



ASPECTS of the LOCAL CHURCH

2019 Youth
Week of Prayer

WHAT
DO
YOU SEE?



GENERAL CONFERENCE YOUTH MINISTRIES

Remember
a Week of Prayer
is more than just a week
of sermons preached.

It is a week to
RECONNECT SPIRITUALLY,
and **prayer and fasting**
are two tried and tested
ways to get closer to God
and understand His will
and purpose for our lives.

#prayerandfastingwarriors#

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IMAGINE!

Imagine a faith without fellowship. Imagine a world without communal praise and worship. Imagine a church where sisterhood and brotherhood are nonexistent. Imagine the church as a social club. I am probably asking you to imagine the impossible. It's hard to imagine such a world.

The local church is an organized body of believers whose primary purpose is to proclaim, preserve and display the gospel and character of Jesus. It is not surprising that at the 2016 World Youth Advisory the decision was taken to be intentional in making the local church a better place—an intergenerational spiritual home for our youth. While we affirm the significance of large corporate events such as summer camps, rallies, camporees and congresses, to foster fellowship with the wider youth community and to provide opportunities for decision making and cross-pollination, we have chosen to place ministry to young people in local churches at the center of our priorities and process. Our rationale lies in this, the local church is the spiritual home of our young people. Their membership is in the local church, not the conference, mission, or union, but the local church.

It is in their families and in their local churches that young people are spiritually nurtured, commit to follow Jesus, embrace His call to discipleship, and find their place in God's service. While many of them make decisions at or during wider church events, the location where they are mentored to become devoted followers of Jesus and to live out their Christian experience is the local church. In fact, it is the local church—not the conference or union—that experiences attrition. Therefore, our aim is to mobilize and encourage the youth to get totally involved in the mission of the church, starting with their local church.

Think Local Church!



EDITORIAL

PAKO MOKGWANE

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**Global
Youth Day**

March 16th

**Homecoming
Day**

March 23rd

**2019
Week of
Prayer**

March 16 - 23



Pastor Charles Blythe recently served as a pastor in the Chesapeake Conference in Maryland, United States of America. Prior to living in Maryland he served the Seventh-day Adventist church in Jamaica for 23 years as a district pastor and Youth and Chaplaincy Ministries Director for the Central Jamaica Conference, West Indies Union, and the Jamaica Union Conference.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion from Northern Caribbean University, and a Master of Arts Degree in Counselling Psychology from Caribbean Graduate School of Theology in Kingston, Jamaica.

Pastor Blythe is an invested Master Guide. He enjoys camping, swimming, playing scrabble and spending time with his family. He is married to the former Marvalyn Walker. They are the proud parents of two children: Charles Phillip, II and Charlyn Phioniq.

His philosophy is "Quality Preparation for Quality Service". His desire is to see the youth maximizing their God-given potential and committed to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ASPECTS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

#1: SABBATH

THEOLOGY
OF THE
CHURCH

#2: SUNDAY

MISSION
OF THE
LOCAL
CHURCH

#3: MONDAY

SPIRITUAL GIFTS
AND **SERVICE**

#4: TUESDAY

STEWARDSHIP
RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE YOUTH &
YOUNG ADULTS

#5: WEDNESDAY

LEADERSHIP
THE BENEFIT
OF BEING A
COOPERATIVE
MENTEE

#6: THURSDAY

WORSHIP
HOW TO EXPRESS
DEVOTION TO GOD
UNITY IN DIVERSITY!

#7: FRIDAY

ADVENTIST
IDENTITY
WHAT IDENTIFIES YOU AS
AN ADVENTIST YOUTH

#8: 2ND SABBATH

SECOND
COMING
HOW YOUTH OUGHT TO
PREPARE FOR THE COMING
OF JESUS.

2019

Youth Week of Prayer

1. Sabbath: The Theology of the Church (Ekklesia) – how the Bible brings to light the idea of the local church.
2. Sunday: The Mission of the Local Church – how youth and young adults can be involved in mission.
3. Monday: The Functions of the Local Church of the Body of Christ (Local Church) – this is in relation to Spiritual Gifts and how youth can avail themselves for services in the operations of the church.
4. Tuesday: The Stewardship Responsibility of the Youth and Young Adults – how youth and young adults can be involved in the finances of the local church. How young adults can have spiritual accountability for the finances that God has blessed them with.
5. Wednesday: The Leadership paradigm of the Local Church – explanation of the structure of the local church and how the youth can benefit from being cooperative mentees.
6. Thursday: Importance of Worship – how to express devotion to God. Unity in diversity!
7. Friday: Adventist Identity – what identifies you as an Adventist Youth.
8. Sabbath: The Church as a Bride – how Youth ought to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Planning for the Week of Prayer

- 1. Start Your Planning Now.** We know that leadership sometimes changes at the end of the year, but please, if you will no longer be the AY leader next year, do not let that stop you from planning for this special week. Start your planning, develop your target, get your team together, and make sure your pastor is a part of that team.
- 2. Global Youth Day Information.** Get information on the Global Youth Day project. This day will be the launch of the Youth Week of Prayer. Please visit our website, youth.adventist.org, or contact your local youth director to find out how you can participate.

READ THIS FIRST

This section is filled with tips to help you in planning the Youth Week of Prayer and Homecoming events .

3. **Commit Your Prayer Warriors.** Get a team of adults together who will commit to praying for you and your ministry on a regular basis. Make sure this is a group with whom you can confidentially share both your personal and ministry prayer needs.
4. **Plan a Day of Fasting.** What is a Week of Prayer without prayer and fasting. Please make arrangement to include at least one day of fasting during the week. Our suggestion would be the middle of the week, Wednesday. It could begin from the night before (or whenever the last meal is eaten), and carry through until right before the meetings begin. If you are at a church where fasting is not a regular occurrence, then you may want to begin with a 12 hour fast. You would begin the fast 12 hours before your meeting time and break it right before the meeting. For example, if your meeting begins at 7:PM, then the fast would begin at 7AM. There are three main types of fast: Water Fast, where you abstain from all food and juices. Partial Fast, this is when you eliminate certain foods or specific meals. "Juice" Fast, this is when you drink only fruit or vegetable juices during meal times. Please visit our website after February 15th for tips on fasting and how to break your fast. Try to provide some light, healthy refreshment for those who will be breaking the fast at church.
5. **Choose a Theme Song.** Involve your youth choir. If your church does not have a youth choir, this is the perfect time to get one started. Pick out songs that you all like and which fit the topic of each evening, or choose a song for the entire week.
6. **Form a Week of Prayer Development/Review Team.** Depending on the size of your church, this group can be four to eight persons who will go through all eight readings with you. Include on your team only interested and committed young adults and youth ministry leaders (Pathfinder, Sabbath School, etc., your pastor/s); this is important because it gives ownership to the entire group, rather than just you and your assis-

Share it...

What's your experience?

What are your favourite tips for an unforgettable

Youth Week of Prayer?

Share it on Facebook at

GCYouthMinistries.

tant. Ask the group to commit to meeting for at least three weeks—at least one week for four lessons, and an extra week to wrap things up. Be sure to identify the goal and direction you want to go, preferably at the first meeting, and choose a young person to speak for each day.

7. Integrate Global Youth Day (GYD) into Your Week of Prayer Plans.

Ideally, GYD should be a time to teach youth how to sacrificially give of themselves by providing opportunities in the church and the community. If you are a small youth group and do not have the resources to arrange a community-based GYD event, you can use this opportunity to break down denominational barriers in the area by partnering with and pooling resources and ideas with other youth groups from other churches in your area.

