



TED Elders Training Curriculum

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Ministerial Association | General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists | Trans-European Division





Nurture

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Shepherding

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N 1.2

Addressing Issues of Retention

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Studies of lapsed Adventists



In 2011, SDA church leaders, decided to carry out worldwide research into the factors that may be involved. Because of the nature of this research, two studies were carried out: one qualitative, one quantitative—both were global.

1. Qualitative research, consisting of in-depth interviews, but with results able to be summarized in quantitative form.

925 interviews



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Studies of lapsed Adventists



2. A survey was developed by the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR). Two versions:

A. “returned members” – those who had left the church, but have since returned to membership (a few additional questions administered)

B. “former members” - those who have not returned
785 surveys completed/returned



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Survey Details



- Basic demographic information
- Attendance of SDA/Non-SDA schools
- Five most important causes for initially becoming SDA
- Reason for leaving SDA church
- Length of time as practicing members and of regular church attendance
- 20 possible factors that triggered decision to leave
- Free-form section on why people decide to leave
- Length of time since last attended SDA church
- If returned, length of absence from SDA church



Areas Explored



- Possible connections between Adventist education & leaving the church
- Frequency of involvement in community service and spiritual activities
- Opinions of organized religion
- Exploration of personal beliefs, including authority of Scripture, gift of prophecy manifested in Ellen White, etc.
- Degree to which belief in God continued after leaving
- Nature of current ties to Adventism
- How they felt about the church when they left
- Rate of openness to reconnect with SDA church
- If attending SDA church again, reasons for reconnection

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Global Variations



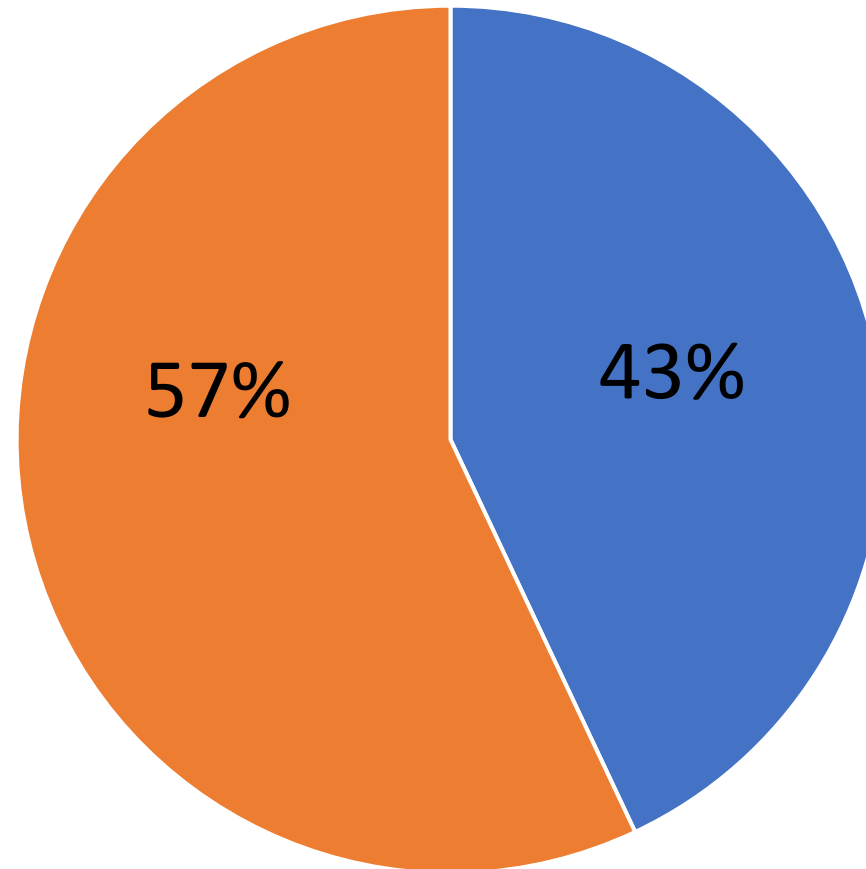
- Demographic data is largely the same in all divisions
- Data on reasons why people joined the Church varies, sometimes significantly, between divisions
- However, data relating to why people stopped attending church is essentially the same in each division
- Human needs and expectations seem to be the same around the globe
 - Sin and its consequences—hurting people—are the same everywhere



