

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

School of Post Graduate Studies

Title: NURTURING NEWLY CONVERTED MEMBERS IN THE AIRPORT DISTRICT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN KUMASI, GHANA

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The study is aimed at nurturing newly converted members in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Kumasi. The idea of nurturing was nurtured by the author after observing carefully how many new converts become inactive or drop out completely from the church shortly after they have joined the church. The research was done at the Airport district of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana with special emphasis on the two newly established churches of North River and Emmanuel Seventh-day Adventist churches.

A survey was conducted to ascertain the reasons of new members leaving the church shortly after conversion. A program was developed and implemented and the results analyzed. It was ascertained that after a year's implementation of the program the inactive and dropout rate of new members had dropped considerably for the whole district. But with the two newly

established churches of North River and Emmanuel the inactive and dropout rate had dropped from 54.3% and 60% respectively to zero percent for both churches.

The study revealed that with proper nurturing programs put in place in the churches, many of the new members will be retained as against the current trend of losing more members than those who stay.

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DISTRICT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN KUMASI, GHANA

A project
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Leadership

by
Adade Boateng

June 2014


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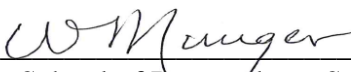
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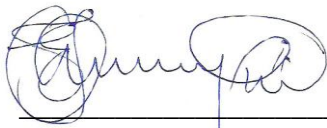
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This project is dedicated to my wife,

Maggie and our two children:

Baffour and Nana Ama

not forgetting all the

members of the

Airport District.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In line with Jesus' commission to His disciples to "go therefore and make disciples of all nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit"¹ (Matt 28:19), the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the Christian denominations that is seriously pursuing this agenda. It was the earnest desire of Jesus that His followers do not only go and preach the gospel message of salvation to humankind, but that the converts shall be kept safely so that none of them shall be lost (John 6:37; 15:16; 17:12, 15, 20, 24).

From this evidence and several others which shall be explored in the cause of the research, it is clear that, church leaders should not only focus on baptismal goals but should equally think of ways of retaining these souls whom the Lord has called to His church.² Nurturing is the process by which new members are assimilated into the church. The Webster's dictionary defines nurturing as the "act of nursing or suckling or the process of upbringing."³ Nurturing as defined here should be seen

¹ All Bible quotations are from The New King James Version unless otherwise stated.

²JaneThayer, "Pastors' Perspectives on Assimilating New Members 1: Challengers and Needs," *Ministry*, February 2010, 6.

³ *Webster's Dictionary*, rev. ed., (1976), s.v. "Nurturing."

as a difficult task which must be pursued with diligence, because even old members sometimes find the assimilation into a new company of believers very unpleasant.

Statement of the Problem

The goal of the church is to have well grounded and active members. For this to happen, newly baptized members must be nurtured, allowing them to become strong members. However, since nurturing is a challenging task, some Seventh-day Adventist churches overlook this important function of the church.

Often, church leaders plan and conduct very exciting evangelistic campaigns. Lots of money and resources are spent. In Ghana, for instance the laity, apart from contributing moneys, also sacrifices their time, families, and jobs to follow the evangelist or the Pastor to help in the conduct of evangelistic campaigns with little or no remuneration. At times they sleep in open air in order to guard the equipment to be used for the three or two weeks . People are willing to go through these hardships in order for others to experience salvation. However, after conversion, within a few months, a lot of these new members stop coming to church.

This backsliding attitude of new converts sometimes dampen the spirit of the once vibrant and enthusiastic members who readily sacrifice comfort, time, job, family, and moneys to bring more converts to the church. As a result, many are reluctant to support evangelistic activities in the local churches. They consider evangelism as a waste of resources and time. The situation described above raises several issues. First, does the Bible have a definite plan for retention of new converts? What are Ellen G. White's comments on the nurturing of new converts? What can the Church in our contemporary society do to keep new converts in the church?

Purpose of the Research

This research is aimed at finding a workable solution to the problem of mass drifting away of the newly baptized members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church with special emphasis on the Airport District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana. Also, the study aims at developing a strategy to nurture newly baptized members to grow in the faith.

Justification of the Study

This research will benefit the church in general since it is aimed at curtailing the waste of money and efforts put into the tedious work of evangelism. Again, it is aimed at reviving the interest of members in evangelism since with this method in place the work of evangelistic team members and evangelists will not be in vain. Also, the individual new members who frequently leave the church will experience the gift and joy of salvation, and eventually grow into the full stature of Christians who are ready to be translated with our LORD whether dead or alive into the heavenly home of believers (Thess 4:15-17).

Methodology

This is a program development project study. Therefore, it employs a set of methods such as review of literature (Chapter 2), description of local setting including interviews and questionnaires to define the need of the program (Chapter 3), and program development approach (design, implementation and evaluation), Chapter 4.

The study proceeds as follows: Chapter 1 introduces the problem, the purpose of the study and the other introductory aspects.

Chapter 2 presents the study on nurture in the Bible, Ellen G. White writings, and other Adventists and non-Adventists literature. Chapter 3 describes the context of the project. This includes the context of the Airport District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the context of the South Central Ghana Conference. Chapter 4 narrates the design and implementation of the program to nurture new members in the Airport District. The program design consists of the goal, objective, evaluation and future suggestions. Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the program.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The process of nurturing new members as has been mentioned earlier is a very difficult task and as such it is a worldwide problem in the Adventist Church. However, due to time constraints and inadequate funding, this study is limited to only the Airport District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana. Some of the delimitations of this research shall be people's lackadaisical attitude towards answering questionnaires and also people's biases to views in interviews.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project is aimed at developing a program that will help nurture newly converted members of the Airport District of the South Central Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana. This Chapter presents the theological and theoretical basis for nurturing new members in the Bible and to look at how the Adventist church can adopt this method to nurture new members to mature in the faith to continue with the gospel commission.

Overview of Nurturing

The word nurture according to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* is “to take care of, feed and protect (esp. a young child or plant) and help it develop. It is also defined as the way in which children are treated as they are growing, especially as compared with the characteristics they are born with.”¹ This definition helps us to understand nurturing as a process of “training” to bring up an individual especially a “young” person by taking care of him or herself, feeding, protecting, and teaching such an individual to acquire a character that the parent, teacher or whoever is undertaking that training desires. In the same vein the

¹ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1996), s.v. “Nurture”

translators of the *King James Bible* seems to share the same thought. For in Eph 6:4 it is stated “And ye fathers provoke not your children in wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” However, in the *New King James Version* the word “nurture” has been changed to “training.” Adam Clark used “Bring them up” instead of “nurture” and commented thus:

ektrefete auta en paideia kai nouyesia kuriou. Literally, *nourish them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*. The *mind* is to be nourished with wholesome discipline and instruction, as the body is with proper food. Paideia, *discipline*, may refer to all that knowledge which is proper for children, including elementary principles and rules for behaviour, &c. nouyesia, *instruction*, may imply whatever is necessary to form the mind; to touch, regulate, and purify the passions; and necessarily includes the whole of religion. Both these should be administered *in the Lord*-according to his will and word, and in reference to his eternal glory. All the important lessons and doctrines being derived from his revelation, therefore they are called the *discipline and instruction of the Lord*.”¹

Based on this information, it is proper for one to consider that the Gospel commission in Matt 28:19-20 cannot be undertaken without practicing nurturing. Hence nurturing is one of the important activities of the gospel commission which states that

go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

Biblical Survey on Nurture

The bible provides information on nurturing which forms the basis of which forms the basis of this project. This section is aimed at briefly looking at both the Old and New Testament teaching on nurturing.

¹ Adam Clarks, *Commentary on Ephesians 6:4*, [Power BibleCD. 3.7, CD ROM] (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, 2002).

The Old Testament Basis of Nurturing

Nurturing is as old as when man began to reproduce. The fact that Abel could choose the type of sacrifice (Gen 4:4 cf, Heb 9:22) – a form of worship at that time suggests that Adam might have nurtured his offspring about the right type of worship. Abraham was known for the nurturing of his household. For it was written about him, “for I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD, will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Gen 18:19, NIV).

Furthermore, in (Deut 6:7) and several other OT passages such as (Prov 22:6; Deut 4:9; 11:19) the Israelites were commanded to nurture their children by teaching them what God has commanded them. However, this research is delimited to the New Testament evangelically based church system rather than the Old Testament family and nationally based system. Hence biblical survey of this research work will be based essentially on the New Testament.

The New Testament Basis of Nurturing

Directly and indirectly, the New Testament provides the basis for proper Christian nurturing. Jesus Christ through His teachings and examples provided the direction for His disciples on how to do nurturing. This section briefly looks at the New Testament teachings in relation to nurturing and disciple-making as well as the early Christians method of nurturing through relational evangelism.

Disciple-making involves nurturing. According to James Cress, “the Greek word for ‘disciple’ is *matheteuo*, meaning a follower, a learner.”¹ He further states that “the disciples were followers of Jesus and learners from Him. The great commission

¹ James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care* (Oshawa, Ontario: Miracle Press, 2000), 13.

called them to do what He had done. They were to make disciples.” He says, “this is the primary emphasis of Mathew 28:19.”² By quoting further from the *Communicator’s Commentary*, James Cress again says, “*making disciples* is the main verb of the verse. The other verbs-*going, baptizing, teaching* - are subordinate.”³

Disciple making then ensures that after a person has received the gospel message he or she is not left alone but is trained to be like the one who led the person to Christ or eventually to be like Jesus Christ Himself which is the ultimate aim of every believer. Concerning nurturing of believers, Christ further taught that the church must guard against backsliding. In challenging the Pharisees and the scribes in Luke 15, when He was accused of dining with sinners, Jesus spoke a parable in verses 4 to 7 to illustrate that every soul is very important in the sight of God. He said “what man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?” He continued that “...I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” Donald Mc. Gavran in his book *Understanding Church Growth* states that “finding the ‘lost’ which includes all men into the fold is the perfect will of God.”⁴

It is not the finding of the “lost” alone which is very important, but showing special and keen interest in every converted individual to ground such a fellow in the faith is equally important as well. Those who are strong in the faith are to sacrifice and adapt to such situations which will help them win over new converts with weaker

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. 330.