8. Suggested Order of Service.

- i. Prayer.
- ii. Song Service.
- iii. Welcome and Introduction.
- iv. Individual Prayer Time
- v. Congregational Song/Special Song.
- vi. SERMON.
- vii. Group Discussion and Prayer.
Break into groups of 7-10 and discuss the questions found at the end of each daily sermon. Accept prayer request and pray for each other.
- viii. Congregational Song
- ix. Closing Remarks
- x. Prayer (Corporate)

Did you know that if you
read the complete 5-year

Revival and Reformation

Morning Watch series

that's available on our
website you would have
read the entire Bible?

**YES, IN FIVE YEARS,
A LITTLE AT A TIME,
AND YOU CAN READ**

**THROUGH THE
ENTIRE BIBLE.**

That is nourishment
for the soul. Visit the
following link to down-
load the Morning Watch:
[https://youth.adventist.
org/Resources/Bible-
Readings.](https://youth.adventist.org/Resources/Bible-Readings)

How to use this book with a small or large group

1. **Journal Space.** This book is designed to be filled with your thoughts. Use the space provided to record your reactions to the something you may hear in the sermon and the questions at the end of each day. It can also be used to write a prayer request or praise to God. Encourage participants to use it anyway they want. It's their journal! Tell them there are no rules, just guidelines. The important thing is to listen to the Lord and open their heart in response to His leading. Leaders, if you take the time to read the daily readings prayerfully and with the anticipation that God will reveal new things to you, you will be surprised at what will flow through your pen or pencil onto the pages of these journals.
2. **Start a Prayer Journal.** Nothing is greater for your personal spiritual growth than time spent in prayer. Your youth group will grow as you grow. Prayer journaling will help you encounter God in new and exciting ways. You will be able to "track" your walk with God as you go back and review answered prayers and see how He has led you step by step each day. New, fresh ideas will come to mind as you spend time in His presence journaling your prayers. You can find many ideas online on starting and keeping a prayer journal. Just go to www.google.com and type in the words "starting a prayer journal."
3. **Daily Questions.** At the end of each sermon are questions and statements designed to get you thinking form small groups and discuss these questions. Take a moment to really think about what they are asking. Listen to the Holy Spirit as He teaches you through Scripture. Encourage participants to record their thoughts in their journal.

4. **Global Youth Day** is set to launch the official week of the Youth Week of Prayer meetings.

Ahead of time, please contact your pastor or conference youth leader to see what projects your church will be involved in on this day, March 16. If you are planning a full day event, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has an amazing activity, ***In Their Shoes***, that can be done during your afternoon AY program.

In Their Shoes is an interactive poverty experience that takes teens on a 24-hour journey into the lives of teens from other countries around the world. Through the eyes of this new identity, they will begin to understand the challenges that millions of people in developing countries face every day. You'll discover what ADRA is doing to help and what the Bible has to say about living a life of Christian service.

[The PDF instruction files can be downloaded from our website by clicking here.](https://youth.adventist.org/GYD/ItemId/745#bottom) (https://youth.adventist.org/GYD/ItemId/745#bottom)

KEEP FIRST THINGS FIRST

Proclaim, Preserve, and Promote on God's Term

A lot of time when you ask people about the role of the Christian Church they think of it in terms of New Testament teachings, and the first scripture that comes to mind is Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commissions the apostles to proclaim the gospel to all the nations.

But is that all the *Church* was called to do?

No, the Bible says the *Church* belongs to God and was given the unique mission of proclaiming, protecting, promoting, and preserving the gospel.

Let's look at what the Bible (Old and New Testament) says about the role of the local *Church*.



KEEPING IT REAL

MARIA MANDERSON

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Isaiah 12:14	Here we see that God is giving Judah a chance to tell others what the Lord has done to deliver the nation (Israel) from its sin.
Isaiah 45:22	In return, they are supposed to make known to the heathen (unchurched) nations around what God has done for them, and point them to the only true God.
Ezekiel 3:17-19	The local church's responsibility is to deliver the message of salvation to everyone. In this text God commissions Ezekiel to deliver His message and warnings. If we do not preach/deliver the message and fail to warn people they will not have that choice to choose/accept the message, and will die and it will be our fault. It will be on our shoulder.
Ezekiel 38:23	The local Church makes God's greatness known.
Malachi 1:11.	The local Church shares God's greatness with everyone

So, we see that the Old Testament ends with Malachi reminding the people to share God's goodness with everyone. Now, let's look at the role of the local Church in the New Testament. Is it different or is it the same?

Matthew 9:35-38.	Jesus points out the importance of prayer in the ministry/mission of reaching the world with the gospel.
Acts 13:47	Christians/ Church members are part of God's goal of redeeming the whole world to himself.
2 Timothy 2:15, 4:2 2 Timothy 3:16 Romans 10:10-17	Proclaiming the gospel is central to the Church's mission and it is a necessary part of the process of salvation.
Romans 10:10-17	The local Church is the light of the world and is a necessary part of the process of salvation. The Church is here to get people saved.
Matthew 28:19-20 Acts 2:42 Ephesians 4:12 Colossians 1:28	To prepare members for the work of service so that the Church can be built up. Our regular services should be primarily aimed at teaching and ministering to the members <i>"to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. Eph. 4:12"</i>
Galatians 2:1-10 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 3:15; Titus 1:9 2 Timothy 1:13	Preserve the gospel. Paul refers to the Church as a stalwart and cornerstone of the truth. One of its duties is to preserve the truth of Jesus. The Church must faithfully deliver the gospel, disprove false teaching, and maintain doctrinal and moral purity among its members.
Ephesians 3:10 1 Cor. 12:12-26	Live the gospel and Promote the gospel. Paul says that through the Church God makes known his wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Through the holy lives of its members and its unity-in-diversity, the Church is called to be a kaleidoscope of the gospel it preaches.
Acts 13:47	Christians are part of God's goal of redeeming the whole world to himself.

**There are two
things that the
local church
should always be
operating as:
A SOUL-WINNING
STATION FOR THE
UNSAVED, AND A
SOUL-BUILDING
STATION FOR THE
MEMBERS.**

**We reach
(the unsaved)
and
we teach
(the saved).**

The commission to be a missionary was given to every individual Christian, but in another sense, it was given primarily to the local churches. Sure, it is good that the Church fulfils our social needs (find friends, network) and social deeds (help the homeless, donate blood, participate in food drives, etc.), but if we fail in following God's command to proclaim, defend, preserve, and promote the gospel; as well as disciple and retain believers, then we have failed in our Christian mission.

Prayer, according to the Bible, is the number one priority in reaching people and pointing them towards salvation.

In a nutshell, the Church belongs to God and must operate on His terms.

DAILY SERMONS

DAY ONE: First Sabbath

The Called-Out Ones

Theme

The Theology of the Church (Ekklesia)
How the Bible brings to light the idea of the local church

Suggested Hymn

SDA Hymnal #348 – The Church Has One Foundation

Key Text: Matthew 16:18

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (New International Version (NIV))

Key Thought

The church of God is solidly built on one foundation, which is Jesus Christ her Lord.

Introduction

Today we will discuss the Theology of the Church (Ekklesia). We will see how the Bible brings to light the idea of the church and its responsibility to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We will see that the church is an assembly of people who have been called out of the world with a special mission—to call others out also and make them disciples of Jesus. We will learn that the church is founded upon Jesus and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. We will discover that the church is not a physical building, but that God's called out people can meet anywhere for fellowship, worship and service.

