especially for us as Bible-believing, Sabbath-keeping, commandment-obeying Seventh-day Adventist Christians? What does it mean to be a disciple, and how do we know that we are actively engaged in discipleship in our home, our church, and our community?

Scholars agree that a disciple is simply a follower of Jesus. But what does it look like to be a follower of Jesus, and how can we tell the world that we are His disciples? Jesus shares something deeply profound to His disciples about this in John 13:34, 35.

He says, ‘A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’

Here, Jesus explains what it means to be a disciple. He says that being a disciple involves more than merely uttering a pretty turn of phrase and vapid soliloquies. Disciples are followers of Jesus who model the radical love of Jesus by loving one another. In fact, He declares that this is a new commandment He is giving.

It’s interesting that Jesus gives this commandment to His disciples. These are the very disciples who were supposed to be modelling love

for one another. However, instead they were fighting and competing with each other. They had allowed greed and pride to get in the way of selfless service for the Saviour – so, instead of loving unconditionally, they were always fighting. ‘Who’s going to sit on the left side and who’s going to sit on the right side?’ they bickered angrily. ‘Who’s going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’

Ellen White, in her book *The Desire of Ages*, reflecting on Jesus’ words, says: ‘In this last meeting with His disciples, the great desire which Christ expressed for them was that they might love one another as He had loved them. . . . To the disciples this commandment was new; for they had not loved one another as Christ had loved them. He saw that new ideas and impulses must control them; that new principles must be practised by them; through His life and death they were to receive a new conception of love. The command to love one another had a new meaning in the light of His self-sacrifice. The whole work of grace is one continual service of love, of self-denying, self-sacrificing effort. During every hour of Christ’s sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another.’

‘This love is the evidence of their discipleship. “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,” said Jesus, “if ye have love one to another.” When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence.’ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 677, 678.

Here are some questions for us to contemplate. Are you ‘truly a disciple’? If so, are you modelling discipleship and letting people know that you are a disciple by having a genuine love for others?

Would your spouse and your children, or your parents and siblings, call you loving? Do you relate to your family in a loving way, or harshly and indifferently?

How loving are you to those you feel threatened by in church? Do you model love and service to the person you think could potentially take your place when the nominating committee meets next year?

How loving are you when you are not chosen for a church office or the position that you feel you’ve worked for or deserve? Do you model the unselfish, humble servanthood of Christ, or do you model self-centredness, rudeness, and unforgiveness? Are you loving, kind, caring and compassionate? Are you being obedient to Jesus’ commandment to love one another?

If we are going to call ourselves disciples then we have to be loving. My prayer for each one of us is that the next time someone asks, ‘Who is a disciple?’ they will be able to look at you and at each one of us and declare: ‘He is a disciple; she is a disciple – because they love one another.’

Appendix A

Super Social Ideas for Youth

Have you ever suggested a fun social idea to your youth, only to have them say, ‘Uggh, not that again’? It’s happened to me! Trust me: I’ve been there before. So I decided to share a few ideas with you that might help to make your youth programme a little more unpredictable.

Let me start by sharing with you my simple philosophy for youth ministry. It is based on Luke 2:52. The New Century Version says it like this: ‘Jesus became wiser and grew physically. People liked him, and he pleased God.’

This passage is written right after the account of Jesus in the temple at the age of 12. It is the link from Jesus’ childhood to His adulthood. In just one simple verse we see how Jesus moved and developed through the teen years all the way into complete maturity.

In this passage Jesus was growing, just like youth do, and the Bible describes Jesus having a fourfold development. He grew wiser: that’s mental development; He grew physically: that’s physical development; people liked Him: that’s social development; and ultimately He pleased God: the result of spiritual development.

Youth wrestle with how to balance these four areas. On the one hand they want people to like them, while on the other hand they want to please God, but it can be challenging to do both: not to mention the struggles they have physically trying to live up to the expectations, and close scrutiny, of how their peers and society tell them to look and act, while still trying to maintain a sharp mental focus for school.

As Adventist youth leaders, our desire is to help youth grow and develop like Jesus. Here’s a simple idea. When planning for youth try to create social, spiritual, and service opportunities for them to chill, worship, and connect with God and their community in a fun, cool and practical way. Gather the youth together one afternoon after a delicious home-cooked Sabbath meal and invite them to brainstorm and find as many ideas as they can for all three areas.

Let them know that you are committed to helping them grow like Jesus grew. That means that they will not only socialise and have fun together, but that they will serve their community and others around them together, striving to grow spiritually together. Then see how each social activity can incorporate a service element and a meaningful spiritual experience as well. Find five ideas that they want to try under each category, and commit to doing at least three ideas a month. Find leaders from within the group to help coordinate each activity.

Five practical, easy-to-do social ideas for your youth group

1. Hold a Friday-evening youth night in someone’s home. Assign a person to prepare icebreakers. Icebreaker resources can be found at

www.thesource4ym.com/games or www.youthministry.com. Serve supper starting at around 6.30pm, and after supper do several icebreakers and group games. Follow with a five-to-seven-minute short talk on service and how youth can make a difference in the community. Opportunities for youth to be involved can be found by contacting your local Adventist community service centre or online at www.volunteermatch.org or www.networkforgood.org. Make a sign-up sheet available for youth to sign up to, to get involved in volunteering two to three hours per week with at least one service opportunity available in their community. End with a prayer time, asking youth to share their ‘forecast’ for the following week. Let them share what their emotional weather looks like for the upcoming week and why. Then have them divide up into groups and pray for each other.