⁴ Donald Mc. Gavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 32.

faith. The apostle Paul wrote that “to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor 9:22). Tom Stebbins also cited in *You Can Keep Them If You Care* by James Cress that “someone has suggested that before we can win people to Jesus Christ we must win them to ourselves.”⁵ In other words, making friends and influencing them through our lifestyle is a sure way of keeping the newly converted persons in the Christian faith. Jesus did not only teach His disciples how to evangelize but His lifestyle was meant to ensure that His followers were properly nurtured to continue with the work He has started. He befriended the people and saw to their needs both physically and spiritually.

Commenting on Christ’s excellent relationship with others as compared to the ill-mannered way the religious leaders behaved towards others at the time, Ellen White wrote, “the ministry of Christ was in marked contrast to that of the Jewish elders. Their regard for tradition and formalism had destroyed all real freedom of thought or action. They lived continued dread of defilement. To avoid contact with the “unclean,” they kept aloof, not only from Gentiles, but from the majority of their own people, seeking neither to benefit them nor to win their friendship.”⁶ She continued by saying that “By dwelling constantly on these matters, they dwarfed their minds and narrowed the orbit of their lives. Their example encouraged egotism and intolerance among all classes of the people.”⁷

⁵Tom Stebbins, *Evangelism by the Book* (Camp Hill, PA: Christians Publications, 1991), 218.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1964), 149.

⁷ Ibid.

Jesus showed care and love to all people by feeding the hungry when it matters most (Matt 14:13-21), visiting and dining with the outcasts in society and the “unclean” (Matt 9:9-13), and sleeping in the houses of the despised in the society such as tax collector like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9). He also built bridges with the gentiles and other hated tribes like the Samaritans (John 4:1-42; Mark 7:24-30).

Again, Jesus’ parting message to Peter one of the leading disciples was for him to feed the flock (John 21:15-17). In other words what Jesus meant was that Peter should take a leading role in nurturing the new believers. This shows that Jesus was very much concerned about the keeping and the nurturing of new believers to be groomed to responsible disciples.

The early Christians’ nurturing of new converts. Peter led some of the disciples back to their former employment of fishing after the resurrection of Jesus when He was no more with them (John 21:1-3). Jesus wanting to remind them of their new call which they had willingly accepted to do for the Lord (Luke 5:10, 11) and for which they had been given about three-years training, appeared to them again as He did the first time He called them (John 21:4-6). When Peter was challenged three times about his loyalty to Jesus, he with sadness as a result of a truly repented heart accepted to do the Lord’s will by “feeding” or nurturing the “lambs” and the “sheep” of the Lord.

From the time the spirit descended on the disciples on the day of Pentecost onwards, strategies were adopted by them to spread the gospel and to nurture the new converts to make them strong in the faith so that they will also be well prepared for effective ministry. Among those strategies adopted were intensive fasting and prayer service (Acts 1:12-14; 13:2, 3; 6:4; 12:5; 16:13, 16), fellowshiping among themselves including the breaking of bread in the homes of believers (Acts 2:42);

Bible studies (Acts 6:4) to mention but a few. There was strong love bond among the disciples to the extent that they were willing to share their properties among themselves such that there was no one among them that lacked anything (Acts 4:32-35). Even when the apostles had opened new churches and they were away they still kept in touch with the new believers by constantly writing them letters to encourage and admonish them to stay in the faith (1 Tim 3:16; 1 Cor 10:11).

Concerning how the early Christians trained and nurtured new converts using the apostle Paul as an example, Ellen White wrote:

And Paul did not forget the churches thus established. The care of these churches rested on his mind as an ever-increasing burden. However, small a company might be, it was nevertheless the object of his constant solitude. He watched over the smaller churches tenderly, realizing that they were in need of special care in order that the members might be thoroughly established in the truth and taught to put forth earnest, unselfish efforts for those around them. When men of promise and ability were converted, as in the case of Timothy, Paul and Barnabas sought earnestly to show them the necessity of laboring in the vineyard. And when the apostles left for another, the faith of these men did not fail, but rather increased. They had been faithfully instructed in the way of the Lord, and had been taught how to labor unselfishly, earnestly, perseveringly, for the salvation of their fellow men. This careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands.⁸

The early Christians and relational evangelism. From what have been discussed earlier, there is no doubt that relationships do help in the success of evangelism. When people are converted, sometimes some lose their relatives and friends. Even others lose their jobs as well. It is therefore expedient for the church to provide a platform for them so that they can enjoy a new relationship that will help them to forget about what they have gone through because of their conversion.

⁸ E. G. White, *The Acts of The Apostle* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 186, 187.

S. Joseph Kidder, writing for the *Ministry Magazine* on the topic “The Power of Relationships in Evangelism” says that “the more friends a new believer has, the more likely the person will stay in the church.”⁹ He continued that, we come to the lord through relationships and we stay in the Lord through relationships. We are disciplined, encouraged, and nurtured through relationships.”¹⁰

The early Christians recognized this hence they formed a close bond of relationships among themselves. They became like a family and shared things together among themselves freely. One’s problem became the problem for all (Acts 4: 32-37). When a problem arose about this communal love system because the apostles were determined to make the system work, they chose some men who were filled with the spirit and who had good report among the believers to oversee to the success of it (Acts 6:1-6).

Also among the early Christians, evangelism among families and friends seemed to be very successful. This helped the members to strengthen the already established bond among them. We read that the very first disciples to be called by Jesus were siblings and friends who were into the same occupation (Luke 5:9-11). In the first chapter of the book of John, we see relational evangelism at work. John the Baptist introduces two of his disciples to Jesus (John 1:35-36). These two followed Jesus to where He was staying (John 1:37-39). One of the two, Andrew found his own brother Simon and talked about Jesus to him and he followed him to Jesus and later both became disciples of Jesus (John 1:40-42). Again Philip was invited by Jesus (John 1:43-44). He found Nathanael probably a friend and talked to him about Jesus

⁹ S. Joseph Kidder, “The Power of Relationships in Evangelism” *Ministry*, July 2008: 10.

¹⁰ Ibid.

(John 1:45-46). Also, concerning the conversion of Cornelius and the Philippian jailer, the whole house hold accepted the gospel and got baptized (Acts 10:47, 48; 16:33).

Evangelizing through relationships like these, that is, through friends and relatives and close associates helps keep the new converts in the faith and they are properly nurtured. Peter and Andrew, James and John the sons of Zebedee became strong members of the early church because of the relationship among them. According to Kidder, “when the new member is down with a crisis, the friend or relation is there to support since he is already being his pastor and helper. This actually will solve the problem where members leave the church because of lack of spiritual or material support when he was in crisis.”¹¹

Ellen G. White’s Teachings on Nurturing

Ellen Gould White was a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. White saw that for the Adventist Church to grow and perform its God given mission with regards to the gospel commission as depicted in Matt 28:18-20 and the proclamation of the three angels message of Rev 14: 6-12, the church needs to consciously nurture her members for each and every one of them to be able to use his or her God given talent for this noble work. She therefore gave several admonitions through her numerous books to leaders and members of the church to that effect. A few of such admonitions and the activities the church needs to undertake in order to nurture the believers are enumerated below:

- a) The need to do follow-ups after gospel campaigns

¹¹Kidder, 11.

Often after public evangelistic campaigns, the church leaves and the new converts are left on their own to fend for themselves. The new believers, when met with serious temptations or false teachings, sometimes denounce their faith because they have not yet understood the message properly. To curtail this problem, White points out that, after the message of the gospel has been presented at an evangelistic campaign, “there is really greater necessity for a second course than for the first. The truth is new and startling, and the people need to have the same presented the second time, to get the points distinct and the ideas fixed in the mind.”¹² She continued that “if those who knew the truth and were established in it were indeed in need of having its importance kept before and their mind stirred up by the repetition of it, how important that this work is not neglected for those newly come to the faith. Everything in the interpretation of the scripture is new and strange to them and they will be in danger of losing the force of the truth and receiving ideas not correct. In many efforts the work has been left incomplete.”¹³

b) The need to consciously integrate the new believers in the faith

Ellen G. White stresses that there is the need to put in place mechanism to integrate the new members in the church. This is a corporate responsibility of both the ministers and the laity in general.¹⁴ According to her when an evangelistic campaign is conducted the team must not leave for what she called “wolves” to devour the new converts. If new converts are left on their own, she says “the work is half done.”¹⁵ She

¹² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 334.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Evangelism*, 336.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 340.

also stresses the need of visiting new members often to encourage them in the new faith so as not to fall into temptations.¹⁶ In dealing with new members she suggested that we must not move too fast for it requires much of time to be with them. The church she stresses must be “compassionate and sympathetic” in teaching health reforms. Assistance also must be given to those who are in need.¹⁷ Another area which can be used to integrate new converts in the church she says is through participation in evangelistic activities. It would be prudent to involve in converts in evangelistic campaign as soon as possible.¹⁸

Adventist and Non-Adventist Authors

This section aims at gathering information on nurture from other scholars both Adventist and non-Adventist beside the Spirit of Prophecy writings. The importance attached to nurturing as a tool for keeping new converts in the church is explored in this section. One book which is to be considered is James Cress’s book *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay On Board*.¹⁹

James A. Cress is one of the Church growth experts in the Adventist Church. This book was originally part of his doctoral work at Fuller Theological Seminary.²⁰ It has been adapted by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as

¹⁶ E. G. White, *Testimonies vol.4*, (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 68.