As part of the body of Christ, God's called-out people seek to be in his presence and to fulfill his will. They long to enjoy times of fellowship with each other. They meet regularly to strategize and organize for mission and witness, so they can

continue making other disciples and inviting them to become part the body of Jesus Christ. God's called out people are part of his body and comprise his church on earth.

Today's sermon teaches that:

- 1. Church is more than a physical place or building
- 2. Church is comprised of God's called-out people in all ages
- 3. The church was founded on Jesus Christ
- 4. God's called-out people have a responsibility to grow his church by seeking out other people and invite them to be part of his church.

The Sermon

Some called Him Master, others called Him Lord, and still others call Him Savior. But who is He? Was He just a teacher? Was He a healer? Or was He an ordinary carpenter? Well, it all depends on who you ask. This humble teacher from Nazareth was so many things to so many people.

His mother will tell you He was her promised gift whom she nourished and cherished from birth. The church leaders might tell you He startled them with His wisdom and authority. The common people will say that He was the humble teacher from Galilee, the healer and miracle worker, who spoke as One having authority and not as the scribes. His friends will tell you that He was their mentor, their teacher and friend.

But how could one from such humble upbringing command such authority? What was it that made Him so different? Why did He have so many followers?

The answer is simple. He was not just a prophet, a teacher or healer. He was and is the Son of God. All things consist in Him. This Carpenter of Galilee was the founder of the Christian church. He is the Son of God. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things and He is the reason we worship and pray and praise.

After His shameful death on a cross, and His resurrection from the dead, He gave power and authority to His followers and commanded them to go preach the gospel everywhere and make disciples of all men (Mt. 28: 18 – 20). These men and women filled with the power of the Holy Spirit started a fire that would never go out.

[illegible]

They went from village-to-village, town-to-town, country-to-country preaching and teaching. They raised up churches everywhere they went. Soon the number of believers and congregations would expand so rapidly, they needed some kind of structure and organization. We will address structure and organization on Wednesday.

The most important concept of church to keep in mind is that it is founded by Jesus. Church happens and exists because of Jesus. Whenever the focus shifts from Jesus to anything else then it becomes just another ordinary social gathering. We should never lose sight of this focus. We should never allow the meaning of church to be diverted or distracted for any other purpose, other than to lift up Jesus, who alone is the author and finisher of our faith.

Today, we will spend some time understanding the origin of the Christian church and the meaning of the word church in its original context. It is very important that we lay this foundation right at the start, because, if our theology or teaching or belief is wrong our practices, behavior, or how we do church will also be wrong.

Jared is a faithful member of the Seventh-day Adventist church who was attending a secular university in a suburban town. He would regularly invite his classmates to a weekly Bible Study held at the home of a local church member close to the university campus. Each time his friends would respond cynically to his invitation expressing complete disdain and derision for religion and church folk in general.

One classmate was particularly skeptic about how church folk seemed aloof and insensitive to social needs in their community. Jared and a few others of his church friends started to look at how they could reflect the totality of the gospel of Jesus in a secular environment. They agreed to do an assessment of the needs. They found that many university students were struggling with taking care of basic needs and that many were too busy balancing daily chores and study schedules, to make time for church.

With the assistance of members of his Bible Study group they organized a "Let's Do Your Laundry" project. Different church members volunteered to open-up their homes to assist busy university students to do their laundry every week. Not only did Jared's university friends get their laundry done but they would be served a hot meal and given care packages courtesy of the local Adventist church members.

In my family, we grew up as Seventh-day Adventists. We did not have one of those bells on the outside that summoned people to church. However, we did have a smaller version on the inside to indicate the start of worship or the transition from one service to the other. We even had a song about it.

*There's a church in valley by the wildwood
No lovelier place in the dale
No spot is so dear to my childhood
As the little brown church in the vale
How sweet on a clear Sabbath (Sunday) morning
To listen to the clear ringing bell
It sounds so sweetly a calling
Oh, come to the church in the dale.*

So, there is always these concepts embedded in our teaching and theology that church is only a place we go to. Church is just a physical place we attend at a set time each week.

In the early church and in the mind of church planters, we do not go to church, or come to church, a physical building, we do not go to 9:15 or 11:00 clock service, instead, we do church.

Church is the body of believers (called out people), who go from house to house, and community to community discipling new believers and raising up more disciples who go from house-to-house, and community-to-community discipling new believers to do the same thing. And so, the cycle continues, over and over and over multiplied infinity.

Here's what we read in Acts chapter 2:42-47:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house-to-house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

That is the biblical theology of church; that's the New Testament model.

The New Testament concept of discipleship is that every member is a disciple or servant or minister.

[illegible]

This is the New Testament model of Ekklesia- church: an assembly of people who have been called out of the world with a special mission—to call others out also and lead them to disciples of Jesus. This is the biblical theology of church. As youth and young adults, let us pray this week for God to show us how we can be better engaged in this model of discipleship. Over the next seven days we will explore various concepts to make this become a practical application in each of our lives.

I want to go back to the very beginning of this presentation. Some called Him Master, others called Him Lord, and still others call Him Savior. But who is He? Was He just a teacher? Was He a healer? Or was He an ordinary carpenter?

But then Jesus made His question very direct to the disciples. He asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter, as usual spoke up, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." To which Jesus responded, "Indeed Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but My Father which is in heaven." He commended Peter for his insight and proceeded to give one of the most powerful declarations about His church yet.

He said, "Upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church of God is built on Jesus. He is the foundation of His church. This is the truth that was revealed to Peter. Jesus is the Christ. He is the son of God. God builds His church on His son Jesus. As a result,

the church is strong and will always be strong. God Himself is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the beginning, He is the ending.

The church of God is solidly built on one foundation, which is Jesus Christ her Lord. It is to this church that we are all called to be a part. When we accept Jesus Christ we not only become part of His church, but we become a part of Him. We are members of His body, and we become partakers of His divine nature.

No wonder we sing joyfully with the poet, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God." Let us rejoice and be glad that we are a part of the family of God. Let us embrace our identity as part of this worldwide movement founded on Jesus Christ.

Let us spend some time each day this week asking God to fill us with His spirit and impress upon our hearts the need to be active participants in His discipleship model. Let us seek His power and guidance to replicate the early church's passion of going from place to place calling out new people and disciple them to continue the cycle of making other disciples who will continue to call out others until there is an abundance of growth and harvest for God's kingdom.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word Ekklesia?
2. Why is it said that we do church instead of going to church?
3. What is the responsibility of those who become members of the church?

DAY TWO: Sunday

Missionaries at Home and Abroad

Theme

The Mission of the Local Church: how youth and young adults can be involved in mission.

Suggested Hymn (SDA Hymnal)

#359: Hark! The Voice of Jesus Calling

#369: Bringing in the Sheaves

Key Text: Matthew 28: 19, 20

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Key Thought

The lives we live each day is a powerful testimony to the transforming power of the grace of Jesus.

Introduction

In today's message we will learn about the Mission of the Church. We will see how youth and young adults can be involved in mission. There is always a role for everyone in the fulfillment of the mission that God gave to his church. Many organizations and businesses today display their mission statement in the lobby or reception area of the office. Some develop a complete document which include the vision and mission statement as well as the strategic goals for the company.

The Bible is God's official document which outlines his plan for the salvation of man. That plan of salvation is, in essence,

-
-
-
-
-
-

27

Missionary volunteers stand for service true,

As we bring the gospel message all the worldwide

Volunteers, volunteers, how I love the name,

Volunteers, volunteers, Jesus to proclaim.