Demographics: global church membership



Gender



■ Men ■ Women

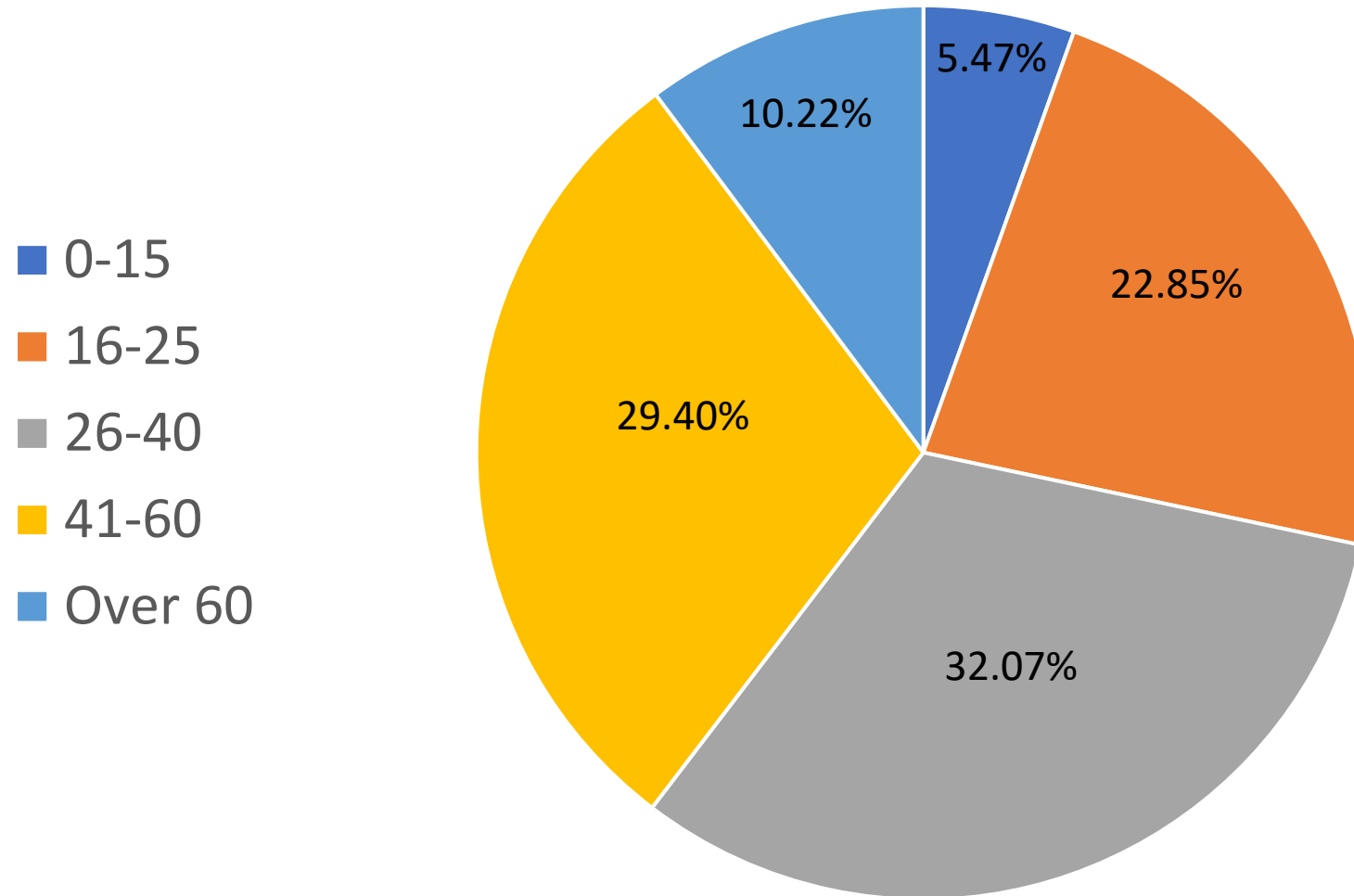
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Demographics: global church membership