2. After church on Sabbath invite the youth to go into the community and feed the homeless, visit a nursing home, or go to an orphanage. After two or three hours of fun and interactive service in the community, return to the church to share supper together, also sharing stories of people they met; and have a time of corporate prayer for the community. After sunset have a games night in your school gym or church hall, with volleyball, tag football, basketball and more. Make board games available, and create a kids’ zone for the smaller kids to play and enjoy. Don’t forget to have snacks and food. This is a great idea to implement in your church every month: for example, the first Sabbath of the month.
3. Hold a Friday-night ‘Create Your Own Cool’ evening for your youth. This involves using different rooms in your local church or school. In different rooms run different activities at the same time. For example, in the sanctuary host a youth or young adult praise and worship team from a sister church or school; in the fellowship hall play short spiritual video clips; and in another room have someone leading a short inductive Bible study. In another room set tables up with construction paper and clay, where kids can draw pictures, paint and make things with clay that describe their picture of God’s love for them. In another room set up a light supper and food. Prepare these five options to run simultaneously, and allow youth to go back and forth, choosing and creating their own worship experience options in twenty-minute segments. At the end of the evening hold a short, final general session.
4. On a Sunday evening, or Saturday night, hold an interactive games night with your youth. See how many people in your church have the ‘Wii Fit’ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wii_Fit) and have your youth take turns working out and exercising with the Wii Fit. Make

board games available as well, and have plenty of food and snacks available. Invite some underprivileged children from the community to join you. End the evening by sharing 'emotional forecasts' and prayer.

5. Run an ice-cream social with icebreakers. Distribute copies of the local newspaper and invite students to get into groups and come up with five ideas from the newspaper of things they can do to serve, show love and meet the needs of the community. Allow each group to share their ideas and then invite the entire group to pick three ideas they'd like to start doing to make a difference in their community. Close by sharing 'forecasts' and having a corporate prayer for the community.

Appendix B

Strategies for Leadership Excellence

Tips for growing spiritually

1. Start a daily devotional plan for 21 days. By the end it should have become a habit.
2. Pray for God to give you the desire and the discipline to spend time with Him each day.
3. Don't give up. Eventually you will discover the joys and blessings of obedience.
4. If you are married, consider developing a couple's devotional plan.

Tips for learning leadership skills

1. Effective leaders realise that leaders are learners.
2. Commit to reading a book a month to develop and grow.
3. Subscribe to a blog or podcast about leadership.
4. Get a mentor or a coach who can help you grow.

Ten tips for nurturing relationships

1. Remember people's names.
2. Recognise people's birthdays and anniversaries.
3. Respond to emails in a time-sensitive, caring and professional way.
4. Do a couple of fun icebreakers occasionally before meetings.
5. Plan a few annual events to create synergy, such as spiritual retreats and so on.
6. Write thank-you cards and send emails of appreciation to your colleagues.
7. Host a year-end banquet to appreciate your team members for their hard work.
8. Schedule a one-to-one meeting at least once or twice a year with team members.
9. In one-to-ones, ask individuals, 'How are you doing, and what can I do to help?'
10. Practise integrity and authenticity!

Develop a plan for your ministry!

1. Effective leaders plan their ministry with spiritual and topical goals to achieve.
2. Effective leaders plan their ministry with a budget, a calendar, and a regular evaluation process.
3. Effective leaders create a DEVA calendar: Development, Encouragement, Vision casting, Appreciation.

What goals do you hope to accomplish? _____

Who are the individuals who can help you? _____

What seven things do you need to do to be more organised and better prepared?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Effective leaders delegate authority by:

1. Mentoring, monitoring and motivating others
2. Establishing sub-teams and giving them ownership of the ministry

Three tips for empowering others

1. Trust the principle.
2. Follow the process.
3. Share the power.

Timothy . . .

1. Came with a good recommendation (Acts 16:2)
2. Was affirmed in his youth (1 Timothy 4:12)
3. Received clear instructions for his task (1 Timothy 5)
4. Was supported in prayer (2 Timothy 1:3)

Communicate

‘The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.’

– George Bernard Shaw

Stay on-message:

1. Be consistent.
2. Be concise.
3. Be prompt.
4. Be creative.
5. Be positive.

Spread the word:

1. To members and their friends
2. To church leaders and the pastors
3. To Conference, Union and Division leadership
4. To the press and the community

Deliver as promised:

1. The best advertisement is a satisfied participant.

Esther . . .

1. Was careful in what information she shared (Esther 2:20)
2. Chose to speak at the right time (Esther 4:14-16)
3. Demonstrated creativity in delivering her message (Esther 5:4-8)
4. Made certain that her message was not forgotten – she decreed that it be repeated yearly (Esther 9:29-32)

Mobilise for service

‘Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.’
(Ephesians 6:7)

Size up the benefits of service:

1. Awareness
2. Witness
3. Fulfilment
4. Discovery
5. Friendships

Seize the opportunities:

1. In your church
2. In your neighbourhood
3. In your community
4. In your world

Rejoice in the miracles:

1. Invite and expect God to work through you.
2. Praise Him for miracles big and small.

Leading Like Jesus

‘What does good Christian leadership look like? What strategies will be most effective in winning souls for Christ? And how can authentic Christianity transform my working environment?’

If you’re asking such questions as these, the answers are in your hands. Philip Baptiste serves as Secretary/Treasurer for Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries in the North American Division. In this handy book he shares wise counsel from Scripture on how to practise authentic Christian leadership and bring glory to God in the home, in the church, and in the marketplace.

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