Faithfully, we work each day,

On through coming years.

M – means that we're missionaries

V – means volunteers.

[illegible]

The instructions were for the called-out ones to go and make disciples or followers who would follow them to make more disciples who would follow them to make more disciples until the end of the world. This is exciting and intriguing news

[illegible]

The big question for consideration today is how. How do youth and young adults become active participants in the mission of the church? Where can we find useful service? How can we be engaged or involved?

But right now, as we are meeting to pray, there are many youth and young adults who feel a special call for missions and have committed one or two years to leave the comforts of home to travel to different countries to share the gospel. Some

[illegible]

That is why in 2013, the Youth Department of the General Conference implemented a project called, "Global Youth Day." This is an initiative that engages youth in acts of benevolence and kindness on the third Sabbath of March each year. Hundreds of thousands of young people around the world take the gospel to the streets in a practical way. According to the overview on the GC Youth website:

The vision of GYD is to recapture the reality of Adventist youth as a global movement mobilized for service, contributing to the proclamation of the everlasting gospel and ushering in the second coming of Jesus Christ. There is a lot more to religious faith than simply going to church and listening to sermons. The true practice of religion involves the revelation of God's love in living out Jesus's gospel commission as He bade us to before He ascended to heaven: through all manners of selfless acts that point a desperately needy world to the ultimate hope of the better world He has made possible for us. Grounded in the concluding words of Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:25-37), the theme of the Global Youth Day is "Be the sermon."

On this one Sabbath in the year, youth purpose to be the sermon, rather than listening to or delivering a traditional sermon. This is real love in action. This is in practical terms fulfilling the great commission of Jesus to preach the gospel in all the world. There is no greater joy than to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to be His hands and feet in impacting and changing lives for the better.

Young people also serve regularly each Sabbath as greeters and in hospitality ministry. Some are excellent at preparing and sharing meals. Like the wise man Solomon says, "whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." There is just no limit to the usefulness of one, who by setting self aside, allow for the Holy Spirit to use him or her.

My prayer is that you will make Christ's mission statement your personal mission statement. In summary, never forget that the reason you are a part of God's big family today is that the disciples before you were faithful to the great commission. They shared it with somebody who shared it with somebody

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DAY 3: Monday

Spiritual Gifts and Service

Theme

The Functions of the Local Church of the Body of Christ (Local Church) This is in relation to Spiritual Gifts and how youth can avail themselves for services in the operations of the church.

Key Text: Joel 2: 28, 29

*And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people..
Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men
will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.*

Key Thought

Each of us, no matter how young or old has a spiritual gift, which must be encouraged and developed for the building up of the body of Christ and the work of the ministry.

Introduction

Today we focus on the functions of the Church or the Body of Christ, in relation to Spiritual Gifts and how youth can avail themselves for services in the operations of the church. God's Holy Spirit is given to every disciple of Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost there was an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the prophecy given by Joel in chapter 2: 27, 28.

God, The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each member of God's church. These gifts are to be used for the building up of the body of Christ and the work of the ministry. All of the gifts and skillsets are needed in order to accomplish the mission. Youth are especially gifted in certain gifts and skillsets that can be very effective in the work of the ministry.

Some persons feel they do not have any gifts or talents or do not know how to identify their gifts. Young people can benefit from the insights of spiritual mentors in helping to identify

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Well we read in Acts chapter 2 that some persons did exactly that. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the small group of believers who were gathered in an upper room. Peter stood up and began preaching to the large crowd who had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover celebrations. The Bible says, as He spoke the other disciples, mainly uneducated fishermen, began to interpret Peter's sermon in the languages of the people who had come from these various countries to celebrate the Passover.

During His presentation He quoted from this prophecy in the book of Joel.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (Joel 2: 28, 29)

The prophet Joel foresaw an unprecedented manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the last days. Amazing and exciting exhibitions of talent will take place when the young and old experience the outpouring of God's Spirit as prophesied by the prophet Joel. Unprecedented talents, gifts and abilities will be demonstrated in those who are so gifted by God. According to the prophet young people will have enhanced visions and revelations of what God's purpose is for their lives. This will be affirmed and endorsed through the wisdom given to older Christians in dreams.

The Fulfilment

This prophecy was cited by Peter as having a partial fulfillment at Pentecost, but like many other Bible prophecies, it has dual applications and is very relevant and applicable for these last days. The Apostle Paul affirmed the role of the Holy Spirit in the equipping and distributing of gifts in God's church. In 1 Corinthians 12:4 – 11, he outlines a variety of gifts that are given to Christian believers by the Holy Spirit. These include gifts such as teachers, government leaders, pastors, and helpers, among others.

Ellen White writes:

"God has set in the church different gifts. These are precious in their proper place, and all may act a part in the work of preparing a people for Christ's soon coming." (*Gospel Workers*, p. 481)

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The Promise

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Young people who are gifted in media and audio-visual technology have been a great blessing to the body of Christ. Many have used their gifts in modern technology to stream

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4. Find someone who you trust in your local congregation to share your passion or burden for service in God's work. Ask if there are any available opportunities where your gifts may be used effectively.
5. Pray for the guidance and the filling of the Holy Spirit to make you an effective worker in your church.
6. If at first there is no positive response or feedback, do not be discouraged. It is very rare that young people are immediately enlisted in the areas they are most talented. Exercise patience and continue praying for God to open the door for your gift to be utilized. Sometimes it might take weeks or months or even years, but God is faithful and will send someone who will identify your gift and ensure that it is utilized effectively.

Discussion Questions

1. The prophet Joel described a period in time when God's spirit will be poured out on young men and women and old men and women? Discuss the specifics of this prophecy.
2. What are some ways in which you can identify your spiritual gifts?
3. Take some time to outline a list of the spiritual gifts in the scriptures. Make a list of your own spiritual gifts.

DAY 4: Tuesday

Who Has God's Money?

Theme

The Stewardship Responsibility of the Youth and Young Adults

How youth and young adults can be involved in the finances of the local church

Key Text: 2 Corinthians 9: 7

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Key Thought

The most important lesson in Christian stewardship is that God loves me. The second is that God made me and everything that I see around me.

Introduction

God gave of his best and all of himself when he gave Jesus his son as a sacrifice for our sin. Even before that he gave us everything in the world that he made including the air we breathe and the sunlight every day. There is just no way we can out-give God. Giving comes naturally with God and all those who benefit from his daily blessings.

Today we will spend some time looking at the concept of Christian Stewardship. We will discuss the responsibility of youth and Young Adults in relation to the support of the local church. The biblical concept of Christian stewardship is sometimes misunderstood, as a result not much teaching focuses on this topic.

We will learn today that God is the owner of everything. He made us and all living creatures. Humans are the most intelligent beings of all of God's creation. God has put us in charge of all of his creation to manage wisely for him. This includes all of creation as well as our time, talents, and material resources.

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How we prioritize and utilize these resources has a lot to do with how much we value and appreciate all that God has done for us. We will spend some time examining how youth and young adults can support the local church with their time and talents and also discuss how they can be involved in the finances of the local church.

Today's message explores:

1. The key components of Christian Stewardship.
2. How youth can give of their time and talents to support the mission.
3. Why does God need money?
4. How youth and young adults can be involved in the financing of the local church and its mission.