¹⁷ E. G. White, *Temperance*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 131.

¹⁸ E. G. White, *The Acts of The Apostle* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 105

¹⁹ James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay On Board* (Oshawa, Ontario: Miracle Press, 2000).

²⁰ *Ibid.* 5.

one of the resource materials for church growth and nurturing.²¹ The book is divided into three parts. Part one which is captioned “Conversion is a Process, Not an Event,”²² explains conversion as a process of assimilating and properly integrating new members into the body of existing believers as “proper and serious” disciples of Christ and not just a simple event of baptizing and acceptance of people who have decided to follow Christ and therefore join the church.²³ For the church to effectively undertake this task of integrating new converts, the author suggests three theological imperatives; “Developing disciples,” “Nurturing Newborns,” and “Conserving the Catch.”

Cress emphasizes that “the product of evangelism must be disciples and not decisions.”²⁴ He states further that “failure to recognize evangelism as disciple making is a failure to fulfill the gospel commission through which Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that He had commanded them.”²⁵ Oscar Thompson adds impetus to this statement by observing that “we are good at teaching, and we are good at baptizing. But somehow we have lost our central theme. We are not good at making disciples as we are going.”²⁶ The Church should not only be interested in winning souls but should always consider how to keep the new converts so that their faith can be nurtured.

²¹ Ibid., 2.

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 16.

²⁵ Ibid., 12.

²⁶ Oscar Thompson, *Concentric Circles of Concern* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1981), 156.

Furthermore, in analyzing Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus in John 3:3-7, Cress uses the analogy of parenting and bring up young children to maturity. He considers parenting as similar to the nurturing of new converts. Walter Henrichsen according to James Cress describes the nurturing, and follow-up process as "spiritual pediatrics."²⁷ He continues that "it has to deal with the care and protection of the spiritual infant. It deals with the development of new babies in Christ from the time of their new birth until they grow and provide for themselves."²⁸

Cress, indicates that new believers exhibit certain observable patterns similar to newborns, such as, complete upset over the status quo; total self-centeredness which refuses to realize the needs of others other than themselves; utter dependence on their parents for everything; the tendency to readily ingest harmful substances because of the lack of discernment; causing mess that may be offensive to the rest of the family; the expression of demands in socially unacceptable manner such as screaming, crying, kicking etc. and the constant need of monitoring as they grow up by parents.²⁹

This analogy is particularly helpful to this research since it enables us to identify the problem of the new believers so that they shall not be treated as fully grown members of the church. Treating new converts as mature Christians usually leads to their being frustrated and its speeds up their exit from the church. The church exhibiting the traits of responsible parents must be tolerant and accommodating when new believers act imprudently and make mistakes. Pastor Cress asserts that "when the long-established members express disappointment at the lack of maturity in the lives

²⁷ Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples are Made-Not Born* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 79-80, quoted in Cress, 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Cress, 30, 31.

of new members, they essentially say that they do not wish to parent.³⁰ But as parents we need to nurture the new believers well.

Cress concludes the first section of his book with the need to conserve new members. He goes further to identify several factors which cause new believers to leave the church but the major factor being lack or poor interpersonal relationship. He suggests that recognition and statistical acknowledgement was to be given to those who were actively attempting to prevent loss of new members and to reclaim those who have become inactive.³¹

The second section of the book aims at developing strategies for keeping both new and growing members in the church. Three essential strategies namely: ability to articulate the doctrines of one's faith; having friends within the church; and a person's involvement in meaningful activities are discussed. Furthermore, the dangers of communalism are also discussed. Communalism he explained is the practice whereby a community of Adventist members is formed around a church's institution such as schools, medical facilities, publishing houses and many other entities.³² This practice does not allow members to effectively mingle among the people. As a result, the church is seen as an isolated or closed community. Therefore people find it difficult to associate well with this perceived "anti-social" group.

Although, communalism may not be common in Ghanaian Adventist setting as may be seen elsewhere, however this study is necessary to this research since most often some non-Adventist communities perceive the church as such because of its remnant motif and distinctive lifestyle of strict observance of the Sabbath; avoidance

³⁰ Ibid. 32.

³¹ Cress, 43.

³² Ibid. 40.

of certain harmful products such as tobacco, alcohol, or “unclean” foods; non-participation in theatrical performances, movies, dancing, and certain social functions such as festivals perceived to have pagan connotations; and the avoidance of Jewelry and make-up etc. Although the church may be right in enforcing such restrictions among its members, nonetheless, members must behave in a manner that will not be offensive to others in order for them to brand them as “holier than thou community”

According to Stott “conversion must not take convert out of the world but rather send him back into it, the same person in the same world, and yet a new person with new convictions and new standards.”³³ The world must not have negative notion about the church otherwise its mission of “going out to make disciples of all nations” will suffer a setback. Non-believers should not see the church as “different” from them in a manner that makes it difficult for them to associate with us but rather be eager to follow our lifestyle. Ellen White states that “the savior mingled with men as one who desired their good”³⁴ before he could present the message to them. If isolationism could be avoided then the church needs to keep the truth continually before the members for it to be well assimilated. Superficial instruction of truth that ends after baptism must always be avoided. While it is commendable for all who have accepted the truth to bear fruits worthy of repentance, new members must not be rushed into accepting and practicing all the truth that have been taught to them instantly. They must be given enough time and space for the spirit to work in them to cause the kind of transformation expected of them.

³³ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission In the Modern World* (Downers Growth, IL: InterVarsity, Press, 1975), 119.

³⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry Of Healing*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 143.

Another important way of stabilizing new converts in the church according to Cress is for the church to have meaningful fellowship with the new converts.³⁵ The old and well established members must show concern in both the spiritual and physical well being of the new members. They must be visited often and befriended. Cress acknowledges that “the probability of new members becoming actively involved in the church is directly tied to the number of friends they develop soon after joining the church.”³⁶ Furthermore, one area which Pastor Cress suggests could help in the integration and stabilization process of new converts is by getting them active in the church through a kind of ministry they are good at.³⁷

Another Seventh-day Adventist Church growth expert considered in this study is Russell C. Burrill, the director of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Evangelism Institute since 1985. Dr. Burrill has written several books on church planting, church growth and nurturing. Two of his books consulted are *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church*³⁸ and *Waking the Dead, Returning Plateaued and Declining Churches to Vibrancy*.³⁹ The book, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* has been divided into four parts. Part one deals with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Part two and three deal with Clergy care in the New Testament era,

³⁵ Cress, 60.

³⁶ Cress, 67.

³⁷ Ibid. 72.

³⁸ Russell C. Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1998).

³⁹ Russell C. Burrill, *Waking the Dead, Returning Plateaued and Declining Churches to Vibrancy* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 2004).

and that of early Adventist Church respectively. The final part deals with a mission-oriented Adventist or Conference based on biblical and historical roots.

In part one of this book, Dr. Burrill looks at the contrast between the commission given to Israel as a nation and that of the Great commission by Jesus to his disciples. For Israel, they were supposed to be a “showpiece of the world” and that the nations were to come to them to learn about God and salvation.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the Great Commission commands the disciples to rather go among the nations with the gospel. He again emphasized that the Great Commission is never accomplished if the three-fold mandate of making disciples, baptizing, and teaching them are not consummated.⁴¹ Doing any one or two of them without the other(s), in the view of Burrill, constitutes disobedience.⁴² Burrill considers true disciple making as not the mass profession of faith in Jesus as characterized by most evangelistic efforts but the individual’s intimate relationship with Jesus due to a one to one or a small group’s interaction and fellowship that seeks to establish the new member in the faith. This he asserts calls for the total effort and support of all Church members and not only the Clergy.⁴³ Burrill maintains that one of the purposes of the Great Commission is the planting of churches in all cultures and among all peoples.⁴⁴ And thus, in part two of the book the author points out that the New Testament Clergy were itinerants who did not concern themselves with provision of primary care or

⁴⁰ Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach*, 10.

⁴¹ Burrill, 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.* 23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 40.

nurturing of a particular congregation.⁴⁵ The work of nurturing was designated to lay leaders.⁴⁶

Burrill therefore intimates that, the best way of nurturing the church is to create a community that cares, in which the Sabbath worship services and the small group ministry serve as catalyst for that purpose.⁴⁷ The New Testament Church met in homes because according Burrill “homes limited the size of the group.”⁴⁸ Also “the family character of the early church called for meetings to be held in homes because homes provided these early Christians with the most conducive atmosphere to give expression to the faith that they held in common.”⁴⁹ Motivated by Jesus’ statement that “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” small group ministry in the early church “continued for nearly three hundred years, until the church was institutionalized at the time of Constantine.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, because of the amazing growth of the early New Testament Church which has no buildings, institutions and mass meetings, the New Testament small group should be a pattern of the church today for retention of members both old and new.⁵¹

Part three of the book discusses the transition from the small group house churches in the New Testament to the institutionalization of the church at the time of

⁴⁵ Ibid.. 91.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 108.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.. 109.