Age



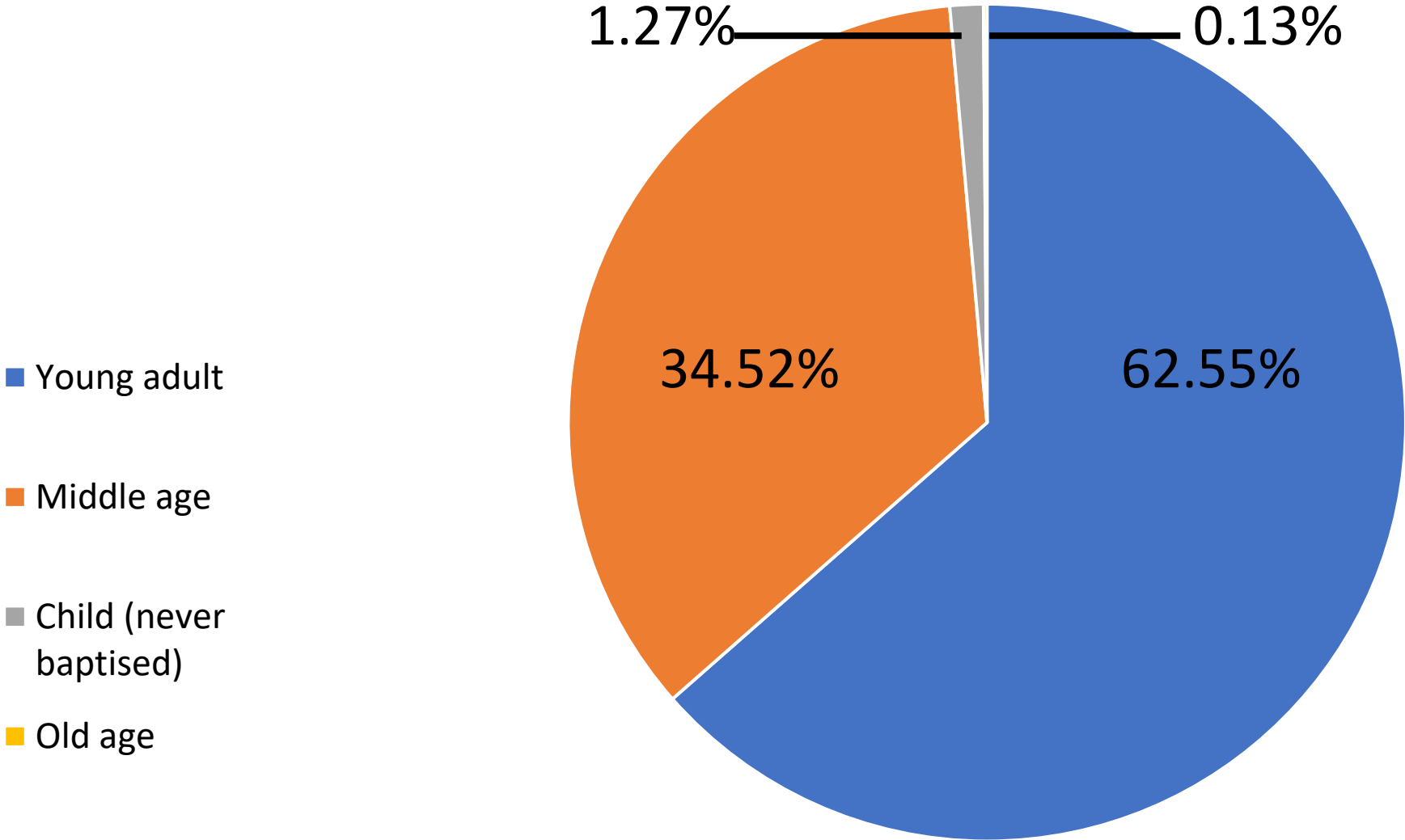
- 0-15
- 16-25
- 26-40
- 41-60
- Over 60