The Sermon

*In the latter part of the 17th century, German preacher August H. Francke founded an orphanage to care for the homeless children of Halle. One day when Francke desperately needed funds to carry on his work, a destitute Christian widow came to his door begging for a ducat and a gold coin. Because of his financial situation, he politely but regretfully told her he couldn't help her.

Disheartened, the woman began to weep. Moved by her tears, Francke asked her to wait while he went to his room to pray. After seeking God's guidance, he felt that the Holy Spirit wanted him to change his mind. So, trusting the Lord to meet his own needs, he gave her the money. Two mornings later, he received a letter of thanks from the widow. She explained that because of his generosity she had asked the Lord to shower the orphanage with gifts. That same day Francke received 12 ducats from a wealthy lady and 2 more from a friend in Sweden. He thought he had been amply rewarded for helping the widow, but he was soon informed that the orphanage was to receive 500 gold pieces from the estate of Prince Lodewyk Van Wurtenburg.

When he heard this, Francke wept in gratitude. In sacrificially providing for that needy widow, he had been enriched, not impoverished." W. A. Criswell, *A Guidebook for Pastors*, p. 154.

L. Kraft, head of the Kraft Cheese Corp., who had given approximately 25% of his enormous income to Christian causes

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the rivers and the oceans, the sun and the stars, the trees and the fruits, everything. God needs nothing because He owns everything. However, God needs everyone and everything to be engaged and employed for His purpose to be accomplished on earth.

We already established that God's mission or purpose for us is to go and make disciples who will make other disciples, who will continue this work until all who desire to be saved are saved. As long as there are people on this earth who are not a part of God's church, this mission is always relevant. And, as long as this mission is relevant or necessary God will always require our help, He requires us, all of us, our lives, our time, our talents, our skills and yes, our money.

The most important lesson in Christian stewardship is that God loves me. The second is that God made me and everything that I see around me. Not only does God love me and made me, but He owns everything, including me. More importantly He is the one who provides for me, protects me, cares for me, and gives me life every moment that I live. He supplies the air that I breathe, so every breath that I take is His as well.

The eyes that I use to see are made by God. The brain I use to think and study is made by God. The hands I use to write and work, God made those too. The feet I use to run and jump in the games I play, God gave me those too. The fingers and eyes I'm using to type on my computer or send text messages on my electronic devices, yes, God made those as well. And the brain power and knowledge that the inventors used to make those devices, those also belong to God.

I guess the question is, "what is it that I have or own that does not belong to God or come from God?" The true and only answer is nothing. It is like this, whoever makes or creates something has the right to that creation. That person also gets the right to dictate how that property is used. Today we hear a lot about copyright. Whether it is a manufactured product or intellectual property or software or scholarly work, the creator or composer has the right to that property and dictates how it may or may not be used.

God is the owner of everything on this earth and has the right to dictate how all of His property is used. He can demand

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In fact, when we give our time and talents and resources to God we are simply giving back from what He has already given or what we already received. We do not give to God in order to receive. We give to Him out of the abundance of what we have already received. Whether it is our time or talents or material resources, all things come from Him and it is of His blessings that we return to Him. Paul underscores this principle when He says in Acts 20: 35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And in 2 Corinthians 9: 7, He says, "God loves a cheerful giver. Giving is a joy for the ones who are experiencing the blessings of God."

The act of giving of our time, talents and material resources is as much a part of worship as is praying or singing or reading the Bible. Each time we come into the presence of God wherever that may be, we should bring our very best to Him. That is the best of our time, the best of our talents and the best of our material resources.

Paul again says, it is required in stewardship that a man be found faithful. 2 Corinthians 9: 7. As benefactors of the blessings of God, we are to be cheerful happy stewards.

When you consider all that God has given you, is there anything too precious or sacred to give to God?

Anything God asks of us, He has already outdone us in giving. For example, God requires that we give Him one seventh of our time each week in the form of rest and worship. This requirement is not that much considering that He already gives us six days for our personal use. All of time belongs to Him. He could say He demands or require any number of hours out of every day for Himself. Instead, He simply says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy." This twenty-four-hour period is all that God requires exclusively for himself, but in truth and in fact all of time belongs to Him and should be used for His glory.

Similarly, God says one tenth of our financial or material resources belong to Him. All of our earnings and income really

The question today is, what is too much or too valuable for me to return to God after all He has given to me. Is one tenth of my income and a sacrificial love offering too much to return to God? Are few hours of my time each day or each week too much to give to Him? Is it too much to use my gifts and talents in His service to bless someone or be a witness for Him? Am I willing to make a sacrifice of love for Him after all He's done for me?

Discussion Questions

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DAY 5: Wednesday

Following the Leader

Theme

The Leadership paradigm of the Church –explanation of the structure of the local church and how the youth can benefit from being cooperative mentees

Key Text: Acts 6:3, 4

"Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them."

Key Thought

Church organization still contributes to the growth and development of God's church today.

Introduction

There is order and structure in heaven. Because God's church on earth is a reflection of himself, he expects the same order in the daily operations of his church. God established the organizational structure of his church starting from the days of the patriarchs and prophets. He always chose men and women to serve as leaders at different times throughout the history of his chosen people.

It is no different today. In fact, after Jesus came and went back to heaven, the church grew so rapidly, there was urgent need to address structure and organization. After much prayer the membership of the church appointed persons to serve in various leadership roles of the New Testament church. This proved to be of great benefit to the growth and development of the church.

In today's presentation, we will spend some time examining the leadership paradigm of the local church and how it contributes to the order and growth of the church. The church today comprises of many different ministries with specific focus on various groups and projects. As the needs of the church increases, so does the need for help in all of the branches of mission.

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Youth and young adults can benefit immensely from the experience of senior church leaders who can serve as mentors. As cooperative mentees young people have a lot to learn and benefit from their local leaders.

Today's message will focus on:

1. Order and structure in the local church.
2. How God choose leaders for service in his mission.
3. The role of pastors, elders and other mentors in the local church.
4. How youth can benefit as mentees.
5. Explanation of the structure of the local church.

The Sermon

One of the reasons the church has been able to survive and continue to grow throughout the ages is because of the solid foundation on which it is built. If we go back to the original definition and concept of church, we recall that church does not refer to a physical building or space. Church is comprised of people, the ekklesia or called out ones. Church is the body of Christ, those who accept Him and believe His teachings and are committed to go and call out others to be His followers.

In other words, Jesus Christ is the founder and foundation of the church. This is not just a concept or theory. Here's what Jesus Himself says, "...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16: 18). Many persons have tried over the years to destroy God's church or to raise up counterfeits, but the church continues to flourish and grow despite the odds and attacks.

I remember as a little boy, we used to hear the terms Shepherd Rods and Brinsmead. All I knew then is that they were not part of the original body of Christ or the called-out ones. They were offshoots or splintered groups from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As the years go by I realized that there have been many other splinter groups from the world wide Seventh-day Adventist church. Most of these disintegrate or operate with very little influence over time, for various reasons, but lack of structure or organization is one key factor.

There are many different religious denominations in the world claiming to be the church of the living God or God's true

oversee the distribution, other persons were needed to assist with the collection of the supplies as well as monetary gifts. It is also evident that to ensure that all of the needy were taken care of, some form of record keeping was required. The fact that we even know the names of those selected as deacons means that someone was assigned the tasks of keeping the church records and maybe even a membership list.

While we do not have all the details, we can safely infer that there were other persons working alongside the deacons and the apostle in this process of meeting the many different types of needs in the church. The passage used the term officers, suggesting that there were various distinct persons appointed to carry out different functions of the church at the time. Ellen White continues to elaborate on this important process.