⁵⁰ Neal F. McBride, *How to lead Small Groups* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1995), 110.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Constantine. This system therefore gave rise to localized clergy as against itinerant clergy.⁵² Burrill intimates that John Wesley through his “Class Meetings”⁵³ attempted to bring the New Testament small group back but he succeeded only when he was alive. His death led to the demise of the small group class system.⁵⁴

After much bible study coupled with the counsel from the writings of Ellen White, the early Seventh-day Adventists actively got themselves involved in the spread of the “Three Angels Message of Revelation 14:6-12.” The New Testament Church planting method was adapted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in its early years which led to its rapid growth.⁵⁵ Thus, in order for the early Adventist Church to speedily and conveniently undertake this task of planting churches among all peoples, they adapted the New Testament model of itinerant clergy system. Thus the early Adventist pastors were itinerants.⁵⁶ There was a lot of pressure from several people to go the popular system of localized clergy system but Ellen White spoke against that. Burrill writes that, “Ellen White and Daniels labored hard to prevent the shift. However, after her pen was still by death in 1915 and Daniels was out of the presidency in 1920, nothing could stem the tide.”⁵⁷ As have been noted, early Seventh-day Adventist clergy were not primary care givers. This function was entrusted in the hands of elders and deacons of the church. The church was kept lively through the social meetings which were characterized by testimonies, Bible studies,

⁵² Burrill, 128.

⁵³ Ibid., 142.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁷ Burrill, 169.

songs of praise and prayers.⁵⁸ In the concluding part of the book, the author calls for the church to return to the New Testament model of making disciples which the Adventist Church adapted in its formative years.

The book “Waking the Dead, Returning Plateaued and Declining Churches to Vibrancy” by Russell C. Burrill examines the causes of Plateaued and declining churches and thereby offers solution as to how these churches could be revived dwelling on the *Natural Church Development Surveys* by Christian Sharwz.⁵⁹ He reasons that the church is like a living organism which usually has a life span of seventy years.⁶⁰ And that it goes through these five stages:⁶¹

- The birth stage where the new members of the church are willing to share their faith with others.
- The growing stage where more members are added and the church becomes vibrant.
- The plateau stage where growth becomes stagnant. Complacency leads to inactive membership. The church can best be seen as a social club.
- The declining stage where members are not interested in church anymore and stop coming to church service. Problems are many in the church at this stage.
- Death, a stage where if care is not taken the church has to be closed down.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁹ Christian A. Schwarz, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development: Experiencing all that God has designed you to be*, (St. Charles, IL.: Church Smart Resource, 2005), quoted in Russell C. Burrill, *Waking the Dead Returning Plateaued and Declining Churches to Vibrancy* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 2004), 29.

⁶⁰ Burrill, 32.

⁶¹ Ibid., 37,38

The relevancy of this study to this research is to know the stages that churches go through and by so doing be able to formulate a workable program to assimilate effectively new members into a particular church based on the kind of stage of that church.

Other Non-Adventist Christian Literature

Waldo J. Werning, author of about thirty books and director of the Discipleship/ Stewardship Center's book *The Seed-Planting Church: Nurturing Churches to Health*⁶² was also considered in this study. Werning approached the art of nurturing from the Agricultural point of view. Focusing on the agricultural principle Christ used in Luke 8: 4-15; Mark 4: 26-27; and Matt 13:24-30, Werning illustrates church growth and nurturing strategies which involve spiritual planting, watering and fertilizing; that is planting and caring for the seed to grow rather than focusing on the harvesting principle as seen in the traditional institutional churches.⁶³

Werning, suggests that the nurturing church works the entire field rather than the fields which it thinks are fertile. He intimates, "the heavenly view sees the body of Christ struggling to produce a harvest from fields that have too often been neglected."⁶⁴ On the other hand, "a farmer with harvesting mentality would choose only good ground. But that would cause much land and plants or trees to be ignored and relegated as useless."⁶⁵ However, since the entire Church including the new

⁶²Waldo J. Werning, *The Seed-Planting Church: Nurturing Churches to Health* (St. Charles, IL: Church-Smart Resources, 2003), v.

⁶³ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁴ Werning, 27.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 36.

believer must be nurtured for the kingdom of God, he emphasized that “the wise planter tends the entire acreage – all believers in the Church.”⁶⁶

He points out that Bible study, the use of the spiritual gifts of individuals, faithful stewardship and healthy relationships which centers on mentoring which enables all persons to be cared for are essential in the nurturing of new members.⁶⁷

In his book, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church*, Thom S. Rainer, the dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth conducted a research to find out how about 287 Southern Baptist Churches in United States are effectively performing in retaining their members.⁶⁸ The research revealed that Bible Study, both personal and involvement in Sunday School classes; allowing new members to discover and utilize their spiritual gifts; effective pastoral care and long pastoral tenure; a preaching based on the exposition of the Bible; vibrant youth and children ministries; a church having a clear mission and vision statements; effective new member classes; and prayer ministry that involve all are essential in retaining members.⁶⁹ He further states that “time is of essence in any assimilation or discipleship efforts toward new Christians.” “Delays” he says “beyond even one week can be problematic.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁸ Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 6, 7

⁶⁹ Ibid., 13-20.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 20.

Gary L. McIntosh, in his book, *One Size Doesn't Fit all: Bring out the best in any Size Church*, looks at obstacles to church growth.⁷¹ He categorizes the churches into two main groups, the small and large churches. The writer notes that the obstacle to growth in small churches includes feeling of inadequacy in doing evangelism, low self esteem which do not allow for evangelism in the larger community apart from immediate family members; inadequate programs that causes a lot of people to leave for other big churches where they can find entertaining programs and makes them more active; and ingrown fellowship among old members that never allow for adapting to changes which makes new members difficult to stay.⁷²

With large churches, McIntosh reasons that factors that could obstruct assimilation of new members are: lack of follow-ups due to the large size of the church; delays in decision making processes due to bureaucratic rules; poor dissemination of information to members due to the scattered nature of members; inadequate membership care due to the large size of the church.⁷³

For solutions to these obstacles, the writer suggests that the small churches should have confidence in themselves and feel good about their church and be positive of envisaging a better future which will propel each member to be actively involved in church life.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the way to curtail these problems in large churches as the writer suggested is what he termed “to grow large we have to grow

⁷¹ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit all: Bring out the best in any size Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 134,135.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

small,” that is the church must divide itself into small group cell units that will help identify and cater for each member effectively.⁷⁵

These studies are relevant to this research work since the findings and suggestions made by the authors of the various books consulted could be of benefit in nurturing new members. Furthermore, the observations made by this researcher through interviews and answers to questionnaires sent to former church members in the Airport District shown in the next chapter confirms most of the findings by these authors.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

The purpose of this project is to develop a strategy to keep new converts who have accepted the Seventh-day Adventist Church message at the Airport district.

This chapter describes the context of Kumasi the city in which the Airport district is located, the South Central Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventist (SCGC), and the context of the Airport district.

The Context of Kumasi

Kumasi is the second largest city in Ghana. It has a total area of 299km² (115 sq miles).¹ It is one of the oldest cities in Ghana founded in the 1680's by King Osei Tutu I as the capital of the Asante state.² "Kumasi is located in the transitional forest zone and its about 270km north of the national capital, Accra. It is between latitude 6.35⁰ – 6.40⁰ and longitude 1.30⁰ – 1.35⁰, an elevation which ranges between 250 - 300 meters above sea level with a land area of about 254 square kilometers."³ It is one of the few cities in Africa which has been able to maintain its ancient cultural values and traditions. Kumasi is the seat of the Asante kingdom which is well known for its rich cultural heritage and tradition.

¹ Kumasi Metropolitan ><http://kma.ghanadistricts.gov.gh>. accessed 13/12/2012

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The head of the Asante kingdom, the Asantehene resides in the Manhyia palace which was established in the 17th century and is one of the most visited tourist sites in Ghana by tourists from all over the world and even local tourist. Also the colorful kente and Adinkra cloths together with the rich craft industry in towns around the city of Kumasi such as Bonwire, Awhiaa and Ntonso makes Kumasi a center of attraction. Many local and foreign tourists troupe to the city all year round.⁴ Again the famous Kumasi Cultural Centre, the first of its kind to be established in sub-Saharan Africa⁵ also contributes to the tourist attraction sites in the city.

The occupations of the people in Kumasi are mainly commercial though there are a few wood manufacturing industries as well as other services such as transport, small scale engineering services, small scale dressmaking businesses and many others. Most people deal in trading activities which involves the buying and selling of foreign and local goods. It is assumed that the “Kumasi Central market is the single largest in West Africa.”⁶ This has contributed to the high population of the city. Though inhabitants of Kumasi are heterogeneous, the predominant language is twi the native language of the Asantes.

Religious Dynamics of Kumasi

The people of Kumasi are highly religious. Prior to the coming of the European missionaries, the people were idol worshippers. However, they believe that their idols serve as a medium for them to reach the highest deity called “Onyankopon”

⁴ Kumasi metropolitan >[http:// kma.ghanadistricts.gov.gh](http://kma.ghanadistricts.gov.gh) 15/12/2012.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid..

(God).⁷ In a sense the people believe in a God who created and controls the universe but because of His power, it is not appropriate or respectful for humans to approach him directly. Thus, through the lower deities who acts as linguists or intermediaries the Almighty God could be approached just as the Kings and chiefs can only be approached through linguists.