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Stage of life at departure

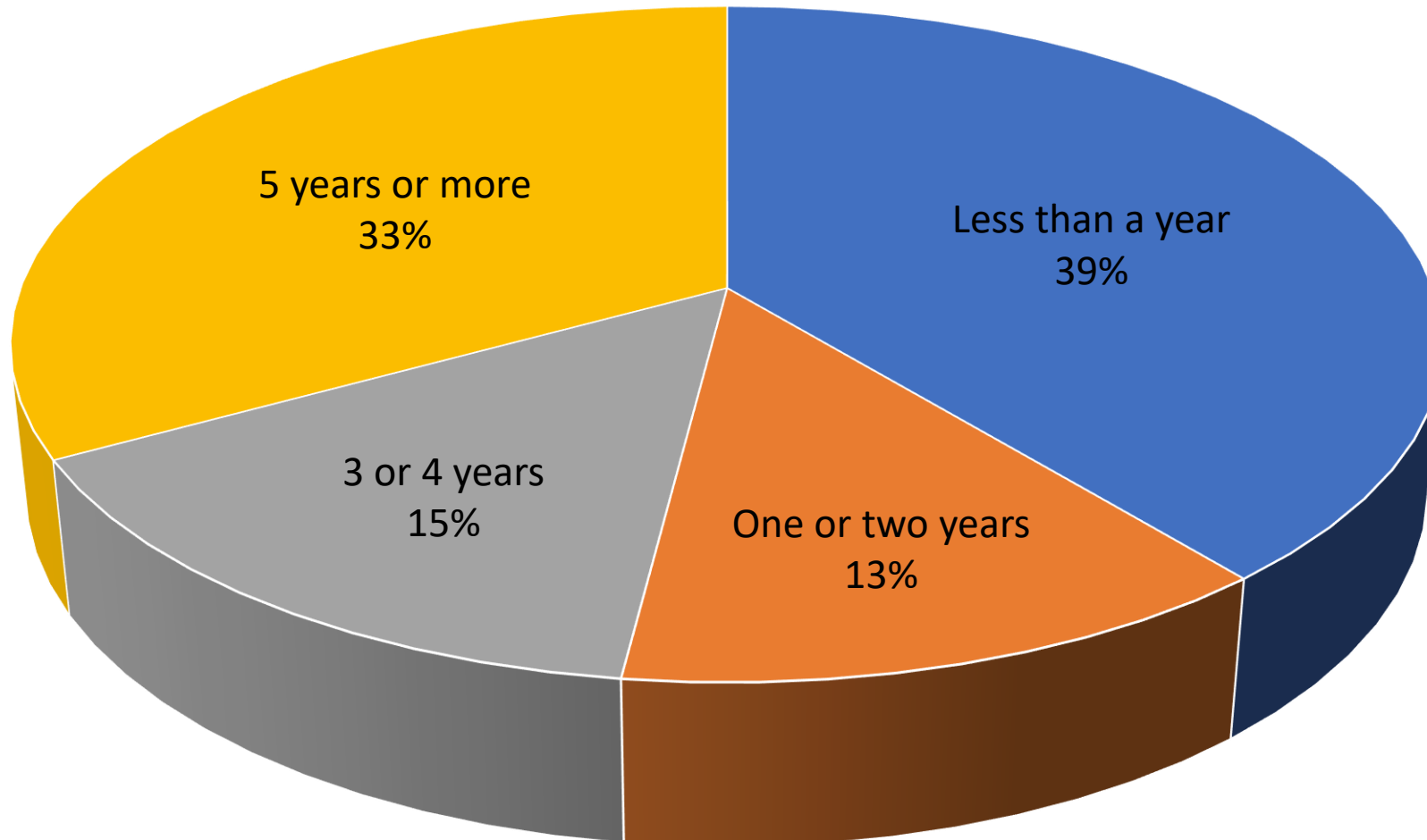


- Young adult
- Middle age
- Child (never baptised)
- Old age

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Time from first contact to baptism