That this step was in the order of God, is revealed in the immediate results for good that were seen. "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." [AA 89,3]

It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth. [AA 18.1]

From these inspired writings, we see that very early in the ministry of Jesus the concept of ordination was introduced. The ordination of the twelve was performed by Jesus Himself. Ordination of selected church officers is still practiced today. It is an act of consecration which sets apart select individuals for important sacred duties in the church of God. This important ecclesiastical endorsement continues to be practiced in our churches today.

In the Seventh-day Adventist church specifically there are three categories of church offices to which this sacred authority applies. These are the pastor, the elder and deacons and deaconesses. Men and women who serve God's church have been set aside for these sacred functions—all in an effort to enhance and advance the mission God has given to His people. In addition to these ordained offices, there are numerous other categories of responsibilities that have become necessary to implement as the church grows and develops into a worldwide movement.

Among the many church offices and auxiliary departments

The impact, benefits and blessings of this initiative are felt long beyond the month. Youth officers participate in church board meetings before during and after the month. They participate in an exit meeting where they share their experiences and the impact it made on each of them. The testimonies of those who serve help to motivate and encourage other young people to become actively involved in the various ministries and initiatives of their local congregation. As the adult leaders pass on the heritage and the organizational structure they are leaving a legacy for, and making a lasting impact on the next generation that will live on long after they are gone.

While learning from their adult mentors, the youth officers are also bringing their wealth of creativity and versatility to the enhancement of the mission of the local congregation. The church is blessed with talented young people whose spiritual gifts can greatly enhance the ministries of each department of the local church. Their expertise in technology for example, can be a great asset in the way the gospel is communicated, making it more attractive and accessible particularly to their peers or the younger generation.

I believe this would be a good model to replicate across the Adventist church worldwide.

Many of those young people who participated in the one month mentorship program still continue to serve the church with distinction. They were privileged to sit with the experienced leaders in meetings and observe and participate in the decision-making process of the church. They led out in the worship services and preached the sermons—in many cases for an entire month.

How did the mentorship program impact their feeling about the church?

1. Everything about their church has new meaning because there is now an open forum and a clearer understanding of the mission.
2. Participation in every decision-making process becomes more meaningful.
3. Youth develop a greater appreciation for church business meetings and all other services and meetings of the church.

thand the powerful impact this has been in the lives of so many of our young people. I believe one of the greatest blessings of the Adventist church is the Pathfinder ministry. I can identify hundreds and hundreds of young people whom I have observed over the years moving up the various ranks of leadership in the church because of the solid foundation they received in Adventurer and Pathfinder ministries.

The divine plan of church organization has been a great blessing to the stability and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church worldwide.

Discussion Questions

- ASPECTS LOCAL CHURCH: WHAT DO YOU SEE?

DAY 6: Thursday

The Uniqueness of Worship

Theme

Importance of Worship – how to express devotion to God. Unity in diversity!

Key Text: Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before Him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God.
It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to Him and praise His name.
For the Lord is good and His love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Key Thought

We must always consider who is the object of our worship, understand the purpose for worship and enjoy the experience of worship.

Introduction

Human beings are always seeking someone or something to worship. In a world as diverse as the one we live in worship can mean so many things to different people. Some persons worship animals, some worship other human beings, and others worship material things.

But what is true worship and why is it necessary and important to worship? Today we will take some time to understand how we express devotion to God. We will look at the importance of worship and its relevance in the life of young people in particular.

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Worship is born out of an individual experience with God. Human's response to God will be influenced by the relationship they share and the impact and impressions they have of God. Much of this experience comes from the environment or personal encounters of each individual.

1. That the object of worship must always be the one true God.
2. That the purpose of worship is to glorify God and foster fellowship with all of God's children.
3. That the experience of worship is born out of our personal and individual experiences.
4. The role of culture or individual experiences in the worship experience.
5. How we can achieve unity in our diverse ways of worship.

David and the other writers of the Psalms were avid worshippers. It is impossible to read the Psalms and not get a sense of praise, worship and adoration to God. Let's look at Psalm 100:

Then there is Psalm 150.

Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise Him with the timbral and dance: praise Him with
stringed instruments and organs.

Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.

Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."

Depending on where we come from, and the experiences we were born into, the act of worship and adoration to God can be as diverse as somber and calm to upbeat and dramatic. Since we already established that the church is not a physical building, but a body made up of "the called-out ones" or God's chosen people, then it must also be assumed that these persons are to be found everywhere, on every continent in a multitude of cultures.

Worship then takes on the styles and norms experienced in these variety of cultures. Worship is born out of an experience with God in the context of how we each experience Him. Some reading this may recall the story of Moses at the burning bush; there he encountered God through a bush that was on fire but was not consumed. God spoke to Moses from the bush. In response to God's instructions Moses removed his sandals in respect for the presence of God.

Recently I attended a worship service where the preacher removed his shoes as a mark of respect from an encounter He had in a culture He experienced some years ago. It is clear to me that for persons who have had such experiences or who know nothing else but this culture, would presume that since God required it of Moses then it is automatic for every human being, it is the universal form or style of worship. Similarly, there is much confusion and long and empty debates on the issue of the correct or acceptable style of worship expression to God. Which cultural experience of worship is best? Which is more acceptable or pleasing to God? Which will God accept and which will He reject? This has become such a contentious issue that many persons, especially younger worshippers, become disenchanted, disillusioned, and discouraged. Some even walk away from the body of Christ because they are made to feel so terribly sinful and ungodly because of the way they express themselves to the God they love and who loves them unconditionally.

There are three basic elements to keep in mind as it relates to worship. First, we must always consider who is the object of worship. Secondly, we must understand the purpose for worship and finally, we must look at the experience of worship.

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God is the sole object of worship because He is the creator of everything. We live and move and breathe because of Him. We owe everything to God. It is He who made us. It is He who sustains us, and it is He who redeems us. We worship God because He is the only one deserving of all our honor and praise. We worship Him because there is no other who has the power to create and to destroy. He is God alone. He is the only omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient one. God and God alone is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise.

The second important element of worship is the purpose. Why do we worship? Human beings are always seeking to worship. It is intrinsically a part of our nature to give some form of homage or reverence to someone or something. That is why we find many nations as far back as history records, having various gods as their object of worship. In some cases, there are as many gods as there are needs or situations. These gods are usually crafted by hand or others are simply objects in nature which were created by God. Each god has a specific purpose and is summoned when there is that specific need. So, the question begs to ask: why do human beings worship?

Worship serves various purposes. It is to magnify and praise the God who made us. Worship serves to bring us into His very presence. In addition to bringing us into a deeper experience with God, worship also deepens and strengthens our fellowship with each other. It draws us closer to God and closer to each other. It is a time of fellowship with likeminded members of the body of Christ. But more than that, worship extends beyond the church into the community, where we serve as Christ served. Every act of Christian service is in itself, an act of worship.

Worship is giving of ourselves completely and totally in the study of the Word, in prayer, in our offerings, in service. Indeed, worship is an experience and an encounter with God and man, on a daily basis. Wherever we are and whatever we do,

When the focus of worship shifts from the object of worship to styles and forms of worship there is always endless, empty debate and confusion. If we go back to the New Testament model, we will see that the called-out ones, or God's body of believers adapted their worship to whatever place or environment they found themselves in. In some instances they were by the river, other times they were in homes, or in a synagogue, and even in prison. The fact is the worship was not so much focused on a specific place or style or particular format, it was adapted to the situation or environment where they were and in some cases to the specific needs of that group or situation.