The traditional view of God has influenced the life of the people that it is hardly difficult for a Kumasi dweller to claim to be an atheist. At least a citizen of Kumasi belongs to one of the three main religions predominant in the city, namely; Christianity, Islam and the traditional African religion (paganism). The most dominant religion in Kumasi is Christianity claiming about seventy-nine per cent of the population.⁸

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has also enjoyed patronage in the city of Kumasi. The church can boast of about 23 Church districts in the city of Kumasi with an average number of 6 churches in a district. The large Adventist presence in Kumasi can be attributed to the fact that the Ashantis are part of the Akan⁹ tribe of Ghana which believes that God has set aside Saturday as His special day. Thus, Saturday is held in high esteem by the traditional people of Ashanti. According to Professor Kofi Owusu Mensah, “in all Akan societies, every child born to man has a day name. The name normally goes with the day of the week on which the child was born.”¹⁰ This

⁷ Kofi Owusu Mensah, *Saturday God and Adventism in Ghana* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 1993), 5.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The Akans are the two speaking tribes in Ghana. They are the Ashantis, the Fantes, the Bonos, the Nzimas, the Akuapems and the Akyems.

¹⁰ Kofi Owusu Mensah, 10.

automatic name is used for the person throughout his lifetime and even after death if reference is made to the person. What is relevant in connection with this analysis is that the Akans of which the Asantes of Kumasi is part consider God to be Saturday born. Hence the appellation “Onyankopon Tweaduapon Kwame” that is the dependable God born on Saturday.

The Context of South Central Ghana Conference

The South Central Ghana Conference (SCGC) is the Conference where the Airport District belongs. It is one of the two conferences which have its headquarters in Kumasi. The other is the Central Ghana Conference (CGC). “The conference covers part of the Ashanti and a small portion of the Central Region. It was carved out of the CGC in 1997 and was organized as a conference in 1998. SCGC has 42 districts, 231 churches and 279 companies with an estimated membership of 77,684.”¹¹

SCGC has four hospitals, and two clinics. It also has three senior high schools and about thirty elementary and junior high schools. The workforce of SCGC stands at 110 as at the end of December 2012, with 87 of them being clergy and 23 laity. The estimated membership of SCGC compared to the population of SCGC territory of 2,523,958 gives the ratio of Adventist to non-Adventist as 1:32. This seems to show a favorable Adventist population in this territory. However, the 2012 membership audit conducted by the conference shows a serious decline in membership from the

¹¹Kumasi Metropolitan > [http://: www.scgcadventist.org](http://www.scgcadventist.org). (Dec., 15, 2012)

statistical report figure of 77,684 to 39,461 as at December 2012.¹² This poses a serious evangelistic and nurturing challenge to the churches in SCGC territory.

The Context of the Airport District

This section describes the brief history and statistical development and the pre-program survey of the Airport District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The district was carved out of the Ash-Town and the New Tafo districts in Kumasi in 2001. It was re-organized in December 2007 at the third triennial session of the conference with four organized churches and two company churches. These churches were Sepe –Buokrom, Buokrom Estate, Duasi and Kenyasi, The companies are Sepe-Dote and the Kenyasi Seventh-day Adventist Senior High School’s Institutional Church. In 2008, two company churches were added to the district namely Emmanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church at Buokrom Estate and North River Seventh-day Adventist Church at Kenyasi. This district was named Airport district because it is located about 10 km square radius of the Kumasi Airport area.

The population of the catchment area of the Airport district is about a hundred and twenty thousand. Majority of the members speak Twi, the main dialect of the Asantes. Though there are many people of other tribes in Ghana and nationals from countries around the West Africa sub-region residing in this area, they prefer to learn and speak the Twi language since it is easier to be learnt.

The statistical report of the first quarter of 2008 showed a membership 2,430. However, the membership audit report of the 2011 showed a decline of membership to 1324, almost half of the 2008 reported figure. The above observation shows that a serious action needed to be taken to keep the members in the church. Thus the

¹² SCGC, 4th quarter statistical report compiled by Pr. Akwasi Boateng, SCGC secretary.

researcher embarked on a program to ascertain the causes and how to curb the downward growth of membership of the district.

Pre-program Survey and Interview

This section deals with actions taken before the program was implemented. Before the program, the author, who was the district pastor for this district from January 2008 to September 2011 held a meeting with the executive committee members of the district about his intension to conduct this study in the district which was eagerly agreed.¹³ A pre-program interview and survey were conducted through questionnaire and interviews.¹⁴ Five hundred questionnaires were sent out to the communities in which the churches were located to ascertain the reasons why members leave the church. Two hundred and eighty people responded and the results are shown in Table 1.

The table shows that the male respondents were 115 representing 41% while the female were 165 representing 59% of the total number of respondents. The greater number of female respondents seems to suggest that females are more likely to leave the church than males. This may be due to the fact that probably the females are burdened with more problems that pressurize them to leave the church than their male counterparts. For instance, a thirty-five year old woman who was interviewed on why she left the church who claimed that the pressure from her husband was too much. Sometimes, when she was ready to go to church on Sabbath, he will tell her to prepare his favorite dish, *fufu* and palm nut soup which usually takes not less than three hours

¹³ Airport District Executive committee action taken on Sunday, Jan 16, 2011 at the district headquarters' church at Sepe Buokrom at 11.00 am.

¹⁴ See Appendix B.

to prepare. This was too frustrating for her and that was the reason why she left the Church.

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	115	41%
Female	165	59%
Total	280	100%

Table 2 shows that members of the church within the age bracket of 20 and 40 are more likely to leave the church. Some of the problems that may speed their exit include Sabbath work, marital problems, moral fall, severe hardships that arises from diseases, unemployment, inability to find a suitor in the church especially the women hence the temptation to look for an unbelieving partner who may not understand her religious beliefs. Such marriages usually cause a lot of problems for the spiritual life of the believing partner. A case in point is a member’s testimony which has been cited above. It seems the females are more vulnerable than the males.

Table 2. Description of Age Group

Age	Males	Females	Percentage
Less than 20 years	15	5	7%
21-30 years	40	95	49%
31-40 years	40	45	30%
Above 40 years	20	20	14%
Total	115	165	100%

From Table 3, it seems that those who are prone to leave the church are those who do not involve themselves in church activities. If new converts are encouraged to get involve in church activity, their chances of leaving the church will reduce. Of the

280 respondents, 180 of them representing 64% were in the church for less than one year. This percentage corresponds to the percentage of the number who was not involved in any church activity. Incidentally, this percentage almost corresponds with the percentage, that is, 67% of those who feel they did not find friends in the church either because of choice or they felt the old members were unfriendly.

Table 3. Involvement in Church Life

	Male	Female	Percentage
None	73	105	64%
Active	42	60	36%
Total	115	165	100%

Table 4 shows that among the male respondents, the topmost reason why they join the church is the teachings of the church, while the female respondents are mostly attracted to the church because of love bond and marriage. Influence of relations and friends also may play significant role in bringing people to the church.

From Table 5, the topmost four factors that led to the lost of members are: job-related problems dealing with the dilemma of whether to attend church service on Sabbath by a new member and lose ones job or leave the church and maintain ones job. The males were mostly affected by this challenge. Trials or hardships that resulted from poverty, spiritual attacks, strange chronic diseases, and many other such situations which needed perseverance on the part of the new convert.

Table 4: Reasons for Joining the Church

	Male	Female	Percentage
Perceived love bond	20	80	35%

Teachings	70	20	32%
Marriage	0	39	14%
Influence of Relations and friends	20	19	14%
Music and worship style	3	2	2%
Others	2	5	3%
Total	115	165	100%

Moral fall due to pregnancy before marriage. The victims in this category are mostly the youth and the young adults between the ages of 21 and 35. Most of them could not continue their education or learn some trade because of parents' low financial status and inability to send them to school or help them learn a trade. They are however of marriageable age but because of financial difficulties they indulge in pre-marital sex or co-habitation.

Marital problems also play significant role in new converts leaving the church. The unconverted spouses especially the males give the female converts lots of problems when they are converted.

Table 5: Reasons for Leaving the Church

	Male	Female	Percentage
Worship style	2	5	2.5%
Hostile old members	10	22	11.4%
Sabbath work problems	45	15	21.4%
Moral fall	25	30	19.6%
Trials/Temptation	14	47	21.7%
Marital problems	14	26	14.2%
Others	5	20	9.2%
Total	115	165	100%

After the questionnaire and interviews, plans were formulated to train leaders and members on the nurturing of new members. In this program, it was evidenced that the task of nurturing is not the preserve of only the clergy and elders but the lot of all church members; therefore each member is encouraged to play a meaningful role in keeping the new converts. The small group model was envisaged as the antidote to the problem of members leaving the church. As a result, the leadership of the various groups in the district were called for a three-day workshop to be trained on the value of the small group ministry in nurturing and retaining members in the church.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This chapter looks at how a program was designed to solve the problem of nurturing in the Airport District of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana. It also considered the implementation procedure of the program. An evaluation of the program after a year's implementation is also considered here as well.

Program Design

A District Executive Committee meeting was held to re-inform the churches within the district about the intension of the district pastor to use the district for a research project. The request to conduct the study was approved.¹ A proposal to organize a three-day workshop to train the leadership of all the Small Group Ministries within the churches in the district was also approved during the meeting. The aim of this training workshop (see Table 6) was to help the members to know how to relate well with new members in order to effectively help integrate them into the church.