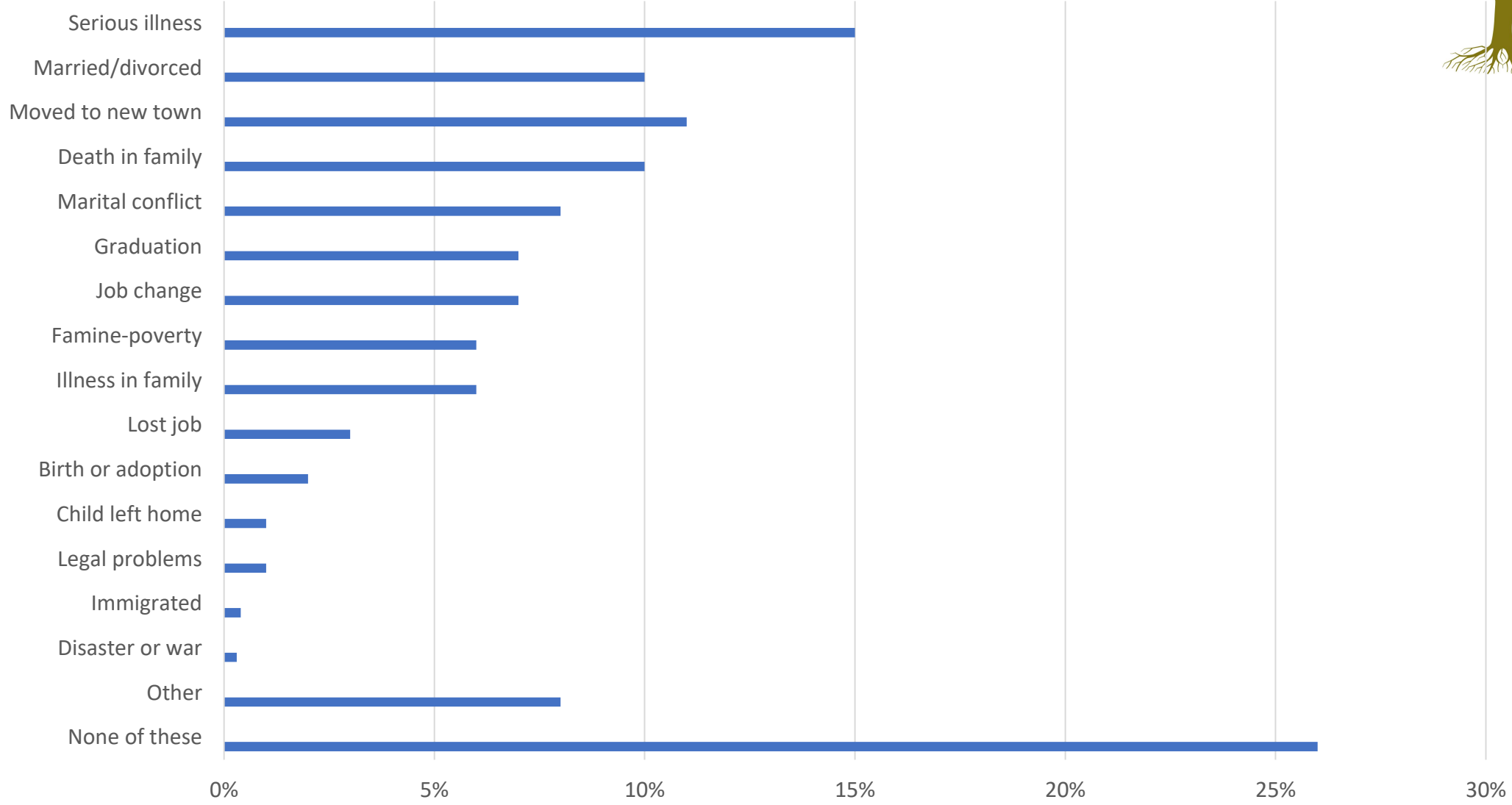


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Life Events in the Year Leading Up to Decision to Stop Attending



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Why do people leave?



- 28% No big issue; I just drifted away
- 25% Lack of compassion for the hurting
- 19% Moral failure on my part
- 18% I did not fit in
- 14% Too much focus on minor issues
- 13% Conflict in the congregation
- 12% Moral failures of members
- 11% Moral failures of leaders

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Why do people leave?



- 11% Pressure from family or friends
- 10% Race, ethnic or tribal issues
- 8% Few members of my age group
- 7% Legalistic attitudes
- 6% Pastor was dictatorial
- 6% Church did not do much to help the poor
- 5% I did not believe some doctrines
- 5% Unrealistic demands on members



Why do people leave?



- 4% Low standards
- 3% The worship was not very spiritual
- 3% Too much asking for money
- 2% Church voted to drop me from membership
- 1% Apostate ideas were promoted



TED Nurture & Retention Summit 2017



- 4 out of 10 converts leave
- During past 10 yrs 7,145 have left TED
- If each one had won one person and they in turn had won someone else, our membership today would be 109,001 rather than 87,556. (30 Sept 2017)

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What can we learn?