As a teenager, I still remember my most dramatic encounter with God. It was early 1980, and I was reading a Youth Week of Prayer sermon, similar to this one. Like most teenagers, I was having some serious identity issues. I remember reading and absorbing word for word the instructions in the Youth Week of Prayer booklet, called the Accent. The author said we can get real with God and talk to Him as a personal intimate friend. God already knows what we are thinking anyway, so whether we say it or not, He reads our thoughts. Even the terrible thoughts we have towards other individuals, He sees and knows them all. I took those words literally. I was having some real negatives thoughts and feelings toward almost everyone around me, as a result of my teenage identity crisis.

As I continued reading the author suggested that I should find an open space where I can look directly at the skies (in the heavens), and address God as if I was talking to Him directly. The instructions were to pray to God, talk with Him and express all the negative thoughts and feelings I had toward all those people I thought were against me. Once again, I followed those instructions verbatim and armed with my Bible and the Youth Ministry Accent I found an open space on my father's farm, and there among the fruit trees I poured out to God all my frustrations and anger and hurt I had toward everyone, including my parents and church family. I still remember as it were yesterday, the peace I felt after that encounter. It was such a rich experience that it became my usual practice to go to that very spot many mornings and worshipped God, pouring out my all to Him.

Those intimate encounters with God were my most uplifting worship experiences. In fact, it was during those wilderness experiences, amidst the fruit trees and bushes on my father's farmland that my call to full time ministry in God's church was

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the world. God delights in creating new things. I believe He takes great delight in the creativity, variety, and diversity in our cultural expressions of worship.

Worship engages both our thought and feelings, the intellectual as well as the emotional. In fact, worship involves our whole being, the physical as well as the social. With all our expressions and cultural interpretations and experiences. God invites us to bring our entire beings, all of us, as living sacrifices, wholly acceptable unto God. This is our reasonable service. Let everything that hath breath from every nation, kindred, tongue and people, praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. Human beings are always seeking someone or something to worship. Agree or disagree?
2. In tonight's message we focused on the object, the purpose, and the experience of worship. Expand on these concepts.
3. What role does culture or individual experiences play in the worship experience?

DAY 7: Friday

Adventist Identity: embracing our Identity

Theme

What distinguishes an Adventist Youth?

Key Text: Revelation 12: 17

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

Key Thought

Seventh-day Adventists are Christians who accept all the teachings of scripture, including the ten commandments, the Seventh-day Sabbath, and who look forward to the literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Seventh-day Adventist Christians have a unique and distinct identity. Although we share much of the same fundamental beliefs as other Christian denominations, there are some distinctive teachings which set us apart and make us different in many ways.

Our understanding of bible prophecy and its relationship to current affairs for example, is a major influence on our view of biblical eschatology. Like most Christians, Seventh-day Adventists anticipate the second coming of Jesus. However, there is a sense of urgency that we have based on bible prophecy that is not always appreciated by other Christian denominations.

Furthermore, our understanding of the judgment in relation to the three angel's messages of Revelation 14 and the 2300 days prophecy is unique in many ways to what most persons believe and understand. At the same time, we do not believe this uniqueness make us superior or better than other Christians in any way.

Like all other believers, we accept that salvation is not achieved by good works or keeping the law. Adventists believe that

salvation is by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This free gift of grace which is given to all is the only prerequisite for salvation.

In response to the gift of grace, we follow Jesus in total obedience to all of his commandments. Out of the overflow of the love of God for sinners, we have no choice but to love him in return and share this love with our fellowmen. We surrender to God's will by choosing to live in harmony with all of his commandments the same way Jesus submitted to His father's will and obeyed his commandments.

Today we will spend some time focusing on some of these core distinctives and see how these beliefs sets us apart from other Christian denominations and who we are as Adventist Youth.

In my time as Youth Leader we had a theme song that simply says,

"Adventist youth are we, from every land and sea,
Together we pray, and work, and play in happy harmony,
We have a faith to share, with people everywhere,
A message of love, from God above
To show the world we care. Adventist youth."

But who are these Adventist youths? What do they believe in? How do we identify them? I am confronted so many times with this question when I introduce myself to persons as a Seventh-day Adventist. I also get a plethora of interesting definitions and interpretations of who we are based on individual experiences and interactions with members of this peculiar group of believers. I am sure you have heard your own variety of definitions and expressions from many different people. They vary from us being labeled as cults to strange, or people who worship on Saturdays and don't eat pork.

In fact, I know many members of the Seventh-day Adventist church who have serious difficulty expressing who we are or what we believe in one sentence. For a number of reasons, I can understand why it is so difficult to do that. Following up on where we left off yesterday, a lot of what we know and understand as Adventist comes from our individual cultural experiences. Most times we simply accept what we see and know in our local experience and use that as the standard for the entire

body of believers around the world.

Sometimes those interpretations or experiences are positive and good, other times they may not be so positive and might even be incorrect. I do not presume to be an expert or to have the one true explanation or defining sentence on Adventist identity. However, I do have an understanding of what Seventh-day Adventists believe from my study of the scriptures and my time in the seminary and as an ordained minister.

So, before I begin to speak to the issue of identity let me share in one sentence my personal understanding of who Adventists are. **Seventh-day Adventists are a group of Bible believing Christians who accept all of the teachings of scripture including the ten commandments, the Seventh-day Sabbath and who look forward to the literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ.**

There is a lot that can be deduced and interpreted from this statement. Most persons use the short version of Adventist when referring to this group of believers as the shortened form for Seventh-day Adventists. I will use the short form for the most part. Using the definition above there are many fundamental truths which readily stands out as core beliefs or identifying principles.

Bible Believing

Bible believing means **we accept all of scripture as the revealed will of God. Adventists believe that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17).** This means that the Bible is God’s Word, communicated through men and women who were inspired by God. These men and women were directly inspired by the Holy Spirit and they spoke and wrote as God inspired them (Read 2 Peter 1: 20, 21). All of scripture is equally inspired and therefore the entire scripture, Genesis to Revelation, contains God’s inspired truth and is always applicable and relevant to all people in all places.

The Bible is God's sacred infallible Word. We do not believe that it contains all of God's message to man, since God still inspires persons today and always seeks to communicate His truth. However, we believe that all truths and messages claiming to be from God must be tested by the truths that are already revealed in scripture. Any modern communication or revelations from

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God would never contradict anything that has already been revealed. That is what Peter meant when He said, "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1: 20).

God has already revealed Himself very clearly in the Bible. Any other revelation or interpretation that will come must be in total and complete agreement with what He has already revealed. As Bible believing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge that we do not possess autonomy on truth or on the scriptures. We are fully aware that there are many other Christian denominations who accept and believe in the Bible as the Word of God.

However, we are also aware that there are many and varied interpretations and understandings of the scriptures both within and outside of the church. God does not need any help to explain Himself. Whatever He wishes to communicate to humans He is capable of doing Himself, He has not left it up to our interpretations and understanding. Humans are fallible, God alone is infallible.

The all-knowing and all wise God knows that people would distort and misinterpret His Words. So, He ensured that He chose faithful men and women in different generations, over hundreds of years to speak and write His messages clearly, and to clarify and explain it so that no one would be confused, or misquote or misinterpret exactly what He meant to say. Human beings must be careful not to impose our own context and cultural understandings on the scriptures. God does not need our help. We take Him at His Word. We trust His Word, because He alone is perfect and holy and just and good.