Some of the topics treated at the workshop included the following:

1. Developing disciples
2. Nurturing and Discipleship
3. Who does the Nurturing?

¹ Airport District Executive Committee Action taken on Sunday, Aug., 28, 2011 at the headquarters church at Sepe Buokrom at 3.00pm.

4. What is involved in Nurturing?
5. Opening of a Closed Community
6. Growing spiritually through prayer
7. Visitation

Program for the Workshop

Table 6, Schedule of Activities for the Three-day Workshop

Date	Topic	Facilitator	Time
Fri. 4/11/2011	1. Developing Disciples	Pr. Adade Boateng	5.00-6.00pm
	2. Discipleship and Nurturing	Pr. Alex N. Owusu	6.05-7.05pm
	3. Evening Devotion and Reflections	Eld. I. A Wiredu	7.10-7.40pm
Sat. 5/11/2011	1. What is involved in Nurturing?	Pr. Adade Boateng	8.00- 9.00am
	2. Sabbath Sch. Study and Divine Service	Pr. Josiah O. Twum	9.00-12Noon
	3. Who does the Nurturing?	Pr. P. Amponsa-Mensah	2.00-3.00pm
	4. Opening of a closed Community	Pr. Alex N. Owusu	3.05-4.05pm
	5. Visitation		
	6. Spiritual Growth through Bible study	Pr. Adade Boateng Eld. Joseph Acheampong	4.10-5.10pm 5.15-6.15pm
	7. Vesper Service		6.20-7.00pm
Sun. 6/11/2011	1. Spiritual Growth through prayer	Pr. P. Amponsah-Mensah	8.00-9.00am
	2. Conserving the catch	Pr. Adade Boateng	9.00-11.00am
	3. Consecration Service	Pr. Josiah O. Twum	11.00-12.Noon

The lecture notes for this workshop have been provided in Appendix C.

Record indicates that 122 small group ministries leaders and other interested persons from the district attended the workshop. After the workshop, the churches regrouped

those who attended the workshop to lead out in special small group cell units within the churches. In all 35 units were recorded throughout the district for implementation of the program.² Each cell unit had about 10 members including the leaders.

Implementation of the Program

This section provides the steps and strategies used in implementing the program. After a month of preparation and further in-service training by the leaders who attended the workshop to the members in the small group cell units which was supervised by the author, a 10 day temple evangelistic campaign was conducted simultaneously in all the churches in early January 2012. The number of baptisms recorded was 86 and about 75 people accepted to continue to study with the churches.

Conservation Strategy

The new members from the various churches were distributed to the small groups in the churches in which they were baptized into. The members in the small groups became their immediate friends in the church. They visited them in their homes and invited them to Bible study classes, prayer meetings and other services of the church. They served as their guide and orientated them about the church life. The new converts were also encouraged and allowed to participate in any group such as

² It should be noted that not all the church members were used in the small group cell units since this is meant to be a pilot program.

the youth club, the women and men ministries, the choir, and other singing group of their choice.

The churches agreed to give free lunch to the new members, visitors and the needy every Sabbath afternoon after church service. This benevolent act increased the weekly Sabbath worship attendance as well as the tithes and other offerings of the churches.

From the analysis of the responds to the questionnaires sent out, the following problems and challenges were identified which needed special attention. Hence the following programs were designed to meet those needs.

Career Counseling Workshops and Special Voluntary Training for Artisans

As part of the program to help those who were unemployed and those who faced Sabbath work problems, career counseling workshops were conducted for them to enable them engage themselves in business activities on their own. Again, some old members who were master artisans in the field of joinery and carpentry, masonry, tailoring, Kente weaving and a host of others offered to train those interested freely. Furthermore, some offered financial assistance to the new members to start their own businesses. The largest and the richest church in the Airport district which is also the headquarters church- the Sepe Boukrom Church- established a credit union to give soft loans to members who needed seed money or capital to start their own business.

Prayer, Pre-Marital and Marital Counseling and Lectures

Every Wednesday mornings, from 9.00 – 12 Noon was designated by the district as period used by the whole district to organize prayers for those facing difficulties and spiritual problems in the district. Free Pre-marital and marital

counseling and lectures were given to young adults who were about to marry and couples who face problems in their marriages as well during the prayer session. The unbelieving spouses of new members were invited to such lectures and often were excited to be invited to such educative program. The program helped in building good rapport between the non-Adventist spouses and the church thus impediment which the believing spouses faced in attending church services from the unbelieving spouses reduced. Also, the pre-marital lectures provided lessons which helped young adults to stay chaste till marriage and this improved the incidence of moral fall among the members.

Proposed Nurturing Activity for the Airport District

One of the problems identified was the high unemployment rate among the youth who constitute the majority of our new converts. This problem persists because most of them end their education at the basic education level and find it difficult to be employed. As a result, they face social and financial problems which often weaken their faith. To help reduce this problem, it is proposed that the district sets up a scholarship scheme to help poor members further their education to at least the Senior High School level.

Evaluation

After twelve months of the program implementation, an evaluation was made to ascertain the success or failure of the program. The results of the two newly

established churches³ were critically observed besides the general observation of the entire district. Of the 86 persons baptized during the temple evangelistic campaign, only 6 persons were found to be inactive after twelve months of the program implementation with no drop-out. Another 40 out of the 75 persons who accepted to study with the church were also baptized within the period.

The outcome of retention of members as a result of twelve month implementation of the program in the two new churches mentioned above was compared with the retention of members in the same churches since 2008. The results are presented in Table 7 below.

In 2012, Emmanuel and North River Churches baptized 25 and 20 individual within the period of the implementation of the program. None of the churches recorded any drop-out within the period as compared with a high drop-out of 16 for both churches in 2008. Again, within the period all the new members were active in the church as compared with a total of 18 inactive members among the 2008 converts. Also, Table 7 below shows that none of the churches was able to achieve membership percentage retention of 50. This seems to prove that without proper nurturing programs for new converts; more than half of them will leave the church hence making evangelism a frustrating exercise. It was also observed that the use of small group cell units may not produce huge numbers in evangelistic activities (see Tables 7 and 8 below) but the converts are sure to stay as against large numbers often recorded in open-air campaigns but only few stay. Another observation made during this program is that the temple evangelistic activity method combined with small group cell units seems to be cost effective.

³ The district opened two new company churches in 2008 namely Emmanuel and North River Seventh-day Adventist churches with beginning memberships of 25 and 35 at Buokrom Estate and Kenyasi respectfully.

Table 7. Membership Retention of Emmanuel and North River Churches since 2008

Church	New converts	Active	Inactive	Drop-out
North River	35	16 (45.7%)	10 (28.6%)	9 (25.7%)
Emmanuel	25	10 (40%)	8 (32%)	7 (28%)

Table 8. Membership Retention of Emmanuel and North River Churches in 2012

Church	New converts	Active	Inactive	Drop-out
North River	20	20 (100%)	0	0
Emmanuel	25	25 (100%)	0	0

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter is the concluding part of the project. The researcher identified problem of nurturing in the Airport District of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana. The Chapter summarizes the step by step method by which the researcher sought to provide solution to the problem. The findings from the work and recommendations what could be done for more effective nurturing as well is also considered.

Summary

The study aimed at finding the causes of new members leaving the church after they have heartily received the gospel message and how the church could nurture new converts especially in the Airport District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The first Chapter drew readers' attention to the rate at which new converts drop out of the church and the frustrating effect it has on both the clergy and laity in that it makes evangelism uninteresting and time wasting not to talk of its unwise financial repercussions on the Churches. As a result members now feel reluctant to do evangelism. One major reason why this trend is taking root in our Churches is that new converts are not adequately nurtured and integrated into the Church hence the study suggested ways of curbing this problem through proper Christian nurturing.

In Chapter 2, a literature survey was conducted. The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy writings by Ellen G. White, works on nurture by scholars both Adventist

and non-Adventist were also reviewed and examined to ascertain their view on backsliding and ways of maintaining new members in the church through nurturing. These studies showed that disciple making as a result of evangelism is not an event as has been the practice in our Churches in recent times but a process which require all members to take conscious effort in painstakingly undertaking certain nurturing procedures which will establish the new members in their new found faith.

The third Chapter discussed the description of the project taking into consideration the context of Kumasi, the South Central Ghana Conference and the Airport District. A pre-program survey was conducted among some former Seventh-day Adventists in the Airport district and the results analyzed. Through the analysis it was discovered that some of the major reasons why new converts leave the church were; job related problems that require the new convert to decide whether to attend church service on Sabbath or to go to work; moral fall; marital problems; inconsiderate or hostility of old members; and several other trials and temptations.

In Chapter 4, a program for nurturing was designed based on the findings in Chapter 3. It was then implemented and evaluated for a period of twelve months. First of all, a three day workshop was conducted to train the leadership of small group ministries in the churches on nurturing and conservation procedures. In-door evangelism was conducted in all the churches throughout the district. Members who were converted were conserved through nurturing procedures learnt in the workshop such as visiting and befriending new members, giving them spiritual guidance through prayer ministries and Bible studies, helping them in their social problems etc. The results after a year's implementation of the program were recorded and analyzed to find out how the program seems to help solve the problem of nurture and retention in the Church.

Conclusions

After the program, the churches in the Airport District realized that evangelizing can be interesting, cost-effective and less tiresome if it is done under the environment of proper nurturing procedures, coupled with small group cell unit activities. But more importantly the work sought to help the church to realize that it is possible to maintain a greater number of new members who have joined the church through evangelism if nurturing procedures such as; befriending and visiting new converts to give them spiritual guide in their new found faith through prayer, Bible study and counseling, giving them social support when it matters most, providing job opportunities to the unemployed or helping them learn a trade and if possible, offering scholarships to needy students etc are given the necessary importance and pursued vigorously.