1. The Bible is still significant

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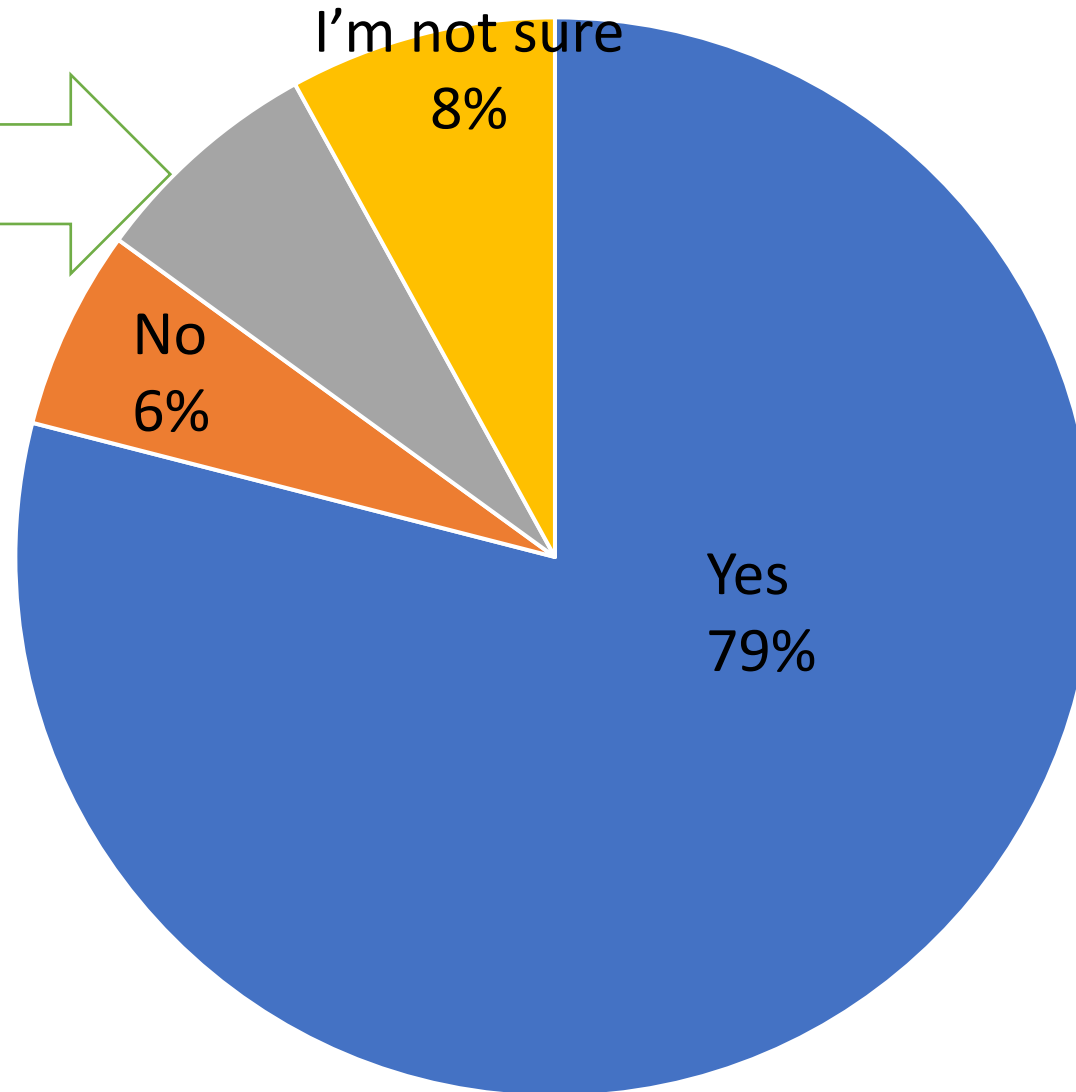
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Do you still believe in the authority of Scripture, as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church? - Former Members



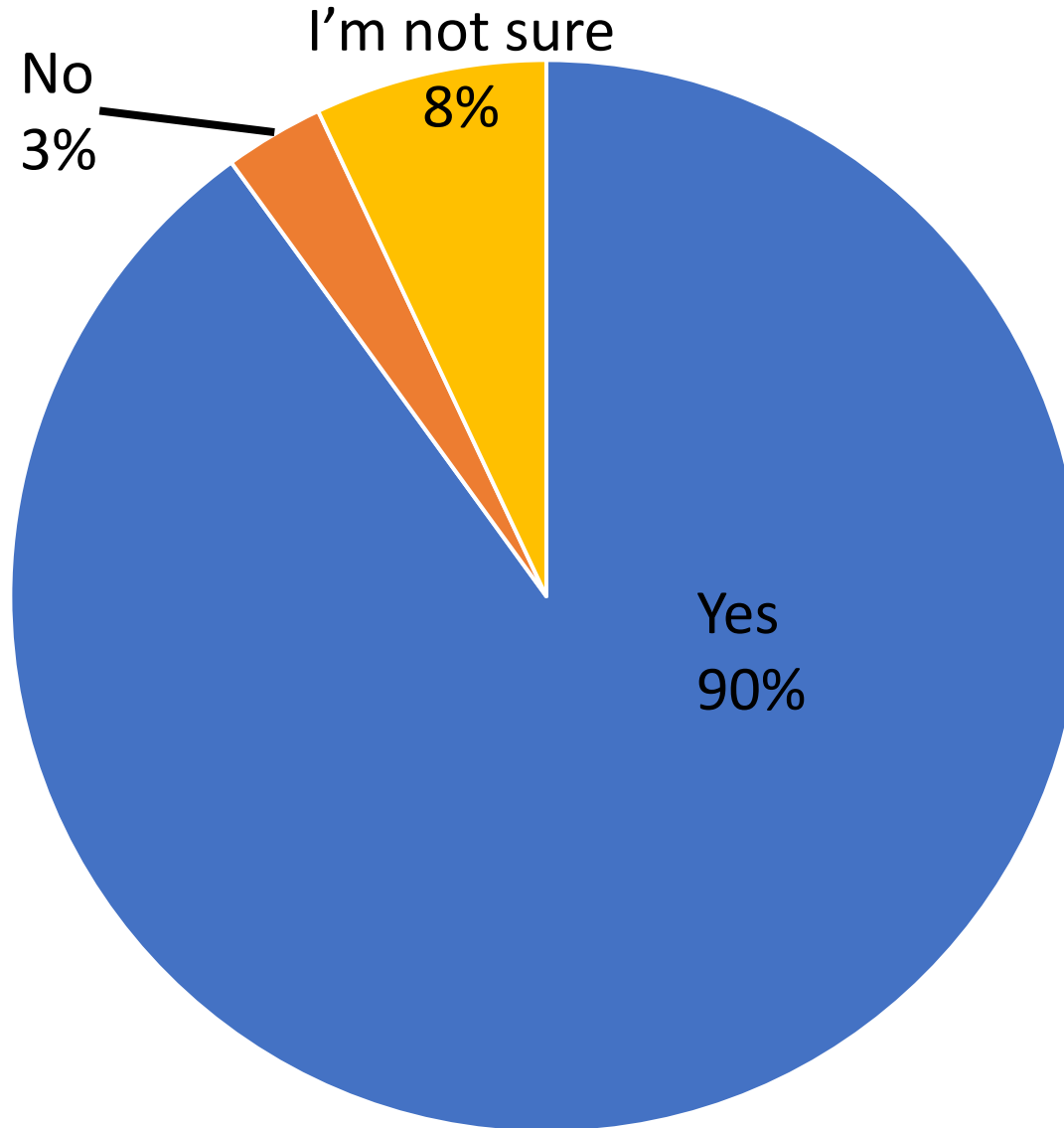
I believe scripture has some authority, but less than Adventists teach
7%