Christians

Christians implies that we are followers of Christ. This means that Adventists, like most other Christian denominations, accept that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, lived a sinless life, was crucified, and is risen again. Adventists believe that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone. His death on Calvary atoned for our sins and provides full compensation for the sin problem.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4: 12).

As a body of Christian believers, we adhere to all of the teachings and practice of Jesus, including embracing all humanity as our brothers and

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from sin. On the contrary, the law condemns those who disobey it. However, just like any law in any land when it is broken it has consequences. When God's laws are violated there are both consequences and redress. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Salvation is not in the law or the Sabbath. Salvation is in Jesus only. That is true Adventist identity.

Adventists believe that all who are saved by grace in Christ Jesus experience a transformation that is both inward and outward. There can be no true conversion without total and complete transformation. This is a daily and progressive experience which is sometimes referred to as sanctification. That is a daily growing process of dependence on Jesus for victory over sin and temptation.

Seventh-day Adventist believe that as God's last day people we have a distinct message which is two-fold in nature. It calls people out of false worship and teaching and points them to the worship of the only true and living God. In response to this call from false teaching there will always be opposition from Satan, who is in opposition to the true worship of God.

According to Revelation 12: 7 – 12, this results in a warfare or conflict which actually began in heaven. Later in that same chapter the remnant, or last day people of God, are identified as those who keep the Commandments of God and have the Testimony of Jesus Christ. In summary, God's true church or called-out people will always be loyal to His commandments and will be guided by the testimonies of His prophets in all ages. This is a fundamental aspect of Adventist identity.

Adventists

The last piece of our identity I will address today is our belief in the literal and visible second coming of Jesus. Adventist believe that Jesus came the first time as a baby, just as He said He would. After His crucifixion and resurrection, He returned to be with His father in Heaven, like He said He would. The word Adventist is derived from the word advent, which means appearing or coming. The first advent was when He came as a

baby. The second advent is when He returns the second time in power and glory, just like He said He will.

Adventist place their hope firmly in this belief that this same Jesus who came as a baby, who walked among men, healing and teaching, will return one day soon to put an end to all the sufferings and pain on the earth. He will banish death and hell forever. Those who accept and believe in Him now will live and reign with Him forever and ever. This is true Adventist identity.

Unfortunately, when we speak of Adventist identity, most people focus on the customs, traditions, and norms which are predominantly cultural. These traditions and customs vary from culture to culture and are just what they are called, traditions. These include worship styles, music, dress, and even diet. The authentic Adventist Christian identity is not founded on tradition, but on the fundamental principles of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Traditions and cultural norms are all subject to individual interpretations and lead to confusion, simply because they cannot be practiced the same way every single place at every single time. In this maze of confusion, it is easy to lose our true identity. **Adventist strongly believe that if we stick to the expressed will of God in Scripture we will avoid all confusion and preserve our true identity as it is in Jesus.**

Discussion Questions

1. Share your personal definition of Adventist identity with your group.
2. How does the name Seventh-day Adventist speak to our identity as a body?
3. What are some of the things non-members tell you about what Adventists believe?

DAY 8: Second Sabbath

The Marriage Supper

Theme

The Church as a Bride – how Youth ought to prepare for the coming of Jesus (groom)

Key text: Revelation 19: 9

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Key point

Jesus has long anticipated the reunion with His chosen bride, the church, and is making preparation for a glorious celebration.

The Introduction

The ultimate desire of Jesus is to be reunited with his church. Sin brought separation between God and man. Through Jesus Christ, this gap has been bridged. Christ fulfilled the demands of sin by his death on Calvary. This has opened up the opportunity for full and complete restoration with rebellious human beings.

Before Jesus returned to his father, he made his church a promise. He said he will come again to take his church, his faithful people to be with him. Revelation 19 describes this experience as a wedding ceremony in which Jesus Christ is the groom and his church is the bride.

Not long from now Jesus will come in splendor and glory to take his bride to be with him forever. It's going to be a grand reunion. It will be a joyful and glorious celebration, as God's people from all ages are once more reunited with their savior, never to part again.

Sin and sinners will be no more. The marriage supper of the lamb is come and his bride, the church has made herself ready.

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ten thousand of his saints; see Jude verses 14 and 15. Job declared in chapter 19: 25 – 27, “For I know that my redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself and not another...”

All through the scriptures we find prophecies pointing to this long-awaited event. There are over 400 Bible prophecies about the second coming of Jesus. The message of the second coming of Jesus has been the theme for many of the writings of the patriarchs and prophets. The idea of God returning to reunite with His people has been a source of the greatest joy and excitement.

One feature of these church trips was the lively and joyful spirit which was expressed mainly in the singing of choruses as we traveled. Many of the songs we sang had an eschatological theme. I can still hear and picture specific church members singing songs like, "We Shall Have a Grand Time Up In Heaven."

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As we prepare and anticipate the return of Jesus, I encourage you to fall in love with Jesus over and over again. We love Him because He first loved us. Jesus is passionately in love with us and we lovingly respond to Him in giving Him full and complete commitment. We pledge our love to Him as we give of our best to Him sacrificially.

Faithfulness is fundamental to the marriage relationship. This sacred vow to keep inviolate is a bond of trust that husbands and wives establish to prevent any form of outside invasion of the marital relationship. When Jesus marries His bride, He does so forever.

Marriage is permanent. It was never in God's plan for separation or divorce. If marriage is to last both husband and wife must possess the virtues of patience, kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness, just as Christ does for His bride, the church. Paul says in Ephesians 5, that the marriage relationship is a symbol of Christ and His church. Christ wants to be with His church forever and so should it be in our marriages as husbands and wives.

Just as it is with some marriages today, the church of God, His called-out people, may seem to be struggling and suffering now. The enemy of souls seeks to discourage, distract, and destroy God's chosen people. But I have good news for all of God's children: You just hold on a little while longer. The promises of God are true and sure. The journey may seem long, and the battle might seem hard, but God has an impeccable track record. He keeps His Word. The bride of Christ will one day be reunited with Him.

In the words of yet another of the good old Advent hymns,
"Let us sing a song that will cheer us by the way
In a little while we're going home,
For the night will end in the everlasting day,
In a little while we're going home."

As we wait patiently, for the fulfillment of the Promise, let us enjoy the journey. Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith, not wavering. He who promises is faithful. His Word is true. The promise is sure.

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Plan a **Homecoming Celebration** *Form a Barnabas Support Group*

The Bible says, “Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord” (Acts 11:24, NLT). Barnabas strongly believed in giving people a second chance. When Paul was converted the Church was afraid to just throw the door open and let him in. It was Barnabas who put his reputation on the line for the terrorist-turned-Christian, Paul. When Paul decided that he did not want to take John Mark on a journey with him, because he had let him down before, it was Barnabas who decided to give the young John Mark, who some thought of as a failure, a second chance. So strong was their disagreement that Barnabas and Paul separated for a while. Later on Paul saw the value in this young man, and even sent for him to help in his missionary journey.

Sometimes young people who make mistakes just need someone to believe in them. Form a Barnabas Support Group to encourage and help those who may have grown up in the church, but decided to leave. You don’t need to know the reason. Just decide to pray, five minutes a day, every day for any young persons you know who have left the church and plan the best way to reach out to them. Find a way to share testimonies from Global Youth Day and Week of Prayer with them and invite them to come for the closing program.

Will you be a Barnabas today?

Will you encourage a young person to come back Home?

Help them find their way back home!

for ideas on planning your Homecoming program visit:

www.youth.adventist.org