To be abreast with the problem of new members leaving the church a short while after baptism, a pre-program survey was conducted in the communities of the Airport district on former Adventists to know why they dropped out of the church. A program was then designed to educate some segment of the church members using the small group cell units on how to receive new members and help them to be assimilated into the church. The result after a year's implementation and observation was that the drop-out rate of new members had reduced generally, that is all 86 members who were initially baptized together with the extra 40 who were baptized later were retained with only 6 members, that is, 4.8% of the overall members baptized who were inactive throughout district. Specifically, when the results of the Emmanuel and North River Churches where a previous open-air evangelistic activity took place in 2008 was compared with that of 2012 in-door evangelistic effort a more positive result was observed. Not only was there no membership drop-out but inactive

membership among the newly converted was zero within the year under observation in these two Churches. The new members were actively involved in all programs of the Church because they had companions who were encouraging them and even sometimes picking them to such programs.

Financial contributions to the churches by way of tithes and offerings as well as project giving also went up during this time. Interest in evangelism was picking up in the district once again. It was also observed that the in-door or temple evangelistic activity adapted in the program proved to be more cost effective whereas old members' participation in the evangelism was encouraging – another way of building them up spiritually.

Recommendations

During the study, the following problems were identified which are recommended to be considered by the churches in the long run for both new and old members to help keep members in the church.

1. The church over the years has not only helped members in their spiritual matters but also in their social and financial matters as well. The church has been helping the socially disadvantaged. It is therefore recommended that scholarship schemes for students and needy financial assistant funds be set up for new and old members who are financially disadvantaged to enable them pursue their life dreams.
2. In establishing new churches, it is recommended that the church in doing so must consider helping the new church find a permanent decent place of worship, preferably a church building before they conduct evangelism or open new churches. This will help reduce the incidence of drop outs due to new members carrying a burden of how to get a decent place of worship. A case in

point is Sepe Boukrom and Duase churches which were established in 1982 and 1983 respectively and within a distance of two and half kilometers away. However, Sepe Buokrom which was lucky to have had a benefactor to help them put up a church building has had increased growth, about nine times⁴ more than that of Duase church which still worships in a small classroom of a local Catholic Primary School.

3. It is also recommended that the small group cell unit evangelism method be replicated among all the churches in the Conference since it helps to reduce membership drop-outs and help build strong spiritual fellowship among members.
4. In order for the Church to curtail huge expenses in evangelism, it is recommended that more in-door or temple evangelism should be encouraged. The huge amount used in evangelism could be geared towards acquiring Church buildings for newly establish Churches to facilitate their speedy growth.

⁴Statistical Report of the Airport District for third quarter ending 30th September 2012 for Sepe Buokrom and Duase churches shows closing net membership of 904 and 103 respectively.

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE



SOUTH CENTRAL GHANA CONFERENCE
(AIRPORT DISTRICT)
P. O. BOX AS 439
KUMASI- GHANA

ALL CHURCES & COMPANIES

6th January, 2010

Dear Brethren,

INVITATION TO DISTRICT MONTHLY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

I write on behalf of the District Pastor and administration to invite you to our monthly District Executive Committee meeting on 16th January, 2011 at 11.00 am prompt at Buokrom Church.

AGENDA

1. Presentation of the Final Report of the District Nominating Committee
2. Approval of District Pastor's intension to conduct a research on nurturing of new members within the district.
3. Appraisal of the December 2010 Youth Camp at Ahweren

Kindly make time for this important meeting.

Sincerely,



Seth Asare.

(District Secretary)

APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ASCERTAIN WHY NEW MEMBERS LEAVE THE CHURCH IN THE AIRPORT DISTRICT OF ADVENTIST CHURCH

TICK AS NECESSARY/APPROPRIATE

1. Male Female
2. AGE: Less than 20 Between 21 – 30 Between 31 - 40
 Above 40
3. How long were you in the Adventist Church?
 Up to 3 months Up to 6 months Up to a year
 More than a year
4. What Influence you to join the Church?
 Music Perceived Love bond/Fellowship among Members
 Teachings/Doctrines Marriage
 Relationship of Friends/Family members
5. Were you adequately instructed in the Word of God before baptism?
 Very much Moderately Not so much
6. Did you ever join any group in the Church, such as Women/Men Organization, Youth Society, Singing group, etc?
 Yes No
7. Were you often visited at home by Members/Leaders?
 Very much Moderately Not so much
8. Did you find a friend in the Church? Yes No

9. Were you interested in the Worship Style of the Church? Yes

No

10. Were you truly interested or feel touched by the preaching and teachings of the Church? Yes No

11. Did you find the teachings of the Church too rigid and difficult to obey?
 Yes No

12. Were Members: Hostile? Accommodating/Sympathetic?

13. What do you think led you out of the Church?

Worship Style uninteresting?

Were/was Member(s) hostile towards you?

Leadership/Members lack of interest in you?

Work related problems (especially work on Sabbath)?

Moral fall?

Briefly state if any

other.....

.....

14. Have you joined any other Church? Yes No

15. If yes, are happy? Yes No

16. Given the chance, will you wish to come back if things change?

Yes No Undecided

APPENDIX C
LECTURE NOTES

Lecture notes for the trainers training workshop on nurturing before the evangelistic campaign are provided in this section.

**Developing Disciples: A Christians
Responsibility**

Christians are mandated to make disciples (Matt 28:19). A disciple is “a person who believes in the ideas and principles of someone famous and tries to live the way they do or did.”⁵ It therefore behooves on every Christian believer who himself is a disciple of Christ Jesus to train others to be like Jesus. For a person to be able to make disciples, the first step for him or her to take is to “go.” Disciples are not gotten when one sits idle. The “gospel commission” enjoins Christians to go to every nook and cranny of the world with the gospel message. They are to ensure that everybody including the rich and the poor, the healthy and the unhealthy, the friendly and unfriendly, the religious and the unreligious and so forth is approached with the message. This call for tact and different approach in reaching the people with the message since people behave in different ways. Ellen white says “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people.” She continues, “the savior mingles with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them,

⁵ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), s.v. “disciples.”

ministered to their need, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow me.’”⁶

The second injunction from the gospel commission is “making the disciples.” This involves training the person to be like the trainer or more specifically in Christian context to be like Christ. This ensures that the new convert is well nurtured and this will be dealt in the subsequent lectures on nurturing. Teaching the convert to observe Christ’s teachings all involve nurturing thus these are all to be dealt with in the subsequent lectures.

Discipleship and Nurturing

To be able to disciple a person one need to nurture that person. The word nurture according to Cambridge International Dictionary of English is “to take care of, feed and protect (esp. a young child or plant) and help it develop. Or is the way in which children are treated as they are growing, esp. as compared with the characteristics they are born with.”⁷ From the following definition it means that a person being disciplined must be taken care of, fed, protected and helped to be developed spiritually and sometimes physically as well by the disciple. Nurturing is a painstaking effort. Sometimes you can lead a soul to Christ within a few weeks but it takes months and even years for a person to be well- nurtured.

⁶ E. G. White, *The Ministry Of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

⁷ *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), s.v. “Nurture.”

Method of Nurturing New Members

To ensure proper care and deal with trouble areas which often make new converts backslide, Walter A. Henrichsen makes the following suggestions in his book "Disciples are made not born:"

1. Go over again with him/her the plan of salvation using 1 John 5: 11-12.

Let him have the assurance that he/she has salvation as long as he/she is in Christ so that uncertainty will vanish.

2. Pray for him/her (see Eph 1: 15-23; 3:14-20). Help converts learn NT prayers such as these ones.

3. Visit him/her often especially after his/her decision for Christ. It is at these periods that Satan marshals all forces against the new converts.

Encourage him/her and help him/her to realize that the problems he/she is going through you are behind him/her.⁸

Furthermore to ensure proper spiritual diet as a new born baby in Christ, Walter suggested that since children could not feed themselves, the new converts are to be guided to study the word of God for themselves and also observe quiet time with God every morning as Jesus did in Mark 1:35.⁹

Showing love and affection is an important aspect of nurturing. Walter suggested three ways ensuring love and affection. These are:

1. Invitation to the house for meals and make him feel part of part of the family (1 Cor 16:15).
2. Involves him in the warmth and fellowship of the Church (Heb 10:25).

⁸ Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born* (Colorado Springs: Charist Victor Publishing, 2001), 78-87.

⁹ Ibid.

3. Take him with you (Mark 3:14; Prov 27:17) in camp meetings and other meetings of spiritual nature to help the new convert to grow strong.

Who Does the Nurturing?

Is nurturing the preserve of a few individuals or every Christian is to learn how to do nurturing and help new converts to grow? The following studies will help members to realize that every believer who is mandated to undertake the gospel commission is to learn to do nurturing.

Special Ministry Calling

Every believer is called to a special ministry (Eph 4: 11, 12). To accomplish this ministry the Lord has given each of us special gifts. These gifts were not given to only special group called ministers. All believers are described as priest or ministers (1Pet 2-9). The clergy is the one chosen to lead in the ministry and the entire membership are supporting ministers wherever they are to help the clergy in the accomplishment of Christ mission on earth. Ellen white clarifies this notion in her book *Christian Service* as this:

Let the businessman do his business in a way that will glorify his master because of his fidelity. Let the Mechanic be a diligent and faithful representative of Him who toiled in the lowly walks of life in the cities of Judea. Let everyone who names the name of Christ so work that man by seeing his good works may be led to glorify his Creator and Redeemer.¹⁰

¹⁰ E. G. White, *Christian Service* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 27.