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Do you still believe there are benefits to Bible study? - Former Members



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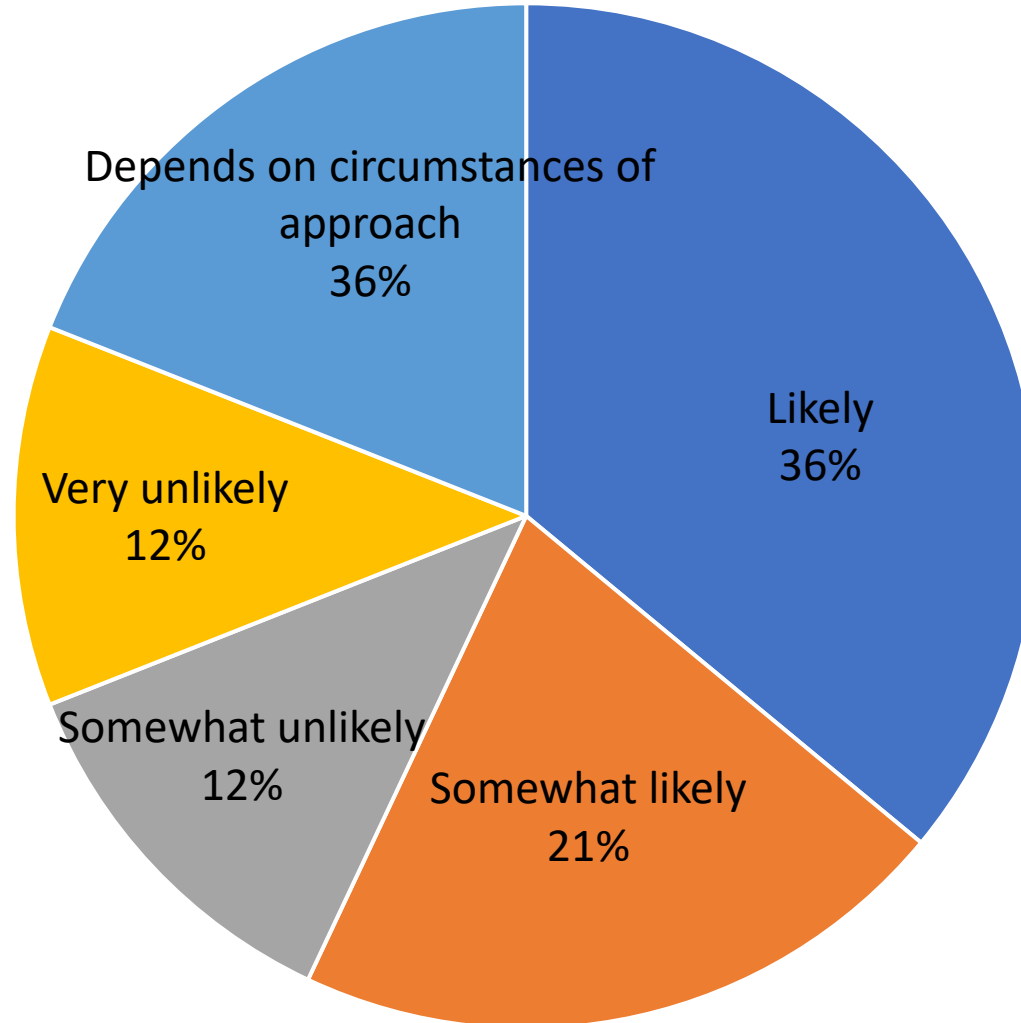
What can we learn?



2. With the appropriate approach 76% of former members are 'open' to reconnecting with the SDA church



How would you rate your openness to reconnect with the Seventh-day Adventist Church? - Former Members



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What can we learn?



3. Reasons why they returned

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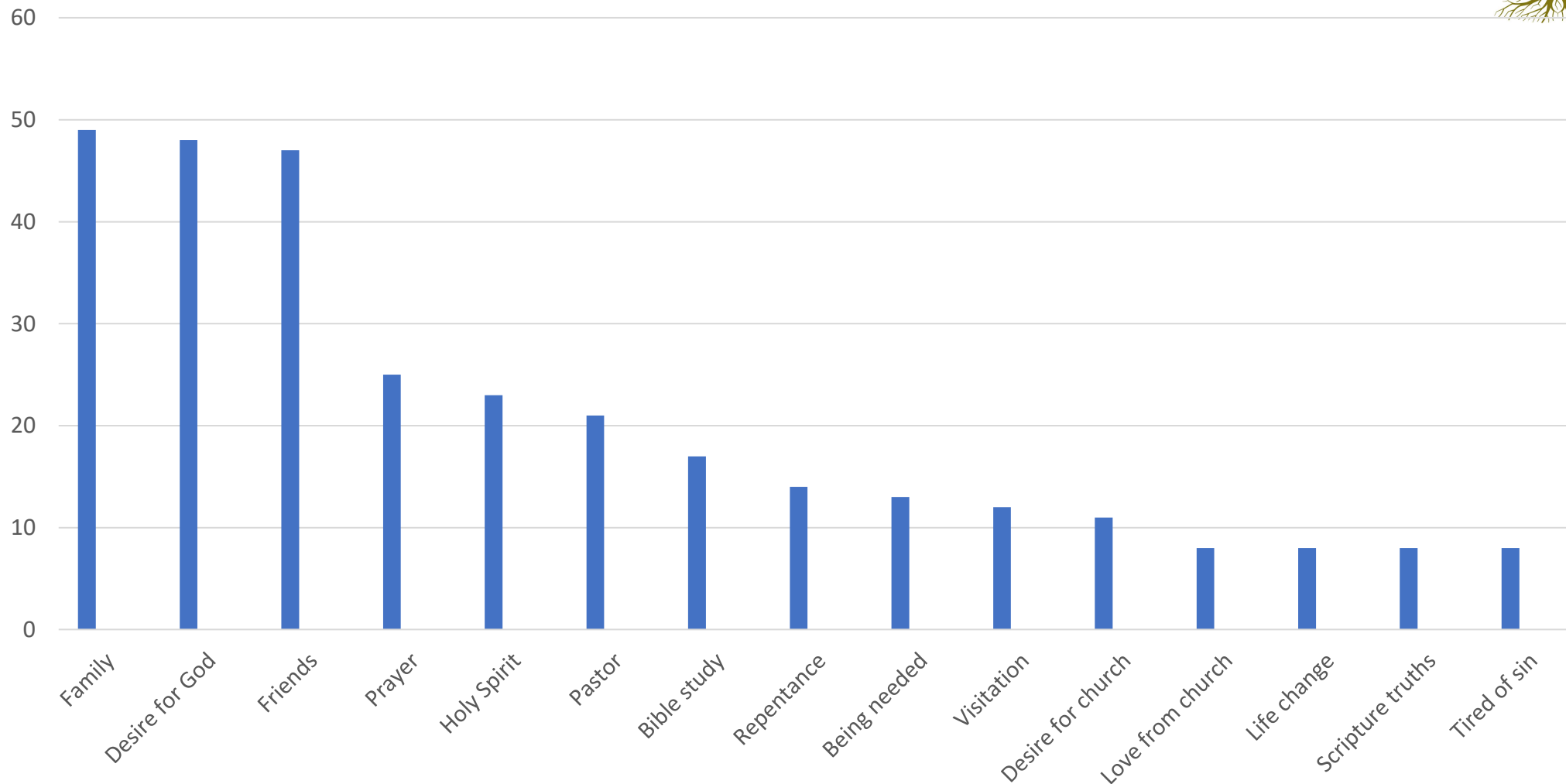
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What can we learn?



Reasons for reconnecting with SDA church: Returned



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Recommendations



1. Comprehensive, widespread, practical and effective training in **conflict resolution** and **reconciliation** be implemented throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church
2. **Mentoring discipleship** be incorporated into the DNA of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
3. Initiate: **‘Operation Reconnect’**

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