According to Rex D. Edwards, “the pastor’s work must be mainly to train and equip the troops for the battle.”¹¹ He further suggests that the term ‘lay-men’ be replaced with lay-minister.¹² In this sense, it is obvious that all members are to learn to nurture others for spiritual growth and further ministry to others and that ministry should not be left in the hands of the clergy alone.

Opening a Closed Community

The Seventh-day Adventist church members in Ghana are sometimes wrongly perceived as anti-sociable community because they usually refuse to attend funeral services, marriage ceremonies, cultural festivals and other social functions which are usually celebrated on Saturdays. This negative branding of the church has been an impediment to many who show interest and are willing to join the church but fear that when they join the church they will be able to participate in these social functions. Also relatives of new converts also use this perceive wrong notion about the church to convince them to leave the church. To help disabuse this notion from the minds of people the following strategies must be adopted to help the communities to know that the Adventist Church is a sociable community.

1. Giving social support to the community: – the church needs to interact with the community. They give volunteer services such cleaning up streets, hospitals markets and other important public places. Again regular visits to orphanages, hospitals, prisons and places where people who are indisposed are kept with gifts and needy items will help raise the churches image in the communities.

¹¹ Rex D. Edwards, *Every Believer a Minister* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Association, 1995), 14

¹² Ibid, 15

2. Giving support in celebrations: - though the members cannot participate in celebrating events on the Sabbath but they can show interest in helping in preparation and giving their opinions to the success of these events. In that sense even if they absent themselves from the main function their little contributions may be appreciated than not showing any interest at all. For after all the Bible advises us to “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15, NKJV).
3. The church could organize free health screening and lectures on diseases that are worrying the communities.
4. The church leadership can liaise with opinion leaders in providing useful suggestions and advice which could help in the progress of the communities.

Visitation

Visitation is very essential in ministry. It is important for shepherds (ministers or disciples) to know the sheep (the people they are discipling). Jesus the master Shepherd says; “I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me” (John 10:14). Through visitation leaders and those they are trying to lead to Christ will be able to know themselves better. The Bible seems to warn against the neglect of this important ministry in Ezekiel 34:2, 4-6 as follows:

Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves!
Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.” (NIV).

Who are to Do Visitation?

Should visitation be done by only the clergy or every individual who is interested or called upon to discipleship should participate? According to Jonas Arrais, “the pastor is not the only one in the church who can communicate God’s love through a visit.”¹³ He continues thus, “he must actively foster this ministry if the church is to be motivated to participate in visitation as well. Visitation is a hallmark of a caring church.”¹⁴

Leaders and members who care must visit their fellow members to show love and concern to them. The clergy alone cannot do this because their busy schedule and more so the large congregation they minister to will not allow them to be able to effectively do this ministry. Hence ministers need to train the members to augment in the visitation program. Jonas Arrais provides some tips for making visitation effective which are listed below:¹⁵

1. Visitation must be planned. Families and individuals who need to be visited must be informed well ahead of time and they be given the opportunity to choose the day and time of the visit. Don’t allow them to prepare food or spend time cleaning their homes.
2. Avoid visiting alone. It is always safe to visit opposite sex with a companion to avoid temptation of moral fall.
3. Keep visits short. Visits should be kept short around thirty minutes so that visitation will not be a nuisance to the people visited.

¹³ Jonas Arrais, *Wanted: A Good Pastor* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2011), 70.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid. 82-91.

4. Share something. It will be very nice if a gift could be presented during visitation. However if nothing could be offered, one's presence is valuable and matters more than the gift.
5. Spiritual preparation is also necessary before undertaking visitation. One needs to pray for oneself for spiritual strength in order to avoid temptations that sometimes cause some ministers to fall morally. Again what to say or do to help the one visited to be built up spiritually is important. Therefore praying for spiritual guidance and discernment is necessary.
6. During visitations, special Bible passages that deals with one's situation and can help encourage him or her must not be overlooked as well as prayer for the needs of the person visited. Furthermore, hymns may be sung to give more encouragement since hymns are usually Bible passages or poems that build up the spirit.
7. The person taking pastoral visits should learn to be good listeners. They should allow the person to pour his or her heart out. The person should be encouraged to speak about his or her problems, interests and share his or her vision with the one undertaking pastoral visits. One way of achieving this is by asking questions about one's social and spiritual lives. This will only be possible if the person have confidence in the visitor.

Spiritual Growth Through Bible Study

One important thing which helps new converts to grow is through the study of the scriptures. The apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy encouraged him to continue in what he (Timothy) had learned from the scriptures because it will make him wise and equip him for good works (2 Tim 3: 14-16). Jesus in John 5:39, confirms to the Jews that the searching of the scriptures do bring eternal life and it also teaches about

Him. In Luke 11:38, Jesus again emphasized the importance of studying and obeying the teachings of the scriptures by replying a woman who wanted to praise Jesus' mother for giving birth to Him by saying "blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (NIV).

What Are Some of the Benefits of Bible Study to the New Believer?

Bible study has beneficial results on persons whose interest in studying the Bible is to understand God and obtain salvation. There is no doubt that Bible study has changed many lives and their otherwise hopeless lifestyle has been replaced by a more positive and hopeful lifestyle (Rom 15:4) which has affected their contribution to society positively. Ellen White in her book *Steps to Christ* confirms this observation by stating that "if God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose that is rarely seen in these times."¹⁶

Some of the benefits of Bible study are enumerated below:

a) The word as food (Matt 4:4; Luke 4:4)

Jesus showed that the words of scripture are food for the spirit. By neglecting to study the Bible, a person deprives the spirit of nourishment hence the spiritual nature is starved to death. For any Christian, especially the new convert to grow spiritually the person must study the Bible always.

b) The word as light (Psalm 119:105)

The scripture is depicted as light which dispels the cloud of darkness in our world and doubt in our lives as well as helping us to escape dangers and see our way clearly.

¹⁶ E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, (Accra: The Advent Press, 1990), 90.

c) The word as a mirror (James 1:23-25)

The word as a mirror allow us to see ourselves in the light of its teachings so that we can approach Jesus for the necessary cleansing and change for us to look better.

d) The word as water (Eph 5:26)

The word is depicted as water which is used to cleanse the bride of Christ – the church so that she shall be perfect before the Lord and live purely (Psalm 119:9).

e) The word as Fire (Jer 20:9; 23:29)

The word as fire burns within a person's heart and challenges the individual to surrender his or her life to the Lord to live a good life.

f) Hammer (Jer 23:29)

The word as a hammer breaks all bad habits for the Holy Spirit to take absolute control over the person's life.

g) Sword (Eph 6:17)

The word as a sword is used in fighting spiritual battle of ignorance and act as defense against the enemy's weapon of sin which destroys the spiritual life of the believer.

h) Seed (Luke 8:11)

The word as a seed when it germinates in a person's life grows up and bears fruit of righteousness (Gal 5:22-24) in the individual's life.

Spiritual Growth Through Prayer

Prayer is one of the most important spiritual activities of the Christian. No Christian can overcome the temptations of the devil and live the perfect Christian life (Matt 5:48), find contentment in his or her walk with God (1Tim 6:6, 8) and be successful in working for the Lord if he or she neglects to pray. Thus the scriptures enjoins all Christians to “pray without ceasing” (1Thess 5:17, NKJV).

Jesus’ Prayer Life

Jesus was aware that the success of His mission on earth depended on constant communion with His Father. Thus He began His ministry with a forty day and night of prayer and fasting (Matt 4:2). Ellen White says “By prayer and fasting, He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel.”¹⁷

He seems to start His daily work with early morning prayers (Mark 1:35). He also ended His busy daily schedule with prayer as well (Matt14:23; Luke 5:15, 16). Sometimes He spends the whole night in prayer before a major decision is taken (Luke 6:12, 13). The content of His prayer included: intercession for His disciples and others who needed deliverance from some spiritual and physical problems (John 17:6-26); prayer for strength to endure trials (Matt 26:36-44).

Jesus’ prayer life was so beautiful and effective that His disciples requested Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1).

The Prayer Life of the Disciples

The disciples also began their ministry with fasting and prayer at the Upper Room in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12-14), where the Holy Spirit descended on them mightily (Acts 2:1-4). They continued fellowshiping, studying and praying together (Acts

¹⁷ The Desire of Ages, 114.

2:42) after the Pentecost experience and “everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43).

The result of these continuous fellowship, studies and prayers was that the disciples became united (Acts 2:44) and were eager in praising and worshipping God as well as spreading the gospel which led to dramatic increase in membership (Acts 2:47).

Conclusion

In her book, “Alone With God” by Matilda Erickson Andross, she points out how history of Christian service shown that the successful ministry of spiritual giants such as Martin Luther, David Brainerd, D.L. Moody, John Knox, John Neesima and many others had also depended on prayer.¹⁸

Therefore in conclusion, it must be emphasized that it is very necessary for Christians who seek to nurture others to imitate the prayer life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His other successful disciples. Also, they are to point out the importance of constant communion with God in prayer to those they are nurturing and to help them cultivate the habit of praying for their own spiritual enhancement.

¹⁸ Matilda Erickson Andross, *Alone With God* (Mountain View CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1961), 20,21.

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